PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 189

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1990-91

COMPRISING PERIOD
15 April—26 April 1991

10

328.42
REFERENCE LIBRARY
-5 OCT 1991

ISBN 0 10 681189 4

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. JOHN MAJOR, MP, NOVEMBER 1990)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Waddington, QC.
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. Chris Patten, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. David Mellor, QC, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Alan Rodger, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
- Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, MP
- The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
- The Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
- Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
- The Rt. Hon. John Patten, Esq, MP
- The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
- The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers

FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—Mrs. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
- Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—Michael Portillo, Esq, MP
- Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Trippier, Esq, RD, MP
- Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
- Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Rt. Hon. Alan Clark, MP
- Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
- Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
- Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Lord Brabazon of Tara

MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY—
- Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
Paymaster General—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
Minister of State—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Baroness Trumpington
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Industry—The Lord Hesketh
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Corporate Affairs—John Redwood, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Baroness Trumpington
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
David Maclean, Esq, MP
David Curry, Esq, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. Chris Patten, MP

Civil Service, Office of the Minister for the—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Rt. Hon. Alan Clark, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Kenneth Carlisle, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Earl of Arran

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alan Howarth, Esq, CBE, MP
Michael Fallon, Esq, MP
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP (Minister for Sport)

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Jackson, Esq, MP
Eric Forth, Esq, MP
The Viscount Ullswater

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
The Hon. Colin Moynihan, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—Michael Portillo, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Trippier, Esq, RD, MP
Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
The Baroness Blatch, CBE
Robert Key, Esq, MP
Tim Yeo, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
The Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Baroness Hooper
Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. John Patten, Esq, MP
The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Alan Rodger, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
MINISTER OF STATE—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Right Hon. The Lord Belstead

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Waddington, QC.
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Tim Renton, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
The Lord Strathclyde
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—
The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Industry—The Lord Hesketh
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Corporate Affairs—John Redwood, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS—Edward Leigh, Esq, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation—The Lord Brabazon of Tara
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Christopher Chope, Esq, OBE, MP, (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP, (Minister for Shipping)

Treasury—
PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. David Mellor, QC, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Mrs. Gillian Shephard, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—John Maples, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
Greg Knight, Esq, MP
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP
Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
David Davis, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Nicholas Bennett, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—
LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—Alastair Goodlad, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—John Taylor, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham, KBE
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Viscount Davidson
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, The Lord Reay, The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, The Lord Cavendish of Furness, The Viscount Astor

---

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Dame Janet Fookes, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Geraint Howells, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Michael Latham, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Robert Rhodes James, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Dr. John Cunningham, MP, Rt. Hon. Sir Barney Hayhoe, MP, Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—W. A. Proctor

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, D. Menhennet, DPhil., G. A. Roberts, I. D. Church, W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—P. J. Kitcatt, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Miss S. Holt

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB, QC

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—R. I. S. Phillips

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
- H. M. Barclay (Public Bills)
- W. R. McKay (Journal Office)
- C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
- R. B. Sands (Overseas Office)
- G. Cubie (Select Committees)
- A. J. Hastings (Select Committees)
- R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
- D. G. Millar (Financial Committees)
- M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. E. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, D. F. Harrison, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips

SENIOR CLERKS—S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, S. J. Priestley, R. G. James, Ms P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, DPhil, Miss E. C. Samson, J. M. Hope (acting), H. R. Neilson (acting), M. J. Reeves (acting), D. Steel (acting)

CLERK OF SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown

ASSISTANT CLERKS—N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, A. Y. A. Azad, C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, P. G. Moon

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Mrs. S. M. Barrett, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough N. P. Wright (temporary)

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—M. P. Hillyard, M. J. Cremin, Mrs. K. Lewis, E. Thompson, I. G. Henderson, J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright, MBE, DEPUTY—B. Tidball, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—A. J. Hastings

TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERVISOR OF BROADCASTING—J. F. Grist (temporary)

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR (BROADCASTING)—R. Longman, OBE (temporary)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Symes, Ms. C. M. Genis, J. Hole, Ms. L. Gardner, Miss E. Segal, R. W. A. Barrand (temporary), P. R. Coppack (acting)

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. T. Warboys

SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, C. E. Gray, J. C. W. Cooper, D. L. Hurley, D. Shiels

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, K. R. Kemp, BEM, K. R. Dickason

ACTING NURSING SISTER—Miss L. Davies

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—G. F. Lock, Miss J. B. Tanfield
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie
LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Ms. C. E. Nield, R. J. Ware, DPhil, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, FSS, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss E. M. McInnes, Miss M. Baber, Ms. A. Muir, Mrs. H. V. Holden ALA, Mrs. G. L. Allen (period).
ASSISTANT—A. J. L. Crompton, E. J. Fishwick, MPhil, Mrs. K. Greener, Miss P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms. N. R. Donlon, Ms. H. M. Jeffs, J. R. Lunn, PhD, R. S. Dewdney, Ms. L. E. Sloman, DPhil, Mrs. P. Carling (period) Dr. A. Davies (period)
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—S. A. Wise
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss I. O. White, ALA (acting)
EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor
PROJECT MANAGER, NEW BUILDING—Miss J. Seaton FLA
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. P A. Bozdan, E. L. V. MacGregor
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—J. A. Prince, MLS, Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Miss B. Mee, MIInfSc, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Ms. F. Whittle, T. C. Holmes, R. Freebury (acting), A. D. Parker, ALA, (acting) C. M. Sear (acting)
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. R. Hutson
EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—Miss B. A. Rowlands, ALA
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss S. Holland, Ms. J. B. Hall, ALA, P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, Ms. Z. A. Smallwood, Miss C. Owens, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA, S. A. H. Jones, Miss D. J. Gillings, Miss L. K. Fleming, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss C. Chambers, Miss P. Rix, Ms. A. Crook, G. G. Newall, (acting), Miss S. Pepin
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, D. B. Inns, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, J. P. Brevitt, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), B. Smith, Miss A. J. Hatton, Ms. J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, Miss N. Sutherland (acting)

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—C. D. Lister
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood, A. J. Ashton (Sales Office)
VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. S. Wilson, G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—G. A. Roberts
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. J. Barram, Miss M. M. McColl, M. Fletcher, R. H. A. Russell
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. G. Crowther, Mrs. D. C. Hill, Miss P. J. Hurford (temporary)
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. N. Norman, Mrs. J. S. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms. M. R. Morris
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, G. L. Turner, Miss P. R. Mills, Mrs. J. D. Mead, P. F. Dawson, Mrs. S. E. Caffrey, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss T. D. Ruewell, C. J. Bumstead, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers (temporary), Miss V. E. Wilson (temporary)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. R. A. White, V. H. Stocker, N. P. Crawley (temporary)
PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—Miss J. Bremner (temporary)
PERSONNEL OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson (temporary), Miss Y. C. S. Bland (temporary)

COMPUTER OFFICE—
COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc
ASSISTANT COMPUTER OFFICERS—S. J. Lewis, J. Fishenden
EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland

INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron
STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins
WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, J. Withers, W. G. Garland

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Vee Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss H. A. Hales, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss V. A. Widgery, C. Fogarty, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Miss M. Babington, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms. G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Miss K. Stewart, J. Ransley

REPORTERS—Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Miss J. A. Bradshaw, Miss E. Morris, Miss J. Goodman, Ms. J. Dall, Mrs. P. Pickford, Miss K. Myers, Ms. J. Burden, J. Robinson,

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. L. Brown

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA

ASSISTANT MANAGER—P. Gale, MHCIMA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay, MBE

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent G. K. Dark

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

FORTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 189

TENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1990-91

House of Commons

Monday 15 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Sir John Stradling Thomas, Knight, Member for Monmouth, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Benefits

1. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual spending on family credit; and what was the spending on family income supplement in 1979.

6. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual spending on family credit; and what was spending on family income supplement in 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): I am pleased to be able to tell the House that we estimate that in the financial year just ended expenditure on family credit will have been £484 million. That is 20 times in cash terms, or eight times in real terms, the expenditure in 1978-79 on family income supplement of £24 million.

Dr. Twinn: I very much welcome my hon. Friend's reply, which shows the real increase in spending. I know that he will share the concern of the House about those who are not taking up benefit for which they qualify and I congratulate him on the advertising campaign. How successful has it been so far?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words about our campaign. In the television campaign we have drawn attention to the message in the front of the child benefit book which shows what people could receive in the form of assistance through family credit. That is a cost-effective way of reaching 6·7 million families. The success can be judged from the fact that after five weeks of the campaign there has been a 17 per cent. increase in the number of inquiries about family credit over the figure for the five weeks before the campaign started.

Mr. Alison: Does my hon. Friend recall that when the predecessor of family credit, the family income supplement scheme, was started by the then Sir Keith Joseph in the early 1970s, the Labour Opposition promised to abolish it? Against that abolitionist background, does he recognise that the Labour party has not the slightest hope of matching, let alone improving, the quality and calibre of family credit as it operates today?

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend, in his perceptive way, has put his finger on a series of exchanges in the recent Budget debate, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State drew the attention of Opposition Members to the fact that the Opposition's policy on the uprating of child benefit meant that people on family credit would receive no additional payments—unlike under our much more generous approach to the problem.

Mr. Frank Field: How much would the increase in family credit have been had the Government increased child benefit during their 11 years in office in line with prices?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman seeks to highlight a most important point: the fact that people on family credit will, of course, receive the full value of the uprating of child benefit in April.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister conduct an urgent review of staffing levels for handling family credit in Blackpool? He will know that, like many other hon. Members, I am in regular correspondence with his Department about the massive delays encountered by people trying to secure family credit, not least by those in the self-employed category, in the evaluation of whose applications more attention to detail is involved.

Mr. Jack: We in the Social Security Department do not have to wait to be prompted on these matters by questions in Parliament. The hon. Gentleman will find that the target met in March—17 days to deal with family credit applications—exceeded by one day the target that was set. He will also know, if he had time to read the newspapers during the recess, that the Benefits Agency was launched last week, with a commitment to a high quality of public service. I am sure that any remaining problems relating to family credit will be one of Mr. Michael Bichard's first priorities.

Sick and Disabled People

2. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent figure for the increase in spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people since 1979.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We have increased spending on long-term sick and disabled people by £5·6 billion in real terms over the last 12 years, to over £10 billion a year.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most encouraging aspects about his reply was not just its proof that the Government have done far more for the long-term sick and disabled than the Labour Government ever did, or than the Opposition seem to be planning to do, but that the Government are boosting the morale of those people by making it more possible for them to earn their living and go out into the world?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government have spent an extra £470 million in real terms per annum compared with £310 million in real terms during the period when Labour was in office. That is ahead of the full implementation of our proposals in "The Way Ahead" which will aid another 850,000 people at a cost of an extra £300 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Tom Clarke: How much of that money was obtained from the savings that the Government achieved as a result of the shameful decision announced with the minimum of publicity by a junior Minister in another place not to implement the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986? That decision has shocked organisations of and for disabled people. Since the Secretary of State had much to do with the drafting of those sections, will he assure him that that anger will not go away?

Mr. Scott: The 1986 Act was passed in circumstances very different from those that exist today or are in prospect when the main responsibility for care in the community, the representation of disabled people and the meeting of their needs passes to local authorities and is properly within their remit.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most important aspects is to ensure that disabled people and others get the benefits to which they are entitled? Can he give the number of people who have taken up mobility and attendance allowance in recent years?

Mr. Scott: Those figures have increased dramatically, but we are still not satisfied with the arrangements for paying disabled people the benefits to which they are entitled. I recently announced that from June the benefits inquiry line, which we have been piloting in Reading in recent months, will be introduced nationally. Those who think that they are entitled to a benefit will be able to telephone a trained operator and receive a personal letter advising them of their entitlements. Many of them will be able to get a completed application form for their signature.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that the increased spending about which he spoke relates, almost entirely, not to higher benefits but to new recipients of benefits that were introduced by this Government's predecessors? Will he confirm that since 1979 average earnings have gone up by more than 20 per cent., but disability benefits by only 1 per cent? Is not that why huge numbers of disabled people complained so bitterly to the Prime Minister at his recent meeting with their organisations? Does he intend to accept the Lords amendment to his Disability Living Allowance and Working Allowance Bill on the future of the independent living fund?

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Gentleman asks a number of questions. First, the extra resources have been found and, for example, our commitment for 1992 to introduce the disability working allowance from the starting date of the legislation compares favourably with the slow, gradual and uncertain introduction of the mobility allowance by the previous Labour Government. Since we came to office we have found the extra resources to deal with the increased take-up of benefits right across the board. The right hon. Gentleman asked about the future of the independent living fund. We have announced extra resources for that and the long-term future will have to take account of the duties that will flow to local authorities after 1993.

Pensioners (Savings)

3. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners retiring *(a)* in 1979 and (b) in 1987 had incomes from savings; and what was the real average level of savings on each of those two dates.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that, in 1987, 75 per cent. of recently retired pensioners had income from savings compared with only 65 per cent. in 1979. The average real level of savings for this group was about four times as high in 1987 as it had been in 1979.

Mr. Stern: I congratulate my hon. Friend on that announcement, which confirms the very real increase in the standard of living of pensioners over the past decade. Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps the greatest danger to the record figures that she announced would be a resurgence of double-figure inflation of the type experienced under the last Labour Government? Does she further agree that the greatest threat of such inflation comes from the grandiose spending plans of the Labour party?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and one need only look at the record of the last Labour Government to see how right he is. During their time in office, pensioners' average income from savings fell by 16 per cent., which was the equivalent of about 3·4 per cent. each year. By comparison, under this Government, pensioners' average income from savings has increased by 130 per cent.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If the Government are claiming credit for those figures, will they also take responsibility for blighting the lives of many of the pensioners in my constituency who have been put out of work in the past 10 years because of the previous Government-created recession and have found themselves, at the age of 55 or 56, unable to get other jobs and having to retire on basic benefits with no savings at all? When will the Government compensate people who were asked to sacrifice their jobs for the prosperity of the country?

Miss Widdecombe: It is odd that the hon. Gentleman castigates the Government for people retiring on basic state pensions, because the number now retiring with occupational pensions has risen to 77 per cent. in real terms. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is on weak ground. Pensioners' incomes have increased steadily under this Government, from benefits, occupational pensions and savings. The total increase in income is 31 per cent. The hon. Gentleman should look to the record of the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that the lesson to be learnt from the admirable figures that she described to the House, in terms of savings and occupational pensions, is that any extra resources that can be channelled to pensioners should not be dissipated across all pensioners but targeted to those reliant only on state pensions and those most clearly in need of extra income?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is right and that is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been targeting help in that fashion. Recently, we announced increases to the value of £200 million in a full year, devoted specifically to less well-off pensioners. From April 1991, a further £80 million has been devoted to exactly that category. My hon. Friend is right that we can do more for poorer pensioners if we specifically target them.

Mr. Allen: The Minister will be aware that, because of the increase in pensions paid for the first time last week, married couples under the age of 75 now receive 10p more than the income support limit. That means that they will be unable to claim benefits such as free dental inspections, free eye tests, European Community food mountain subsidies which allow pensioners free meat and so on—

Mr. Dickens: The gravy train.

Mr. Allen: —access to the social fund and cold weather payments. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), who calls that the gravy train, should be ashamed of himself. Did the Government realise that that 10p rise over the income support level would have such an effect? If not, what will they do to help those people?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, as a result of that rise in the basic retirement pension for the category of people whom he mentions, the retirement pension has now risen above the level of income support, so they now receive additional resources each week. He should also be aware that such people are still eligible for national health service benefits, as they are for housing and community charge benefits. Their total income should, therefore, not be eroded.

Disabled People

4. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the impact of recent technological developments upon the disabled.

Mr. Scott: Recent, current and future technological developments are making and will continue to make an increasing impact on the lives of disabled people. They will enable many disabled people to live independently and to have opportunities for education, employment and leisure. They will also play an important part in the detection, prevention and amelioration of disabling conditions.

Mr. Summerson: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, wherever possible, money is made available by his Department to ensure that disabled people who cannot afford that new technology are enabled to afford its benefits?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend. We want those developments to be made available on as wide a scale as possible. Clearly, priorities will have to be made about the development and availability of new technology. But we are moving in the right direction and in the next 10 years technology will make a greater impact than anything else on the lives of disabled people.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend recall his visit three years ago to the disabled living service centre in Manchester, which has a unique display of devices to help the disabled? Does he recognise the national importance of that centre, which is funded almost entirely by charity?

Mr. Scott: I certainly recognise that and there are a number of other centres around the country that also play an important part in enabling disabled people to see what is available to them. I am concerned that we should exploit information technology to the greatest extent possible so that social services departments, voluntary agencies and disabled people can find out, by using the telephone or other instruments of information technology, what is available to them.

Claimants

5. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures the Government are implementing to improve their level of service to social security claimants.

8. Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures the Government are implementing to improve their level of service to social security claimants.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The creation of the Benefits Agency under the "next steps" arrangements is an important development which will enhance and improve the service given to social security claimants. It will be able to build on other measures already being introduced, including, in particular, the extensive use of information technology.

Mr. Sims: I thank my right hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. The sheer size of the social security organisation and the number of beneficiaries make it inevitable that errors will occasionally occur. What is annoying for our constituents is that, when something goes wrong, it takes so long to be put right—phone calls receive no response, letters go unanswered and papers go astray—and constituents often turn to their Members of Parliament to get a relatively simple matter put straight. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that his proposals for the agencies will speed up the methods of dealing with the occasional mistakes that are bound to occur?

Mr. Newton: Like any other Member of Parliament, I am familiar with the sort of criticism made by my hon. Friend. I well recognise that there has been substantial scope for improvement. If my hon. Friend looks at what has happened to, for example, income support clearance times and the speed of reassessment, when required, he will find that there has already been substantial improvement. However, there is still scope for more and I have no doubt that the emphasis that the Benefits Agency already puts on service to the public will contribute to the further improvement that my hon. Friend and I both want.

Mr. Lester: It is very interesting that, following the Moodie report, my right hon. Friend has moved to the policy of having a Benefits Agency. I welcome his non-complacent attitude and awareness that matters can always continue to improve. Is he satisfied that the interface between the Benefits Agency and the Department of Employment, particularly when dealing with people who move from Department of Employment benefit to income support, is first class, because nobody wants to make it more difficult for people who are currently unemployed or are becoming long-term unemployed?

Mr. Newton: I should not wish to appear complacent about that aspect of the social security system, any more than any other. I am sure that there is scope in that area for further improvement. I am confident that the combination of the Employment Service Agency and the Benefits Agency will produce further improvement.

Mr. Grocott: Cannot the Secretary of State understand the considerable scepticism that exists about any of his planned changes since one consequence of the changes is the diminution of his accountability to the House and the accountability of him and his Ministers to individual Members of Parliament? Is not it the habit of Ministers that when they have anything good to say, they much prefer to say it to the House? Therefore, it occurs to many of us that the reason why the Secretary of State puts himself behind the front line is that he is not too proud of the changes.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is unduly cynical, even by the standards of the House. The accountability, to the House and to Parliament as a whole, of the Secretary of State for Social Security for the social security system is entirely unchanged. In my view, it will be more effective, because it will operate on the basis of clearly set targets and the delegation of responsibility, in terms that make it much easier to judge whether those targets are being met.

Mr. Meacher: As good service is about providing adequate benefits and not less benefit more quickly, is not the Secretary of State ashamed of the EC report of a week ago which finds that while the number of poor people elsewhere in the EC remained broadly stable through the 1980s, in Britain the number of poor households has increased by a third? When will he apologise to the House for the Government having caused that by breaking the pensioner link with earnings, by failing repeatedly to uprate child benefit, by forcing families into poverty as a result of the social fund, by huge cuts in housing benefit and by making the poorest of all pay the poll tax? Is not all the razzamatazz about agency status merely a cover-up for the greatest increase in poverty and inequality since the war?

Mr. Newton: Obviously the hon. Gentleman has not studied with great care the statistics to which he refers. He well knows that average incomes were used as the benchmark for them, which means that at a time when average incomes have been rising quickly there is an apparent increase in the number of those in poverty measured on that basis. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is sensible to rest an analysis of that sort on the basis of figures that appear to produce an increase in poverty when average incomes rise quickly, he should do more homework.

Mr. Meacher: It is an EC report.

Mr. Newton: Of course it is an EC report, but that does not necessarily make it sensible. I am sure that the information is good, but the analysis is wrong, as is the use which the hon. Gentleman made of it.

I take up the point which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People made in another context last week, which revealed again the absurdity of the way in which the figures are used. It happens that 50 per cent. of average incomes was used as the benchmark. Taking Europe as a whole, that produced the result that 50 million people were poor. Had 40 per cent. been used as the benchmark—there was no specially good reason for taking 50 rather than 40 per cent.—the result would have been halved to 26 million. The figures are worth only as much as the interpretation placed on them and the interpretation is ridiculous.

One last point—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be helpful if the Secretary of State answered the supplementary questions, not questions that have not been asked.

Mr. Newton *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Very briefly.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) asked about half a dozen questions. As he put

forward a proposal to increase child benefit that would have done nothing for the poorest families in the country, I wonder how he has the nerve to raise these matters.

Computerisation

7. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the level of savings in costs and time brought about by computerisation within his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department's operational strategy—the biggest and most ambitious computerisation programme in Europe—is proceeding as planned and should be fully implemented in July. Most local offices have already gone live and are providing a quicker, more accurate service. For example, the processing time for income support claims has reduced from 6·2 days to five days and for retirement pensions from 28·5 days to 20·3 days.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend tell my constituents how they have benefited from the computerisation process by telling the House the degree to which the accuracy of income support claims has been improved since computerisation took place?

Miss Widdecombe: Swindon is already benefiting from the pension system, which is on line. It will shortly be benefiting also from the income support system. After those systems have been in place for some time, my hon. Friend will notice, as has been noticed in other constituencies, that there is a marked increase in speed and accuracy in responding to claims. My hon. Friend will be aware of the business plan recently published by the Benefits Agency and of the most impressive target for accuracy and speed contained therein.

Mrs. Fyfe: How can the Minister say that when we all have constituents who have waited weeks and even months after claiming benefits, only to receive them in the few weeks before the financial year ended, when officers were reconsidering their budgets? Would it not be more sensible to put the money into people's hands when they need it, not weeks and months later?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Lady is describing a system that most of those who are already computerised and have been for some time would not recognise. Among the local offices that I have visited have been those which are now turning round pension claims in days rather than, as previously, in weeks. It is true, in the immediate aftermath of new systems being introduced, there is sometimes some backlog and delay. When that has been cleared, the uniform experience thereafter is greater speed in delivery of benefits.

Child Support Agency

9. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he has made in setting up the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Jack: I am glad to report to the House that the key objectives of site selection for the agency's centres are developing well. The appropriate information technology systems are being evaluated and job design for them is also progressing well. We are confident that the agency will be able to meet its operational requirements by early 1993, as set out in the White Paper "Children Come First".

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend outline some of the local employment created as a result of this welcome measure? Will any local employment be created in Warrington?

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the assiduousness and persuasiveness with which he wrote on behalf of his constituents to those given the responsibility for site selection. We hope to establish up to six regional centres for the Child Support Agency. I assure my hon. Friend that, although at this stage I cannot reveal precisely the locations of the centres, we have taken carefully into account the facts that he put before the House.

Each of the regional centres will employ up to 500 people. In total, about 5,000 people will be employed by the Child Support Agency—an increase of some 3,500 overall in the number presently involved in liable relative work in the Department.

Mr. Meacher: Now that a vote in another place means that the Secretary of State will not be given the proposed punitive power to remove the right to income support from a lone parent who declines, often for good reason, to name the father, will the Minister give a commitment that the Government will use the carrot and not the stick? Will they encourage lone parents to name the father by allowing them to keep a proportion of the maintenance thus obtained? Will the Minister at least give a commitment that he will not reintroduce any punitive measure that forces unemployed fathers below the level of subsistence?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has asked me that particular question. I draw to his attention the fact that clause 5 of the Child Support Bill remains in place as a result of the discussions in another place. As he will know, that clause contains a requirement that the information be made available to child support offices during their inquiries relating to seeking maintenance. We listened carefully to the arguments on clause 22, which deals with this matter. That consideration continues. Until that operation is concluded, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a precise answer to his question.

Disabled People (Allowances)

10. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people will benefit from the introduction of (a) the disability living allowance and (b) the disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that nearly 300,000 people will benefit from the introduction of disability living allowance and about 50,000 will be receiving disability working allowance at any one time.

Mr. Lawrence: Are not these considerable, substantial and constructive improvements in the conditions of disabled people in Britain? Is not there a world of difference between Labour promises, which are not even priority pledges and which socialist management of the economy could never deliver any more than it did the last time that the Labour party was in power, and actual Conservative deeds?

Mr. Scott: I am delighted that my hon. and learned Friend recognises both the progress that we seek to make and the failure of the Opposition. There was previously a partial incapacity benefit. For the first time, we are introducing a benefit that will encourage those who are able and want to work, to do so. That is a great step in the right direction. I am also pleased that, in the vast majority of cases, we have moved away from medical assessment to self-assessment, as that is a better way to handle these matters.

Ms. Mowlam: Will the Minister express his disgust at the fact that one group of disabled—haemophiliacs suffering from AIDS—has not yet received a penny from the Government? Will he assure the House now that anyone who applies to the Macfarlane Trust and eventually, through the rhetoric, gets some money, will not be denied any social security benefits such as disability working allowance?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Lady is wrong to suggest that haemophiliacs have not received any money from the Government. They have received a great deal of money. There was a lot of misleading comment in the press this weekend and I should like not only to lay that ghost but to refute the suggestion that payments from the haemophiliac trust, the Macfarlane Trust, are not being disregarded for social security benefits. They are and they will continue to be so.

Child Support Agency

11. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the Child Support Agency will assist lone parents.

Mr. Newton: The Child Support Agency will be a purpose-built organisation with a single aim of providing an efficient and effective service for all families for whom child maintenance is an issue. The use of an administrative formula to calculate child maintenance will produce consistent and predictable results, introduce the opportunity for regular review and reduce the scope for dispute.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. I entirely support the Government's intention to ensure that three quarters of absent parents who presently do not support their children should be made to do so. Has he thought about the fact that what mothers in such cases need is the money in their hands? Having been made an award, they will not necessarily get that money unless the father can be tracked down and made to pay. The award that the Government will have made is a negotiable document for the mother. In the private sector, one could factor such an award—go to a bank or some other organisation and be able to get the money up front. When we discuss the Bill in the House, will my right hon. Friend consider introducing that idea into it?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion. The main point that I would make in reply is that one of the groups for whom the use of the agency will be compulsory is lone parents on income support. In those cases, it is difficult to see quite what they would gain from my hon. Friend's proposal, because if maintenance does not come, income support does. The state is providing a guaranteed income.

Dr. Godman: Will lone parents in receipt of income support, especially mothers bringing up children on their own, receive any assistance by way of advice and representation when they apply for community care grants or crisis loans from their local DSS offices? Are not women in such circumstances often in need of professional advice, especially when challenging decisions taken by adjudication officers?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps for good and understandable reasons, the hon. Gentleman is taking us rather wide of the subject of the Child Support Agency. I would certainly hope that, in line with much that has happened in recent years, and referring back to the question about the Benefits Agency, there will be a continuing improvement in the advice and assistance that the Department, along with many other organsiations, is able to offer claimants.

Child Benefit

12. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters he has received about the uprating of child benefit in recent years.

Mr. Newton: There were 374 letters to Ministers in 1989 and 164 in 1990.

Mr. Knox: Is my right hon. Friend aware how warmly the decision to resume the index-rating of child benefit has been received? Will he accept my congratulations on winning that battle with the Treasury?

Mr. Newton: That is probably as friendly an exchange as I have had with my hon. Friend in the better part of eight or nine years, mostly as Minister responsible for social security. Perhaps I should congratulate him on being so nice to me.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Secretary of State be responding to a report, which came out today from the Family Policy Studies Centre, showing that larger families in the United Kingdom benefit least from Government assistance in rearing their children? It would be helpful if he could place the report in the Library.

Mr. Newton: I shall consider whether to place it in the Library when I have established more about the precise status of the report. It is worth noticing that the only country in Europe where the average family size is not less than two is Eire, so comparisons that rest heavily upon child benefit for larger families apply only to a small minority. What we hear less about is that, for example, if the French regime for child benefit, in which there is no payment for the first child, were in force, 40 per cent. of those who receive child benefit in this country would not get it.

Mr. Favell: As my right hon. Friend knows, the increase in child benefit will be a help to the poorest families. However, one thing concerns me. The number of illegitimate births to women who have never been married seems to be rising. In Manchester last year, 49 per cent. of all births were illegitimate. Have the Government any plans to educate young women at school about the difficulties that they will face? I do not think that people appreciate the problems of bringing up a child alone.

Mr. Newton: It is probably best for me to draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. and

learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science; I have not yet gone into the workings of the education system. Let me pick up one point, however. My hon. Friend said that the increase in child benefit would help the poorest families. That is true of our child benefit increase, but not of the increase proposed in the shadow Budget by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

Clients (Facilities)

13. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent in London social security offices on facilities for clients during the latest period for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: In the financial year 1989-90, £1·5 million was spent on capital refurbishment projects at 13 offices in the London area. Expenditure in 1990-91 is estimated at £5 million at a further 31 offices. A breakdown of expenditure between customer and staff areas is not available from information held centrally.

Mr. Banks: But a breakdown is precisely what I wanted. I am not arguing about the amount of capital expenditure on London offices; I want to know what is being done to stop supplementary benefit claimants being treated so shabbily in those offices.

Is the Minister aware that the new office at Stratford was clearly designed for no clients to come in at all? Nothing much has been provided in the way of chairs, and it is impossible for those going there, who may have to wait for hours, to obtain a hot drink. When will the Minister start arranging for such people to be treated like decent human beings rather than like dirt?

Miss Widdecombe: As he visited the Wood Grange Park office in February, the hon. Gentleman will be aware of the unfortunate circumstances that prevail. He will also know that one of the problems has been an increase in the number of Somali refugees who are applying for benefit. I share his concern that conditions in the offices should be adequate: that is why we have spent some £40 million on improving offices throughout Great Britain. Every effort is being made to resolve the problems in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

THE ARTS

Arts Venues

28. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what visits he has made to arts venues in London outside the west end and other nationally funded centres.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): I regularly visit arts venues throughout the country, including the Battersea arts centre, in my hon. Friend's constituency. With permission, I shall arrange for a list of those that I have visited so far this year to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when it comes to the arts, there are really two Londons? There is the London of the centres of international and national excellence in and around the west end and the world of the Londoner's arts. As my right hon. Friend rightly pointed out, this includes, among many other excellent venues, the Battersea arts centre. Those centres depend for their funding partly on the borough, partly on the Arts Council and partly on the London borough grant scheme.

Has my right hon. Friend seen the reports in this week's *Stage and Television Today*, which quotes, among others, the National Campaign for the Arts stating:

"Vote Labour And Arts Will Suffer"?

That is because Labour councillors involved in the London borough grant scheme and in the boroughs have withdrawn their support for the arts in London. Will my right hon. Friend do everything possible to restore that support, and perhaps consider whether the grant scheme is the best way forward?

Mr. Renton: I agree that London is a vibrant centre for the arts outside the west end. Some 160 clients in London receive revenue support from the regional arts association, and many of them are not west-end based.

I also agree with my hon. Friend's analysis of the diverse funding for the arts in London. It is extraordinary that the shadow Arts Minister is not with us today, given that virulent criticism in the *Stage*—

"Vote Labour And Arts Will Suffer".

The paper is not normally a supporter of the Conservative party. I can only suppose that, after all those months of preaching Labour support for the arts, the shadow Arts Minister has taken fright today—that he has not dared to face the music, and has gone off to read "The Wreck of the Hesperus" by himself.

Dr. Marek: The Minister is very unfair. The shadow Minister for the Arts has been held up. A note of apology will no doubt come to the Minister in due course. He wanted to be here, but he could not get here in time. I hope the Minister will accept that explanation.

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for saying that. No apology had reached me. If something like that which appeared last week in the *Stage* had been written about me, I do not know whether I should have turned up today.

Miss Emma Nicholson: When the Minister visits arts venues, either inside or outside London, will he please press, especially on venue managers, the needs of the disabled? Does he know that the only dignified night out that a disabled person can have at an arts venue is to sit at home in front of the television set?

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend. I thank her and congratulate her on all the work that she has done by means of the ADAPT programme to help to improve access for the disabled and the deaf to arts venues. Arts companies throughout the country are becoming more and more aware of the issue. When I recently visited the new West Yorkshire playhouse in Leeds I was delighted to see how far it had gone towards making access to both theatres available to the disabled. That trend ought to be continued.

Following is the information:

Arts venues visited by the Minister for the Arts since January 1991 (outside the west end)

Date	
6 January	Sadler's Wells Theatre
14 January	Tate Gallery
17 January	Science Museum
23 January	Queen Elizabeth Hall
24 January	Barbican

Date	
29 January	British Library
	Old Vic
31 January	Battersea Arts Centre
	Royal Albert Hall
	Young Vic
7 February	Victoria and Albert Museum
	Royal Festival Hall
12 February	National Maritime Museum
15 February	Apollo Theatre, Oxford
21 February	West Yorkshire Playhouse
	Museum of Film, Photography and Television, Bradford
	Alhambra, Bradford
26 February	Southlands Arts Centre
	Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith
27 February	Arts Theatre, Cambridge
	Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
28 February	Royal College of Music
7 March	Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham
8 March	Symphony Hall, Birmingham
12 March	Greenwich Theatre
14 March	Horniman Museum
	Sir John Soane Museum
18 March	Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond
19 March	Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
	Old Fire Station Arts Centre, Oxford
20 March	Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn
25 March	Imperial War Museum
9 April	The Waterfront, Norwich
	Lyric Studio Theatre, Hammersmith

Arts (London)

29. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will earmark additional revenues for funding the arts in London.

Mr. Renton: No, Sir, as London is already well funded by the Arts Council. Even omitting the national companies, London is the best funded region at £2·75 per head of population.

Mr. Banks: The Minister is being remarkably complacent, in view of the question he was asked by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). Is he aware of the chaotic situation that the London borough grant scheme is in? That scheme was set up to fund voluntary bodies after the destruction of the Greater London council by the Conservative Government, but it has been hindered by Conservative councillors who are looking for cuts. If that happens, arts in all the London boroughs will be decimated. What is the Minister doing about the London borough grant scheme? What consultations has he had with the Department of the Environment, where the responsibility rests? If he does not do something, he will have an appalling mess on his hands. Is he prepared to wash his hands, just like Pontius Pilate?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman's analysis is wrong. There is a Labour-Liberal majority on the London borough grant scheme. Labour councillors are pushing their arts company clients off the edge of the table, one after the other, in order to spend the money available on projects that they think have more popular political support. That was at the heart of the criticism last week in the *Stage*. That is why so many people in London are totally losing faith with Labour councillors. The shadow Minister for the Arts has preached, but he cannot deliver Labour councillors.

Mr. Jessel: As London is highly successful as the arts capital of the world, as millions of people come here to see our arts and heritage, as their spending generates a huge amount of income and employment, and, therefore, tax returns to the Government, and as a strong centre helps the edges, ought not we to continue to build on our strength?

Mr. Renton: I fully agree with my hon. Friend. As he is a well-noted pianist, I hope that he will continue to give recitals throughout the summer which will encourage the arts in, and attract attention to his constituency. London is a very successful centre for the arts. It is only right that successes should be remembered. For example, the reopening of the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican three weeks ago was very much due to the enhancement fund recently set up by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary.

London City Ballet

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proposals he has for ensuring the future of the London City Ballet.

Mr. Renton: I very much hope that a solution can be found to the company's financial difficulties. The Arts Council makes decisions relating to the funding of individual arts bodies. I understand that recent discussions between the council and the company have been constructive and moderately encouraging.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Minister for what may give some hope to London City Ballet. Does he accept that over 13 years the ballet company has built up a reputation as one of the leading classical ballet companies in the country, that it tours to about 26 venues, that attendances are over 80 per cent., that it has a leading educational programme and that its closure and disappearance this summer would be a grave blow not just to London but to ballet and the arts countrywide? Will he personally take an interest in the matter so as to ensure that London City Ballet survives and is funded properly?

Mr. Renton: I saw the chairman of London City Ballet last week and had a long discussion with him. I agree with many of the comments that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has made about the artistic work of the company. I saw its "Cinderella" production at Sadler's Wells just before Christmas, and it was very good indeed, However, the hon. Gentleman, as a fair man, knows the difficulties. He knows that the Arts Council's budget for dance, including ballet, is fully committed. It is a strange notion that the support of a group of successful business men who, by their own endeavours, have funded the London City Ballet for the past 13 years, while the company was being built up, should automatically be replaced by Government support. It is rather difficult to accept that the Government should automatically pick up the bill when that group, for its own reasons, decides to withdraw funding. London City Ballet received a touring grant of £100,000 last year. This year, in view of the slightly smaller number of touring weeks, the grant will be £89,000.

Mr. Tracey: Will my right hon. Friend look seriously at some of the points that have been made about the London borough grant scheme? There is no doubt that among

London Members of Parliament there is serious bias over the provision of grants for honourable causes. I want aid to be provided for particularly honourable causes in our boroughs.

Mr. Renton: The decision as to who is aided under the London borough grant scheme is one for the scheme's board, on which there is a Labour-Liberal majority. I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to do everything possible to ensure that the LBG's budget allocation this year is decided quickly and that it is as large as possible. Within those parameters, the Secretary of State for the Environment recommended total grants of more than £30 million. At present, councillors are talking about a somewhat lower level. That is what lies at the heart of the difficulties concerning arts clients. I repeat that it is Labour councillors who, one after another, are jettisoning their arts clients.

CIVIL SERVICE

Women Civil Servants

40. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many women are now in post in the civil service at under-secretary level and above; and how many there were 10 years ago?

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Tim Renton): There are now 45 women in the civil service at under-secretary level and above; 10 years ago there were 31. A programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity for women in the civil service has been in place since 1984.

Mr. Tony Banks: If I were the hon. Lady, I should put in an application.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Currie: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply and congratulate him on the 50 per cent. increase in the number of women at the higher levels of the civil service. I do not want to carp, but does my right hon. Friend agree that, in a world in which more than 50 per cent. of the electorate are women, and in which nearly half of the work force are women, it is time to increase the number of capable women who reach the higher levels of the civil service to something approaching the proportions that they achieve at the lower levels?

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of my overall responsibilities as a civil service Minister is to see that the aim that has been voiced by my hon. Friend is realised. I hope that it will be some comfort to her to hear that the proportion of women younger than 45 in the top three grades is higher than the proportion of men in that age group, and that there is a higher proportion of women in grades 5 to 7. The latter figure is up considerably on that of six years ago. That gives me reason to believe that in the years immediately ahead there will be a higher proportion of women in absolutely top positions.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister realise that there is no shortage of talent among women in Britain and that simply saying that he is led to believe that things might get better is not good enough? Can I invite him to set a target to make sure that at least 40 per cent. of all civil service posts, especially those between grades 5 and 7 and grades 4 and above, will be filled by women within five years? If the Minister sets himself that target, he will earn the congratulations of the whole House.

Mr. Renton: I have only to look at the Benches around and behind me to realise that there is no shortage of talent among women in Britain. Setting a target would not be a realistic approach. It would be far better to make sure that the top posts go to those with the greatest ability, no matter what sex or ethnic origin. My office is certainly dedicated to that aim and we shall do our utmost to achieve it.

Sir Dudley Smith: While there is no room for complacency on matters of equality, will my right hon. Friend confirm that our record throughout public service and industry bears up very well in comparison with other countries in the European Community?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important point. Although the percentage of women in the civil service is still low—indeed, too low—it is increasing pretty rapidly.

The Gulf

41. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what advice has been given by the occupational health service to civil servants required to visit the Gulf region in the course of their official duties.

Mr. Renton: No general advice has been issued. The occupational health service gives advice accompanied by appropriate briefing and leaflets to all civil servants travelling abroad as and when required.

Mr. Dalyell: Would it be unduly alarmist to suggest that civil servants, service men and the local population, who are subject to hydrogen sulphide and mixtures of chlorine and hydrocarbons, risk cancer or leukaemia? In those circumstances, will the Minister undertake to look at the statements of Professor Nicholas Wright of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, which suggest that no research is being done along those lines? Should not the Government find out the effects of unprecedented oil fires on human health?

Mr. Renton: I know of no specific evidence that the hon. Gentleman could adduce to back up the remarks that he has just made. However, the booklet, "Keeping healthy overseas", which is issued by the civil service occupational health service to all civil servants travelling abroad, gives some specific advice. When I was working in the private sector and travelled abroad a great deal for my employers, I was never issued with any such booklet.

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

42. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements are made for counselling drug and alcohol misusers in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: We advise managers in Departments and agencies to encourage staff with an alcohol or drug abuse problem to seek appropriate counselling or treatment. This may involve giving them the opportunity of talking to a welfare officer or occupational health service staff. They can then be advised on how to seek help for their specific needs.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcome the concern for those personal problems and urge on my right hon. Friend the need to establish points of contact outside the civil service for people who may have those problems because of the reticence that many feel in seeking help within the civil service.

Mr. Renton: I accept my hon. Friend's wise suggestions and I shall pass them forward to the civil servants in my office. I should point out that in January 1988 we issued a policy guidance note which was followed up by a pamphlet called "Misuse of drugs: training framework" for personnel managers. We have tried to give personnel managers sensible advice. I shall certainly ensure that my hon. Friend's points are considered.

Dr. Godman: If counselling has replaced the issuing of disciplinary orders against such civil servants, when someone undertakes that counselling or the treatment recommended by the counsellors, is that fact wiped off his or her personal record?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman will realise that it is not possible to be specific in advance as to whether the action taken in individual cases should be only counselling or could also involve something much more serious. If it was a case of the possession of, or trading in, illicit drugs on a Department's premises, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that counselling would not be sufficient and counsellors would have to take a more serious view of such illegal action.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it after questions on the statement.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister will have gone by then.

Iraq

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the relief of suffering in Iraq. We are faced with suffering and fear on a huge scale—inside Iraq, on both sides of the border with Turkey, on both sides of the border with Iran, and in the demilitarised zone bordering Kuwait. Each of these areas has its difficult problems and in all of them the needs are formidable.

Our response has two elements: first, to keep the refugees alive; and, second, to create conditions in which they can return home in safety.

We have given prompt humanitarian help. We airlifted relief supplies to the Turkish and to the Iranian Red Crescent Societies. With the United States and France, Royal Air Force aircraft have been airdropping supplies into northern Iraq. With the Americans and Germans we are now engaged in a helicopter airbridge. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has arranged for six more Chinook helicopters to deploy to Turkey from the middle of this week, bringing to nine the British helicopters joining in this effort. We are contributing over £20 million to appeals by the United Nations and other international agencies. This includes the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is at present providing the most effective help inside Iraq. Part of this money will go to our own non-governmental organisations whom I met this morning.

We helped bring about Security Council resolution 688 which requires Iraq to co-operate with the United Nations and other international humanitarian organisations and to stop repression. The Iraqis are receiving UN missions led by the Secretary-General's representative, Mr. Suy, and by the UN co-ordinator, Prince Sadruddin.

At the special European Council at Luxembourg on 8 April, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister put forward a four-point plan to build on the resolutions of the Security Council. First, he proposed the establishment of temporary safe havens in Iraq, in which UN officials can provide for the basic needs of refugees and monitor their security until they can return to their homes in safety. Secondly, he proposed a generous contribution by the European Community to the UN and other appeals for funds for humanitarian relief. The Community immediately contributed 150 million ecu.

Thirdly, apart from food and humanitarian supplies, he proposed that economic and financial sanctions against Iraq should remain in force until Saddam Hussein's offer of an amnesty is made permanent and the international community is satisfied that persecution of minorities in Iraq had ceased. Fourthly, he proposed a strict arms embargo against Iraq to remain in force as long as Saddam Hussein is in power.

We are vigorously pursuing this proposal for safe havens. Our aim is to create places and conditions in which the refugees can feel secure. We are not talking of a territorial enclave, a separate Kurdistan or a permanent UN presence. We support the territorial integrity of Iraq.

But we have to get the refugees off the mountains. That is the unanimous view of those who have visited the area on behalf of the ODA and the British NGOs with whom I talked this morning. Some refugees are now being admitted to places in Turkey and Iran where they can be better cared for. That is welcome, but it is not the right answer except temporarily. We should not aim to add a new permanent refugee problem to the others that already disfigure the world.

The Kurds should be enabled and encouraged to return to their homes, where effective help can be given, but they will not do that unless they feel secure. Undertakings such as those made yesterday by the Iraqi Government will not suffice for that purpose. The United Nations presence in Iraq must build up fast and solidly to monitor and to ensure the safety of those whom the Security Council has resolved to help. We share the view of President Bush when he said yesterday:

"We will not tolerate any interference in this massive international relief effort".

To help to carry the British relief effort forward, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will visit Turkey and Iran, including the frontier areas, later this week.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Opposition share the horror of the whole country—and indeed of all the civilised world—at the repression carried out by Saddam Hussein against the Kurds, the Shi'ites and many other inhabitants of Iraq. We strongly support Security Council resolution 688, which calls on the Iraqi regime to end the repression and which demands access by international humanitarian organisations to alleviate the suffering. We welcome the assistance already provided, but we believe that it should be increased substantially by the United Kingdom, as well as by the European Community and other agencies, not only for the Kurds themselves, but for Turkey and Iran which are faced with such a problem in seeking to take in Kurdish refugees.

We think that it is right that proper protection should be given to the teams going into Iraq to provide that help, but we do not believe that that should be the limit of our action. We stand by our view that the war aims against Iraq should not have extended, and should still not extend, to attempts to dismember that country or to change its regime, however vile that regime may be. The question of who governs Iraq must be decided by the Iraqi people.

At the same time, resolution 688 authorises the United Nations Secretary-General to send a mission to Iraq to report on the plight of the civilian population and in particular on the plight of the Kurds. I ask the Foreign Secretary to instruct our Permanent Representative at the Security Council to propose at the Security Council that the Secretary-General sends a mission to investigate charges of genocide, with the intention of the earliest possible report, bearing in mind that the United Nations genocide convention authorises punishment of those who transgress its provisions. Although we do not believe that any one country or combination of countries should send troops into Iraq for whatever purposes other than for the protection of relief missions, we believe that if genocide charges are proved the military staff committee of the Security Council should consider, as a matter of urgency, what appropriate action might be taken by the international community to seek to bring such acts to an end and to deal with those responsible.

The right hon. Gentleman said nothing about the wider middle east crisis. Will he give his full support to the efforts of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker, to convene an international conference? Does the right

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

hon. Gentleman agree that what is going on in Iraq now, horrifying though it is, is no more than the latest dismaying symptom of an endemic crisis in the area which must be solved? Unless there is a settlement which brings security to all nations in the region, including Israel, and which provides self-determination for the Palestinian people, what we are witnessing now will be seen not only as the bloody aftermath of one war but as the prelude to another war which will be bloodier still.

Mr. Hurd: On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, I confirm that we intend steadily to build up and increase the British relief effort and to apply pressure continuously day by day, as we have done for a long time, on the United Nations and on other agencies to do the same.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman correctly said that genocide is a crime under international law—the convention of 1948—and that the contracting parties have agreed to prevent and punish that crime. People charged with genocide can be tried before national courts. Proof is required of the intention to destroy in whole or in part one of the groups defined in the convention by carrying out certain acts.

The Secretary-General has, in a way, anticipated the right hon. Gentleman's point, because, as he said, he has sent Mr. Suy, his representative on human rights, to Baghdad. It will be sensible for the Security Council to consider very carefully what Mr. Suy may have to report, which will bear on the question of genocide.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's third point. I discussed the problem on the telephone with Mr. Baker on Saturday. He knows that his efforts, which are energetic and well conceived, will continue to receive our support.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the initiatives taken by our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by himself to help the Kurds and Shias stand out as highly creative acts of statesmanship in a very negative international climate? Does he further accept that there will be no feeling of safety for the Kurds or Shias, who have been the subject of the most appalling atrocities, no guarantee for us or the United Nations that any resolutions will be fully implemented and satisfied and no peace or security in the region, even for the Kuwaitis and neighbouring countries, until in Baghdad there are the glimmerings of a Government who have a minimal respect for human rights and do not believe that blood and killing are the main weapons of governing a country?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my right hon. Friend. I cannot conceive of the present regime in Iraq, which has shown itself to be aggressive abroad and barbarously oppressive at home, finding its place again as an important middle eastern state in the international community.

The initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has moved the international effort forward, both as regards the United Nations and some of our most important allies. Needs are multiplying all the time, so we cannot be complacent about our response so far, but the British initiative has moved the response forward.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Foreign Secretary will be aware that logistical supply and air supremacy were important factors in the allied victory in the Gulf war. Will he confirm that the same standard of expertise of supply will be used for humanitarian purposes? Will he further confirm that the allies are willing to use air supremacy to protect Kurdish refugees?

Mr. Hurd: The first point made by the hon. and learned Gentleman is entirely right. The international relief effort, in complicated and difficult conditions, is using the full expertise and experience which we all have and which, increasingly, is being pooled. The effort was originally focused heavily on the Turkish side, but the greater problem, as the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) will confirm, is on the Iranian side. We shall increasingly find our effort and those of some of our allies and the United Nations agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who is in Iran at the moment, being devoted to that aspect.

The United States has given clear warnings to the Iraqi Government, the importance of which was stressed to me by Mr. Baker on Saturday. The fundamental point is that a huge international life-saving operation is under way and the Security Council has insisted that Iraq co-operates with that effort. If the relief effort is harassed or frustrated by Iraq, it will be the responsibility of the United Nations to protect both the helpers and the helped, and the Security Council would have to act on that responsibility.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is overwhelming support in this country and in Europe and growing support in the United States for the concept of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of safe havens for the Kurds and, I hope, for the Shias, too? Does he further agree that if there should be a conflict between our commitment to non-interference in the affairs of other countries and our determination to help refugees in danger of persecution, whether in Kurdistan or south Iraq, we shall come down firmly on the side of the refugees, even if that means co-operating with some of our allies in the use of military power—I hope, under the aegis of the United Nations and, if not, otherwise?

Mr. Hurd: It is important to continue, as we have begun, with the authority of the United Nations. Security Council resolutions 687 and 688, in both of which we had a substantial hand, extend the boundaries of international action and thus strike the balance, about which my right hon. Friend is talking, in a rather different place from hitherto. I chose my words carefully in answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) to show that we believe that that process should, if necessary, continue.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): For the people of Kurdistan, genocide is proven. Resolution 688 has been breached—there can be no doubt about that—in so far as Saddam Hussein continues to repress the people of Kurdistan. The Kurdish leaders desperately beg for military action by the major powers, preferably through the United Nations, through the use of aircraft against the equipment used for the repression of the Kurds. Why, when on 28 March we raised in the Chamber the imminent catastrophe in the region, was there such a delay in providing aid? Is it not true that the Kurds have had to wait for nearly two weeks for the first British aid to reach

them? If that is not true, will the Foreign Secretary give us the date when the first aid was received by people in Kurdistan?

Mr. Hurd: Long before the Kurdish rebellion the United Nations put it to the world that it thought that in the aftermath of the Gulf war there was likely to be a strong movement of refugees out of Iraq. That was foreseen. We provided a further £8 million, including £1 million to the United Nations disaster relief organisation, precisely for that purpose, not knowing then exactly when or where the movement would be or the numbers involved. It was a case of an international organisation foreseeing trouble, asking for help and getting help from us. That was long before the debate. The planning to deal with the immediate crisis began before the Easter weekend and has built up ever since. I was in touch with those concerned over the Easter weekend. The hon. Gentleman asked for a particular date, and I shall provide him with it.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The decisive action taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during the recess to send aid to Kurdish refugees as a damage control exercise and his further proposal to establish safe havens have been most welcome, but is it not a fact that there will be no safe haven for the Kurdish people or the minority peoples of Iraq so long as Saddam Hussein is in power? Will the Government send a message both to President Bush and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the effect that we expect whatever action, including military force, is necessary to secure safe havens and to remove Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Hurd: Those are two distinct questions and I have already answered the first. If the United Nations, under the terms used in the Security Council resolution 688, is insisting on Iraqi co-operation in the humanitarian effort —about the need for which there can be no possible doubt —the need to protect that operation for the benefit of the helpers and the helped, should it be frustrated or harassed, is clear.

No one who followed not just what President Bush said but what my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) or the present Prime Minister said could have been led to believe at any stage that it was part of our purpose to change the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Is not the cause of this vast tragedy quite clear? Is it not entirely due to the wicked and continuous persecution of his own people by Saddam Hussein? Is it not the case that we already have the authority of the Security Council in its resolution 688 to take action to stop Saddam Hussein from persecuting his own people? That authority is in the text of the resolution and it calls upon him to cease immediately the persecution of the people of Iraq. Does not that resolution come under the mandatory chapter 7 of the Security Council? Is there not a moral obligation on Britain and other nations to undertake such actions as are necessary to stop Saddam Hussein's persecution of his own people?

Mr. Hurd: That is precisely what we are doing within the terms of that resolution. We are bringing into effect a humanitarian effort in circumstances which I think are unprecedented in the history of the United Nations. That is happening under terms and phrases of insistence which are, I suspect, although I have not done all the research, unique. That effort needs to proceed and if it does so without harassment or interference by the Iraqis, over time the Kurds—although not just the Kurds because the Opposition are right in believing that it goes further than them—will have the confidence to return to their homes. If that effort is harassed and frustrated, those Kurds will not return and the Security Council has a responsibility, which we have fully emphasised for some time, under resolution 688 to ensure that that effort succeeds.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to those already given by my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends on his initiatives. The House will welcome what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary just said in response to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on the availability of air cover. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new mood of co-operation between the permanent members of the Security Council has given an opportunity for promoting the role of the United Nations, as first shown by resolution 688, in dealing with cases of genocide or near genocide in cases such as this? Will my right hon. Friend persevere with his triple policy of humanitarian aid to the Kurds, sanctuary for the Kurds, and economic pressure on Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his succinct analysis of the situation and the policy. The United Nations faces a difficult and crucial test. It has passed the test of reversing aggression. Very few in this House were in any doubt about the need to pass that test, nor about the effectiveness, speed and skill with which it was done. Such action was necessary and was done well. Now we face a more difficult problem, which we have been discussing for the past half an hour. It represents a more complicated test to the United Nations, but, in my view, it is just as important as the first test.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): As resolution 688 has been breached in every particular from the moment it was passed, and since President Bush has made it clear that he does not intend to put United States forces on the ground in Iraqi Kurdistan but will give air protection north of the 36th parallel, is it not the duty of the Security Council to pass a resolution for a UN peacekeeping force so as to provide a haven in Iraqi Kurdistan? If it is to be vetoed, let the world see which countries are prepared to veto or not to support such a resolution.

Mr. Hurd: I do not see any great advantage for the Kurds in putting forward a proposal of that kind at a time when and in circumstances in which it would not succeed. I do not think that the Kurds on the mountain tops would be powerfully impressed by that.

The right hon. Gentleman will have noted the phrases used by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister under questioning on this point yesterday. I have given a rather careful amplification of them in what I said to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). No one who has studied what we have said can be in any doubt about our firmness in the matter.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend and his Department have had ample notice concerning the specific case of a constituent of mine—a British-born constituent and her children—whose Iraqi

[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]

husband is in Sufwan camp and has applied to join his wife in the United Kingdom. What specific steps in which my right hon. Friend has confidence are being taken on a continuing basis to safeguard this man personally until the resolution of the question whether he is to be admitted to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and glad to be able to tell him that we have now authorised a visa allowing Mr. Jarah to enter this country.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): To pursue the long-term aim that the Secretary of State mentioned—that the Kurds should return home—has his Department evaluated the possibilities of that happening in anything less than the longer and longer term? For example, what conditions would have to be obtained from Baghdad before that could happen? What worries me is that I do not see it happening.

Mr. Hurd: The best way for it to happen is that the United Nations presence which has already begun and which is rather stronger partly because of our insistence should build up fast and solidly in the north of Iraq in and around the Kurdish homes, and that that presence should be so robust that the Kurds do not have to rely simply on assurances, which they already have from Baghdad, but can hear reports from their homes that it is safe to return. We are nowhere near that, but it is a resonable objective which lay at the heart of my right hon. Friend's proposal.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I welcome the vigorous response by the Government to the Kurdish crisis, but will my right hon. Friend remember that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is desperately short of cash to deal with refugee problems in all parts of the world? Can he assure me that the extra money being devoted to Kurdish relief will not result in a diversion of funds from refugee relief efforts in other parts of the world?

Mr. Hurd: That point was powerfully put to me by representatives of the relief agencies who came to see me this morning. It is obviously important, especially because of the tragic needs in Africa, that the requirements not only of refugee work but of all relief agencies should not suffer because of what is happening in Iraq. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is making an announcement today about extra help for Africa——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Where is she?

Mr. Hurd: She is joining in the opening of the new bank for eastern Europe, but she will make an announcement today about fresh help for Africa. My hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), the Minister of State, is just about now in the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels emphasising the importance of the Community responding in the way that my hon. Friend requests.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): The Secretary of State speaks about people feeling secure, but they will feel secure only when the killing stops because the killing is the cause of the refugee flood. The Secretary of State implied that the Government and President Bush's Government would use air supremacy in the event of harassment of the international relief effort. Will they apply the same equation and tell Saddam Hussein that air supremacy will be employed if the killing does not stop?

Mr. Hurd: When we discuss this area, we are talking about the military capability of the United States, and the hon. Gentleman should be aware of that. If the hon. Gentleman has studied what the Americans have said on this matter, he will know that it goes a long way. I am not authorised to add to that warning, but, as I said when reporting on my conversation with Mr. Baker on Saturday, the Americans clearly intend the warning to be taken seriously.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scale of the problem of refugees from Iraq in Turkey and especially in Iran suggests that the problem will remain for a long time? Can he say more about the co-operation that we can extend to both countries, both bilaterally and through the United Nations?

Mr. Hurd: We are in close touch with the Turks. The Turkish Prime Minister is in London today and has been speaking to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. We are aware of Turkey's difficulties and we shall do our best, as part of the international effort, to build up Turkey's effectiveness and capability to the extent to which the Turkish Government feel the need. Our contacts with Iran have recently been less close than before for reasons which the House knows all about. Iran has a bigger refugee problem, and that is why I am anxious that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, on her visit to the area later this week, should visit Tehran as well as the frontier areas, as the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has done.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Although there are good reasons, which I accept, why the allies did not proceed into Baghdad and finish the job which undoubtedly a large majority of British people wanted to see finished, does the Foreign Secretary agree that as long as Saddam Hussein and his murderous cronies remain in power there will be no peace or security in the region in accordance with Security Council resolution 678? Is he aware of the great strength of feeling in the country and in the House, not only about the horrifying stories in the press and on television about starving men and babies in arms, but about the continuing crimes and atrocities being committed in Iraq by Saddam Hussein's thugs? Is it not time that the allies made it perfectly clear that, if these crimes and atrocities continue, military action, which is provided by Security Council resolutions, will be taken? Surely the world cannot remain indifferent to what is happening in the area.

Mr. Hurd: There is no indifference, and I hope that what I and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have said shows that. There is no indifference here, in Europe or in the United States, which, of course, carries and will continue to carry the lion's share of the responsibility. The hon. Gentleman should be aware of that.

Perhaps I could amplify my answer to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who asked about the first relief supplies. Eighty tons of relief supplies were flown to Turkey on 5 April, and they were the first airlifted supplies from any country to arrive in Turkey for the Kurds.

Sir Richard Luce (Shoreham): Does not this Kurdish tragedy highlight the fact that there is no sensible long-term solution to such tragedies by the provision of homes in other countries and permanent refugee camps but that the answer lies in the countries of origin where the tragedies are created? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential for the United Nations to take a far more robust line on the gross abuse of minorities, in this case in Iraq, by the continued imposition of sanctions until the problem is solved?

Mr. Hurd: That is the third point of the plan which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister outlined in Luxembourg last week. I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): How many people have already died as a result of disease, starvation and our failure and that of the United Nations to bring adequate relief to the Kurdish people? Does the Secretary of State not see that, however worthy may be the efforts made so far, they are absolutely inadequate to meet the awful need that we see every night on our television screens?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that the efforts are not yet enough, but they are being intensified and multiplied. The Kurds need food, clean water, tents, blankets and basic medical care, particularly for women and children. It is not a question of sophisticated surgical equipment or other things that have been needed as a result of earthquakes and other emergencies in the past. It is important that precious time and precious money are concentrated on what is needed and not on extras. I cannot answer the hon. and learned Gentleman's question about how many people have died.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend rightly listed the basic necessities that must reach these poor, wretched people. We see every night on television that the law of the jungle prevails. The strongest get there first; they get the most and the weak are left on the sidelines. What steps have been taken to formulate a control, co-ordination and command structure? Even when supplies arrive in quantity, they are of no use unless they reach the people and unless priorities are established by someone on the ground.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is absolutely on the point. It is virtually impossible to provide an orderly distribution of help on the tops of mountains. That is why, temporarily, some refugees are, quite rightly, being allowed into Turkey and Iran where it is possible to help them in a more orderly fashion. In Turkey, aid is being organised by the Turks and the Americans; in Iran, it is being organised by the Iranians, the Red Cross and, I hope, increasingly by the United Nations. Although those are not the best answers, they are necessary answers. The real answer is to enable and encourage the refugees to go home and to provide effective and secure help for them there. My hon. Friend is right to say that it is a matter not simply of getting the supplies to them but of distributing those supplies in a reasonably orderly and fair manner.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Does the Secretary of State agree that, having more than tacitly encouraged the Kurdish uprising, the international community has a real responsibility to the Kurds? Is it not all the more urgent and essential that there be United Nations intervention, under the UN convention on genocide, to prevent genocide from continuing?

Mr. Hurd: I answered fully a similar question put by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and have nothing to add.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): How long can we and other Governments pick up the tab for a humanitarian problem that Saddam Hussein would dearly love to export? Will the Government continue to insist that sanctuaries in Turkey and Iran are no substitute for safe havens in Iraq, and that a return to their homelands must be by supervision rather than intervention? Once the principle of the inviolacy of sovereign nations is breached, we are all lost.

Mr. Hurd: I follow my hon. Friend's point. We are encouraging the United Nations to take action that is virtually—perhaps wholly—unique in its history: to mount a huge international relief operation as urgently as possible in a country like Iraq, insisting on co-operation and ensuring that that effort is not harassed or frustrated. That is the right way to reconcile the two considerations that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Secretary of State aware that many in this country who believed that the only way to bring peace and security to the middle east was the overthrow of Saddam Hussein now believe that, having encouraged the uprising of the Kurds and others against Saddam Hussein, President Bush, not to mention the Prime Minister, is now acting like Pontius Pilate and something realistic should be done? How much of the £29 million aid from this country is reaching the Kurds? Is it not a fact that the money is going into a pool to help all those who suffered in the Gulf war?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member used the word "realistic". I hope that what I have said about what we are doing is realistic. Some of the other suggestions are unrealistic. We have to be, and are being, vigorous and energetic on this matter, and the outline that I have given to the House shows that.

There is a problem of supply and distribution in terms of the aid given, but, certainly in Turkey, we are increasingly looking to buying local food rather than shipping food from here. That would now be a good deal more effective. We want to get the supplies in effectively by air drop and, increasingly, by helicopter, because that is more sensible in terms of orderly distribution, not just to the Kurds, but to all people in distress in Iraq, including Shias in the south. We are not talking exclusively about the suffering of Kurds because others are also suffering.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is not the crux of the problem the fact that the dictator of Iraq is a wicked and bloodthirsty tyrant and that as long as he remains the policy of the violent repression of the minorities will continue, and no guarantees offered by any Iraqi Government are worth anything? What can be done about getting rid of Saddam Hussein?

Mr. Hurd: The suggestion is sometimes made that, instead of bringing the war to an end, we should have marched on Baghdad and overthrown Saddam Hussein. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) nods in agreement. The House should consider the ramifications

[Mr. Hurd]

of that suggestion and consider why neither the previous Prime Minister or the present Prime Minister nor President Bush has ever endorsed that aim. One would have not simply to overthrow Saddam Hussein but to choose, implant and sustain a successor, month after month, year after year. That is what I mean by being realistic.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the immense revulsion and groundswell of opinion in this country arises, not only because of the terrible tragedies portrayed on television screens, but because the British people, like the Kurdish and Shia people, read President Bush's lips when he said that the people of Iraq must rise and oppose President Hussein? Having willed the means and that means having failed, does the Foreign Secretary realise that we now expect the coalition to pursue the freedom and protection of the Kurds and Shias with the same resolution as the liberation of Kuwait was fought for?

Mr. Hurd: I described what the British Government are doing, and the record of the House and the Library contain what British Ministers have said about our aims and objectives throughout the affair. No one could seriously accuse us of lack of energy, realism or will, either in the earlier phase or in what we are doing now.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is at least possible that the Shias and Kurds were encouraged to take up arms against the Iraqi Government by the words used by the western leaders? Would it not be truly dreadful if they were encouraged to fight on by vague talk about the use of force on their behalf when President Bush has already said that the forces of the United States will not engage in a civil war in Iraq?

Mr. Hurd: The President said that, and he also said, as I quoted in my statement:

"We will not tolerate any interference in this massive international relief effort".

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Will the Foreign Secretary tell us exactly how much aid the United Kingdom has given in terms of pounds, not ecus? How much do we intend to give, and how much did we spend on the war? How many aircraft and helicopters have we mobilised for a relief operation, and how many did we mobilise during the war?

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced, the sum involved is £20 million, of which £12 million will go through the EC as a result of the decisions taken last week. The remaining £8 million will be reserved for the direct British help, including help to our own non-governmental organisations. I hope that our agencies will apply for help through contributions from the European Commission in Brussels. I can give the other figures for which the hon. Lady asked, but not without notice. I hope that she is not implying that there has been any falling away of vigour. That is not borne out by the facts and figures that I have given or by the plans that I have announced.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): In view of the mood of the House, and in view of what I am about to say, may I remind my right hon. Friend that I spent nine months in Kirkuk and Kurdistan in the last war, and that I like and admire the Kurds? If I read the mood of the House right, it wants military intervention by our forces. I believe that that would be wrong and dangerous. I am worried that some of those who call loudest for military intervention are those who would deny us proper arms to defend ourselves.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend advances a robust argument that I have not been making in those terms. Before some hon. Members put forward plans—sometimes rather grandiose ones—for the future government of Iraq, I urge the House to consider the realities and to ask itself who would carry out such plans.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Does the Secretary of State accept that there is no simple and comprehensive solution to the tragedy, and that certainly military action in Iraq is not such a solution? As it is clear that our priority must be to reduce the dying of babies, their mothers and others in the mountains, is not the best short-term, practical solution—albeit not a very satisfactory one—to encourage Iran and Turkey, perhaps through bribes and inducements, to allow many more people to come down from the mountains so that they can be supported in less hostile climatic circumstances?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman puts it entirely right. That is an immediate necessity, and one that we have been urging on the Turks. The Iranians have allowed their border to be open fairly consistently. As the hon. Gentleman would concede, however, it is not the right long-term answer. That answer is to enable the Kurds to return to their homes in safety.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I greatly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, having argued in the House two weeks ago that we should be dropping aid to the Kurds. Is it not a fact that great responsibility lies with the Americans, who incited through a CIA-promoting radio station the Shias and the Kurds to revolt? Is it not a fact that history will relate that, while President Bush fiddled, Kurdistan burnt?

Mr. Hurd: I am not answering for the sort of activities, or allegations and suggestions relating to them, to which my hon. Friend refers. What we have said about the internal situation—what my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) said when she was in charge of the Government and what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said since then—is on the record. I do not believe that the remarks of my right hon. Friends and others bear the sort of construction that is sometimes rather loosely put upon them.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Does the Secretary of State agree that, while in the long term the only solution is the establishment of a form of homeland for the Kurdish people, the immediate and overriding priority is to get the Kurdish people off the mountains? As the Turkish Prime Minister is now in Britain, will the right hon. Gentleman assure me that the Prime Minister will ask him, the Turkish Prime Minister, to consider whether his country could do more, despite the difficulties that it is undergoing, and open its borders and so let the people off the

mountains so that the humanitarian aid that is going to them can be organised properly to ensure that it reaches those in need?

Mr. Hurd: That is precisely the course of the conversation which my right hon. Friend had with the Turkish Prime Minister today.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the tremendous efforts made by the British Government to bring immediate help to the Kurdish and other people are widely recognised and that he does not need to feel in the least defensive about what we have done so far or what we intend to do? Does he agree that to talk about Kurdistan as we heard the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) do on television at lunchtime—which was not at all what her boss said in the House a few moments ago—is extremely dangerous? Trying to carve up the areas of the middle east on supposed tribal lines in the conference halls and chambers of the west is exactly what we did 70 years ago and has resulted in a great deal of unhappiness since.

Mr. Hurd: The countries of the area disagree about most things, but they are all clear about one thing—the need not to meddle with frontiers. But within frontiers it is entirely reasonable and right, as I said on 13 March in the House, that the Kurds should enjoy autonomy and decent respect for their way of life. That is our view and that must be the long-term aim.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Did not the Government go along with President Bush when he argued for revolt within Iraq? Was not part of the problem caused, as General Schwarzkopf said, by our being suckered into allowing Iraq to use helicopters? Will the British Government press the American Government to make a clear and concise statement that any aircraft used by the Iraqis to harass the refugees or those bringing them aid will be shot down? What discussions has the Secretary of State had with adjoining territories such as Turkey, which have their own Kurdish problems, to ensure that the refugees can be accommodated and that those problems do not stop aid to those who are dying?

Mr. Hurd: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I have referred in careful terms to the emphasis which Mr. Secretary Baker placed when I spoke to him on Saturday on the warnings which the United States has made about Iraqi military activity. I refer the hon. Gentleman to that. On his second point, he is right. Of course, both Iran and Turkey include large numbers of Kurds and at various times in the past have had substantial reservations and difficulties as a result of that. But to do both the Turkish and Iranian Governments justice, they are not letting those sensitivities get in the way of help. We are urging them in that direction—certainly the Turks. When the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), goes to Iran, no doubt she will do the same.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Why is the distribution of aid so haphazard that loads are thrown at people in masses, as we see on television? Can something be done to underline what my right hon. Friend said to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) about securing orderly distribution so that we do not see simply survival of the fittest and the law of the jungle operating?

Mr. Hurd: Dropping food or anything else in large pallets from fixed-wing aircraft is an unsatisfactory way of getting relief through. The only thing to be said for it is that it is quick. If there are no roads to the mountain tops and no places where helicopters can land, it is the only way of getting supplies through quickly. However, it is imperfect. It is not the best way. It produces the hazards and sometimes tragedies to which my hon. Friend refers. That is why the Americans on a larger scale and we on a substantial scale are building up the helicopter effort, which enables much better distribution.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I had hoped to be able to call all hon. Members, but I think that I shall not now be able to do so. I shall call three more from each side and then we must move on as we have a busy day ahead of us and a prayer this evening which must end at 11.30 pm.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The Foreign Secretary must be aware that the British people are appalled that the so-called liberation of Kuwait has unfolded into the massive tragedy that we now see on our screens every evening. Compared to the vigour with which the Government pursued the liberation of Kuwait, their commitment to the refugees can only be described as relative inertia.

The right hon. Gentleman, in his statement, mentioned Iran. Many thousands of refugees are moving towards Iran and I have a constituent whose entire family are there. They have been turned away from the British embassy when trying to make contact with their relatives here in Britain. What undertakings can the Secretary of State give about arrangements that will be made in Iran not merely so that one visa may be granted but to allow refugees with families in Britain to contact them and to ensure that the proper relief structures are put in place there?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know why the hon. Lady talks about the "so-called" liberation of Kuwait. That demonstrates a cast of mind that somewhat clouds her judgment on the rest. I do not believe that what this country has been doing to get the relief effort going could conceivably be called inertia since we were first in the field and are perhaps pressing for the build-up of the international effort more energetically than anyone else.

If the hon. Lady will give me the details of the case that she mentioned I shall look into it. At present the embassy in Tehran does not issue visas.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): Notwithstanding the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), can he confirm that this uprising is only the latest in many by the Kurds in response to their demands for self-determination, which was promised to them by the great powers after the first world war, under the treaty of Sèvres in 1920? As long as the rest of the world continues to ignore that demand for self-determination, there will always be such uprisings, which will be brutally put down. Will he ensure that that matter, along with self-determination for the Palestinians, is sought to be resolved in the wake of the outcome of the Gulf war?

Mr. Hurd: The Kurdish leaders who came to see my right hon. Friend at No. 10 Downing street last week were clear that their demand was for autonomy within Iraq. That seems to me to be an entirely reasonable aim for them and one that we can certainly support.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Why should the Kurds, the Shias or any other oppressed people trust western Governments, especially this Government and the Bush Administration, ever again? Clearly they were asked to rise up against a brutal dictator and, having put their trust in Governments—which I would not have done—perhaps bemused by the poetic phrases about the rights of small nations, they have been betrayed. Why are a million people on the borders of Turkey and Iran worth £20 million when a million people oppressed by the same Government in Kuwait were worth £3,000 million? That is the difference between the amount of aid to the Kurdish people and the money spent on the war in Kuwait.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member would have left Kuwait under Saddam Hussein's rule. I cannot think why that would have been of any advantage to the Kurds.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): My right hon. Friend has properly laid emphasis upon the importance of getting the Kurds back to their homes. Is not the key to that a guarantee that when they get there they will be able to live in safety? Is not the message coming through to my right hon. Friend from the House and from outside that the United Nations, which could send peacekeeping forces to do that, is being less than robust in attempting to do so?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) also put that point to me, and I answered it in terms that I consider to be realistic. I followed carefully my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's words on television yesterday. I do not exclude the possibility of such an answer any more than he did, but I know that it would not succeed now.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Foreign Secretary recall that, during our debate on 21 January after hostilities had begun, I urged him to set up two working parties? The first would review the objectives and operations of the United Nations to take advantage of the new circumstances following the end of the cold war; the second would examine the organisation of the relief and rehabilitation that would certainly be required when hostilities ended. The right hon. Gentleman may also recall that I sent a letter backing up what I had said with further suggestions, to which he gave what I would call a typically Foreign Office reply. What specific action did he take?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's first suggestion lies outside the terms of my statement. I have already answered his second point: the United Nations disaster relief organisation anticipated—and asked member states to anticipate, and contribute accordingly—a movement of refugees out of Iraq after the war, and we have contributed.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): If no direct action is taken against Saddam Hussein following what has happened to the Kurdish people, we can only conclude that no act is barbaric enough for the international community to intervene, provided that it is inflicted by a Government on their own peopole. Is not the logical conclusion of such thinking that the only crime committed by Hitler that justified intervention was his failure to restrict the slaughter of Jews to his own countrymen?

Although I understand the logic of the position that the Government have adopted, constituents whom I have met over the past two weeks have not understood it, and I for one am at a loss to explain it to them.

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is suggesting that his constituents who served in the Gulf should now be on duty in Baghdad, but that is the implication of what he has said. I rather agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes).

There is no doubt about the indignation that is felt about the suffering of the Kurds, or about the importance of mounting an effective operation—not just dropping food, but ensuring that relief is protected and that the Kurds will eventually be able to return to their homes. That, surely, is a realistic course on which the international community is agreed, as is shown by, in particular, resolutions 687 and 688.

If, however, that course were frustrated and did not succeed—as I have made clear in answer to several questions—a different position would arise, and the Security Council would have to address it. If my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) is suggesting that we should now put our troops into Baghdad and install a new ruler—or that we should have done so in the past, and should now be sustaining that new ruler—he is verging on what I, perhaps with a good many other people in this country, regard as unrealistic territory.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I have just returned from a five-day visit to Iran and Iraq. I have seen for myself the most abject misery—misery that I had not believed possible. The scenes are indescribable. I saw a 60 km line of cars stuck on a hilltop, where they have been for more than 11 days waiting to cross the border to Iran. Those who have managed to cross the border, however, are still experiencing dreadful conditions. They are at the top of a mountain about the same height as Snowdon, in winter conditions—freezing at night and bitterly cold during the day—and without proper cover. The makeshift tents that they have constructed are made of the thinnest plastic, the kind in which clothes are returned from the cleaners. It is entirely impracticable as a protection from the weather.

Mothers who have crossed the border to Iran are trying to shelter their children. A mother with a baby in her arms came up and asked me to take it to hospital: it was cold, blue and clearly going to die. I had to turn away because there were hundreds of others in the same condition. I saw the food deliveries. We have seen pictures of that on television. It is exactly like that. Desperate people are scrabbling for food. Again, that is on the Iranian side of the border. On the other side of the border, people have managed to bring in some supplies—those who are lucky enough to have some form of transport. Others have no means of transport. Barefoot, they have walked many long miles—taking over 10 days perhaps to walk to the border. Some of the women are wearing totally inadequate clothes. They look as though they have come straight out of their homes, without any protection. When I went there with a group of diplomats, including ambassadors, who had witnessed scenes of famine, flood and earthquake all over

the world, they said that never before had they seen such scenes. The same is true of the aid workers whom I met there.

I saw no signs of British aid on the Iran side of the border. That aid may have gone to Turkey, but it certainly had not gone to Iran. I asked many reporters in the area, but they said the same—that there was no evidence of British aid. The only aeroplane that I saw on the airfield was a Russian aeroplane.

I raised the matter in the House before the Easter recess and asked what the Government proposed to do at that time about distributing humanitarian aid to the whole of Iraq. We have, as the Foreign Secretary knows, the statement of the United Nations team that has been into Iraq. The team described is as a catastrophe and set out the need for medicine, food and clothes.

The Red Crescent in Iran, with whose director I spoke early last week, has managed to cope so far with the enormous influx of refugees. The situation is obviously much worse in Iran—a point that I stressed to the Foreign Secretary—because 1 million people have already crossed the border and the estimate is that another 1 million people may be trying to get across the border. Iran, therefore, desperately needs help. The Red Crescent in Iran says that is has come to the end of its tether. It has had experience of dealing with earthquakes and the Iran-Iraq war. To some extent, they were prepared, in that they had camps close to the border and a certain number of tents. When the Red Crescent asked the Save the Children Fund for help—a group of its representatives was present when I spoke to the director of the Red Crescent—it asked particularly for tents but it was told by the Save the Children Fund that it did not have in the United Kingdom a supply of tents in the numbers needed. What they need most of all are tents, clothing, powdered milk for the babies, food and teams of doctors and nurses.

I saw a French team of 150 doctors from Medecins Sans Frontieres, which is well known to everyone, and asked why such an organisation can get a group of doctors quickly into a disaster area while we, who have faced similar tragedies in many parts of the world, cannot. I met the French aid Minister who had been in the area for six days. He felt desperate about the situation and said that he was going back to report to President Mitterrand in Paris.

I urge the Government to give particular attention to the needs of Iran, which has coped very well so far, but it cannot do so any longer. The governor of west Azerbaijan, where the main bulk of the refugees are going, said that 80 per cent. of the refugees were in hospitals in his province and that 800 emergency surgical operations have been carried out on the refugees. Injured people are still to be found on both sides of the border.

On Saturday I travelled about 40 miles into Iraq. I heard the shelling coming from Sulaymaniyah, which at present is held by Iraqi troops. The shells were aimed at Kurdish fighters on the hillsides surrounding the town.

I spoke to the main Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, in his headquarters, hidden away in the hills. He said that, although he was grateful for any suggestions as to how the desperate situation in which Iraq finds itself might be solved, he could not understand why the international community, if it were prepared to offer safe havens within Kurdistan, could not make the whole of Iraqi Kurdistan a safe haven for the Kurds. That is a matter that will have to be addressed. Talabani said that he was not in favour of safe havens, as such areas would be surrounded by areas of hostility. He is in favour of a political solution that will enable the Kurdish people to live in peace in their own country. As the Foreign Secretary has said, what the Kurdish people want is autonomy within Iraq. That is the very least that the international community should aim to provide.

The situation is desperate, both for the Kurds and for the Shias. There are United Nations resolutions under which the international community could take action. I appeal to the Government to do everything in their power to deal with the situation, including the provision of aid on a vastly increased scale. I am not convinced that aid has been provided on anything like the necessary scale. Most of all, I appeal to the Foreign Secretary to aim for a political solution to the dreadful situation in which the Kurdish and Shi'ite people find themselves. Saddam Hussein is still killing, killing, killing, in Iraq. This is genocide, and it calls for an international response.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has drawn on her memories of the immediate past. At the meeting that I had this morning, there were three or four other people, including Dr. Barrow of the Overseas Development Administration, who had recently returned —some of them last night—from various parts of the area, and whose vivid recollections bear out entirely what the hon. Lady has just said. The House will have found no hint of exaggeration in her description of what she witnessed.

It is certainly true that the help that we have been providing on an increasing scale has gone overwhelmingly to the Turkish side of the border. However—and I said this before the hon. Lady asked me to do so—it is clear that, in terms of size, the greater problem arises on the Iranian side. It may have been since the hon. Lady's departure that we flew the first supplies directly to Iran. We shall continue to provide supplies.

The problem is how to get them up to the area where they are needed. Just before coming to the House, I saw a telegram to the effect that the closest airport is too small to receive aeroplanes of the type needed to carry them. Indeed, some planes have had to be turned away and sent to Tehran, which is hundreds of kilometres away.

These are the problems with which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, who is now in Iran, is wrestling. The focus of the international effort —without our ceasing to build up on the Turkish side— will increasingly have to be Iran and the problems that the hon. Lady has described. She referred to people sitting miserable in cars—some of them dying. That reflects completely other comments that I heard this morning.

On the political side, I cannot sensibly add to what I have said already. The objective that the hon. Lady heard voiced by the Kurdish leader is the one that was explained to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he met similar Kurdish leaders in London last week. That must be the right objective, and it can be achieved only by steady steps. I repeat that the first steps must involve efforts to prevent people from dying on the tops of mountains; the second must be to get people—immediately, if possible —into Turkey and Iran; the third must be to enable them to return to their homes. That will require not just the provision of aid but United Nations action that has not previously had to be taken in this form. I refer to the need to ensure that people may return home in safety and confidence.

[Mr. Hurd]

The Government will take seriously the points that have been made during these exchanges not least those raised by the hon. Lady.

Mr. Speaker: I shall ensure that hon. Members who were not called to put questions on this statement are given some priority when we next return to the subject.

Question Time

4.42 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that, by comparison with the subject that we have just been discussing, this is a very small point.

When the Minister for the Arts was answering questions today he made a remark which, on the face of it —though I am sure it was not intended—could be misleading. On the subject of the London borough grant committee, he said that Labour and the Liberal Democrats had a majority. That is true, but the budget requires a two-thirds majority vote, and it is Conservative members who are blocking the resolution——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be responsible for adjudicating on the accuracy of answers that are given in the House. The hon. Gentleman must find another opportunity to raise this matter. It is not one for me.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 351) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Local Authorities Etc. (Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 397) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service Trusts (Consultation before Establishment) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 358) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service Training Authority (Abolition) Order 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 327) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That the Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 2/90, relating to management and control of export refunds, and European Community Documents Nos. 4549/91, relating to the development and future of the Common Agricultural Policy, and 5032/91 Add I to III, relating to the prices for agricultural products and related measures (1991-92), shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Export and Investment Guarantees Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

4.44 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to my point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not see how there can be anything further to be said about the matter. As I have said already, it has nothing to do with me. I do not know whether what the Minister said was right or wrong.

Mr. Hughes: It is a procedural point, Mr. Speaker. Such matters have often been raised with you. My understanding is that a point of order relating to questions may be taken immediately after Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that if something disorderly has occurred during Question Time, that is the point at which it should be raised. However, it is not disorderly to disagree with an answer.

New Clause 1

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

"The Secretary of State shall make arrangements to ensure that ECGD's services to developing countries are effected in coordination with the services offered by all other government departments or agencies involved in assisting developing countries or in assisting British firms to supply goods or services to developing countries.'.—*[Ms. Quin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause introduces into the debate on this legislation an element that was not really covered at the Committee stage. We are concerned about how the ECGD's services will fit into the overall trade and aid arrangements between the United Kingdom and developing countries. It has been pointed out to me that the equivalents of the ECGD in many developing countries are involved more closely in co-ordinating facilities for the promotion of trade and aid. A number of west European and other developed countries have state facilities to assist their industry to identify, and to develop involvement as technical partners in, sources of know-how and technology in projects in developing countries. Such projects often lead to opportunities for funding and for the supply of goods and services. There are such business development facilities in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, France, Finland, Ireland, Austria and Switzerland, as well as Japan and the United States of America. Business concluded via this system is very much in the national interest of the countries concerned and we believe that a similar approach by the United Kingdom would be in our national interest.

It is unfortunate that the Bill, in its present form, does not contain a provision that would enable the Secretary of State to make arrangements to give such guarantees as appear to him to be in the national interest, even though the original Act—the Export Guarantees and Overseas Investment Act 1978—does contain such a provision. For two reasons, the provisions of our new clause would be

very much in our national interest. They would certainly enable British industry to become involved at an early stage in business with developing countries. If British industry is not involved at an early stage, the way is open for other countries, and, because of their more co-ordinated structure, it is easier for them to become involved at an early stage.

Such an arrangement would be in the interests of developing countries, so the system proposed in new clause 1 would improve our aid and development efforts. It is important for Britain to avoid losing out in trade with developing countries. Similar considerations also apply to our trading relations with eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and to the use of ECGD in that context as we appear to be losing out to other countries because of our lacklustre approach. However, as new clause 1 is about developing countries, I shall resist the temptation to say too much about eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, although I believe that I have made an important point.

Using Indonesia as an example of a developing country, I shall quote part of an article which appeared in *The Independent on Sunday* on 31 March. It states:

"Her Majesty's Treasury moves in mysterious ways, as the Government of Indonesia will testify. In 1989"

our then Prime Minister

"was touring the Far East, vigorously waving the flag and helping British companies pick up business in Jakarta.

Because Indonesia is poor, the British Government lets it pay with low-interest loans called mixed credits, which are backed by the government export credit agency, ECGD.

An umbrella arrangement for such deals was due to expire on 30 November last year, so when two telecommunications contracts and one for railway refurbishment, worth £89 million between them, came close to signature, the Department of Trade, the exporters and the embassy in Jakarta put pressure on the Indonesian government to sign by the deadline.

It did, and then waited for the financing arrangements to be finalised—which would normally take about 10 days. It is still waiting. The exporters and their bankers are furious, for they see this delay, linked to the introduction of a new premium system, not only as potentially damaging to business in a fast-growing market, but also as a sign that the Treasury is yet again throwing spanners into the works of ECGD."

That example bears out the worthwhile nature of new clause 1 which envisages a system in which such delays would not occur.

I wonder whether the Minister has seen the interesting proposals by Mr. Andrew Brzozowski of the Commonwealth Development Corporation. He suggests a one-stop bureau, a British industries overseas projects development bureau, which would achieve the co-ordination for which we are asking and ensure that ECGD services were brought into a network that would operate efficiently for British industries in developing countries. I refer in particular to part of the paper by Mr. Brzozowski where he points out that a number of countries have one-stop project promotions offices run by multilateral aid organisations with national Government funding. There are no similar one-stop facilities in the United Kingdom, and the Commonwealth Development Corporation, and Mr. Brzozowski in particular, feel that the Government should consider such an approach. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's response. Such a network would aim to bring together potential United Kingdom know-how and technical partners to joint ventures in developing countries. It would draw attention to the finances available, including grants, concessional finance, export credits and commercial funding, and would provide a vehicle for assisting the development of a total United Kingdom response to major projects.

The Minister may remember that in Committee we referred to the example of an exporter who was interested in establishing a telecommunications project in Kenya but was unable to get export credit assistance from the ECGD. The Minister subsequently sent me an unsatisfactory reply which did not give any hope that such facilities would be available to that exporter in future. If there were a co-ordinated system, as we are suggesting in new clause 1, the chance of that exporter getting ECGD assistance would be improved and he would be aware of other sources of assistance. For example, he would be referred automatically to the Commonwealth Development Corporation. I understand that that would not be the case at present.

Many of our major industries would be interested in the system proposed in new clause 1. For instance, companies in the Export Group for Construction Industries are involved in many large-scale projects in developing countries and are well aware of the value of ECGD services. They want those services to continue and to be efficiently and effectively organised in future.

Perhaps I should make it clear that, although I am anxious that we benefit from project and trade opportunities in developing countries, nothing that I have said so far undermines our comments and the amendments that we tabled in Committee. We expressed concern about the scale of military exports and sought to ensure that any project in developing countries should comply with environmental safeguards. However, we believe strongly that an effective co-ordinated system would be a good way of organising future projects in developing countries.

The Minister may say that the new clause goes rather wide of the Bill. That would be a fair comment, but we seek some reassurance on how the system will work in future. We know that there have been some moves to co-ordinate the export services of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office recently, but our aim, and Labour party policy, is to ensure that all export promotion interests, including the Government and other agencies working with developing countries, are properly co-ordinated. For that and all the other reasons I have given, we hope that new clause 1 will get a sympathetic response from the Government.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I am certainly sympathetic to the objectives that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) set out. However, I fear that I will disappoint her by saying that, although I am sympathetic to her objectives, I cannot be as sympathetic to new clause 1. Perhaps she recognises that the legal and practical effects of new clause 1 are rather unclear. It is not at all clear to me or to any rational reader how it would attain its objectives. Another problem is that the hon. Lady's remarks seem to be based on an assumption that ECGD support is always helpful to a developing country.

In effect, ECGD support is another form of commercial loan. There is a real problem—although we wish that it did not exist—that when a country is unable to service its existing foreign debt, it does not seem helpful to add to its burden of indebtedness. Quite the opposite. The hon. Lady

[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

used Kenya as an example. That country has a problem servicing its existing debt burden. In those circumstances, it is more appropriate to give aid in another form.

Having said that, I assure the hon. Lady that we are conscious of the importance of co-ordinating the Whitehall machinery for aid and the activities of ECGD in respect of trade. Machinery exists for co-ordinating those activities with those of other Departments concerned with developing countries and third world development. We should not fall into the trap of confusing the role of the ECGD with that of the ODA. The ECGD's function is not to provide assistance to overseas countries, but to encourage British exports by providing services to industry here. We recognise that there is a need to co-ordinate ECGD's activities with those of the ODA and of the DTI and I assure the hon. Lady that machinery exists for that purpose.

First, in respect of export projects assisted by the aid and trade provision, for which ECGD cover for the related commercial export credit is a normal pre-requisite, long-standing procedures exist which ensure that the interests of ECGD, the ODA and the DTI are effectively co-ordinated.

Secondly, in respect of commercial export credits supported by the project group—I think that I am right to say that the hon. Lady referred broadly to commercial export credits—further machinery exists to ensure that the views of all interested Departments, which could include the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Treasury, are brought to bear in assessing the national interest case for giving cover.

5 pm

The hon. Lady will appreciate that national interest can encompass a wide range of factors—employment, security and diplomatic and trade factors. However, it can also include the developmental benefits to which she referred. A formal Whitehall committee of officials exists to co-ordinate the views of different Departments.

I said that I was sympathetic to the objectives of new clause 1, but the machinery for which it asks already exists. We would not wish to confuse the role of the ECGD with that of the ODA and we do not believe that it is helpful to add to the burden of debt of a country that already suffers severely from excessive debt. I cannot ask the House to accept the new clause, I urge hon. Members to reject it.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The Minister's answer is much less impressive than it should be, because he has merely outlined precisely the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). There is no co-ordination of the Government's activities. The Minister mentioned a range of Departments, all of which are dabbling and meddling in different respects with different functions and purposes. He said that it would be unkind and unfair to ask developing countries which already have a substantial burden of debt to incur even more. That is fine, but where does that leave an exporter who wishes to trade with Brazil, Mexico or Nigeria? My hon. Friend asks for systematic, publicly known and well co-ordinated arrangements to deal with precisely that issue.

My hon. Friend alluded to a key issue which concerns us all, which is that on the question of military exports, there is great confusion between the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry when it issues export licences, the ECGD and other Departments that might be involved. That is of great significance. We have heard a major statement in which co-ordination was one of the hidden themes which underpinned the discussion on that statement. The Minister merely said that a range of public and semi-public agencies such as the banks and others are engaged in this issue, but offered no assurance that they are co-ordinated, which is the purpose of the new clause.

Ms. Quin: The Minister said that he feared that his reply would disappoint me. I can at least say that he has been consistent, given his replies to the amendments that we tabled in Committee, where he was unwilling to accept the many excellent ideas that were suggested by my hon. Friends and I.

I am grateful for the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) because it reinforced the points that I made. Those points were made properly and related to the position of developing countries as well as to the need for British industry to be involved in those countries as much as possible.

I did not intend the new clause to increase the indebtedness or the debt burden of developing countries and I do not believe that it would do so. We merely sought to ensure that the ECGD is brought into an overall system of aid and trade assistance and that the machinery of government and the co-operation between the Government and other relevant agencies work smoothly and effectively. From the evidence that I have seen of the way in which many European countries do that, I believe that it is something we should at least consider in detail and decide whether we should alter the way in which we organise such matters. We believe that the interests of aid and those of British industry are not necessarily incompatible. Therefore, the two should work together as much as possible in pursuit of a variety of objectives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central referred to the debate on military exports and I referred to considerations of the environment, but those issues are not, in themselves, arguments against the co-ordinated system for which we ask. In many ways, they reinforce the request for such a system, because such considerations could be built into the system at an early stage. That would work in the long-term interests of us all.

I hope that the Minister will at least be prepared to examine closely the proposals to which I referred from the Commonwealth Development Corporation—which have been around for some time—and discuss with that organisation how the work of his Department on exports and on relations with developing countries could fit into its concerns. The new clause was devised not in a vacuum, but in response to difficulties that we know exist. Despite what the Minister said, we do not believe that the mechanisms exist to ensure that if an exporter does not receive ECGD cover for a project that he has in mind, he is automatically referred to other agencies which could assist him. There seem to be gaps in the system and exporters do not get the information that they would like. The information may not be available in sufficient quantity at a regional or local level. As the Minister knows, we raised in committee the

question of the desirability of proper regionalised services linking ECGD and other export services and a later amendment refers to a regionalised network.

We are aware of the gaps in the system which affect exporters and which can therefore lose valuable orders for this country and discourage exporters from trying to use the service in the future. We do not want a system that deters exports, but one that favours exports and their expansion in the future. Therefore, we do not apologise for raising this issue. We are disappointed by the Minister's response, but we shall not press the new clause to a Division.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 2

POLITICAL RISK REINSURANCE

'( )-(1)—The Secretary of States may make arrangements for insuring any person providing insurance with a view to facilitating, directly or indirectly, supplies by persons carrying on business in the United Kingdom of goods or services to persons carrying on business outside the United Kingdom against risks of losses resulting directly or indirectly from war, expropriation, restrictions on remittances and other similar events.

(2) Arrangements under this section will be made and would last at least for three years from the date of coming into force of a scheme made under section 8 of this Act. After such a minimum period, the arrangements will be subject to an annual review.

(3) References in subsection (1) above to a person carrying on business in the United Kingdom and to the insured include any company controlled directly or indirectly by him.'.—*[Ms. Quin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Quin: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 16.

Ms. Quin: The issues raised in new clause 2 and in the Government's amendment have emerged as the key concerns of exporters. The Government's approach to political risk reinsurance is the single most powerful reason why so many exporters distrust the Bill and distrust the Government's intentions for the future of the continuing ECGD and for the future of the insurance services group under a private owner.

All hon. Members have been lobbied about political risk reinsurance. They have been lobbied by firms in their own constituencies, by individual firms, by large firms, which may sub-contract to many smaller firms, and by associations of firms, such as the British Exporters Association, the London chamber of commerce and the British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Association.

I received today a letter from the president of the BEAMA, from which I shall quote. The letter is important and shows vividly the reactions of industry to the Government's approach on political risk reinsurance. In the letter, Sir Robert Davidson says:

"Industry has been concerned by the nature of this Bill right from the beginning. There is a real question mark over the willingness and ability of a private sector export insurance endeavour to provide the range and depth of cover after privatisation which exists at the moment through the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department. Whilst the Bill was in Committee, Members of the House raised this point specifically, and tabled an amendment which gave legislative guarantees that the Government would retain an involvement with the insurance or reinsurance of political risk for a period of at least three years after privatisation; this amendment was agreed by the Committee. This seemed the very least that could be done to allay the fears of Britain's exporters.

Yesterday the Government tabled an amendment which, if passed, would simply delete from the Bill the previous statement which guarantees this continued involvement. I find it extraordinary that the Government should choose to send this negative message to industry at a time of severe recession. Some £13 bn of the United Kingdom's £8 bn export business is currently underwritten by ECGD Cardiff, so uncertainty of the kind caused by this action has a potentially disastrous consequence for the confidence of Britain's exporters."

Those are strong statements from BEAMA, and they have been reinforced by many other firms and by many other commercial associations while the Bill was in Committee and in the few days before Report. The Government are winning no friends in industry by their attitude.

I am rather surprised to see so few Conservative Members in the Chamber at present given that it was a Conservative member of the Committee who tabled the original amendment. He received support from some of his colleagues, but unfortunately he did not receive support from the Government. I am surprised that the author of that amendment is not here, as he was a member of the Committee. Perhaps there is a good reason why he is not here to defend his proposal.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Lady has commented that few Conservative Members are present. Will she now turn round to see that even fewer Labour Members are present?

Ms. Quin: If the hon. Gentleman looks across the Chamber, he will see that all Labour Members who were members of the Committee are present.

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): And others.

Ms. Quin: Indeed. However, some of those who seemed most to support the original amendment, which the Government now seek to overturn, are not here to defend their stance in Committee. I know that many Conservative Members were pleased with the original amendment, which was passed in Committee with strong support from the Opposition, so we are rather surprised that so few of them seem to be prepared to defend the amendment, which is under threat from their own Government. All the Conservative Members who are not Ministers to whom I have spoken seem to favour the original amendment because they know that it was popular with exporters and with British industry, and they know the real difficulties that British exporters face at present.

The new clause is slightly stronger than the original amendment. However, to try to promote agreement throughout the House on the issue, it is not as strong as the amendment that we tabled in Committee in which we sought an open-ended Government commitment to provide political risk reinsurance facilities to the new privatised company. The new clause refers to reinsurance being available for three years and for it to be subject to an annual review after that. That goes some way towards meeting the Government's feelings on the issue. Given that the new clause fits in quite well with the original amendment, we hope that the Minister will accept it.

5.15 pm

On reflection, it may be even better to set up a rolling programme. I know that exporters are interested in the idea of a rolling programme to allow reinsurance facilities to continue fairly smoothly. That would also allow reinsurance facilities to be reviewed, rightly and properly, by the Government of the day in the light of the circumstances.

There is a clear difference of opinion between the Minister and almost the whole of British industry about whether it is likely that the private market will be able to take up the reinsurance business. The Government seem to feel that, after the magic period of three years, the private sector will have no difficulty in taking on the whole of the reinsurance facility that is presently provided by the Government. None the less, all exporters have told us that they fear that the private sector will not properly take up the facilities. Exporters are worried that at the end of three years they will be left high and dry. Will the Minister let us know a little about his discussions with exporters on the subject? Will he tell us whether any of them share the Government's optimism about the private market and reinsurance?

What are the Minister's current feelings about the three-year period which is on offer by the Government? Does he expect the amount of reinsurance provided by the Government to reduce systematically over the three years, or does he expect it to remain at current levels and suddenly to be cut off at the end of three years? Many people are worried about that. The Committee accepted the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and it commanded widespread support. It is disgraceful that the Government are trying to reverse that amendment today.

There seems to be a difference of view between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury on the issue of political risk reinsurance. Will the Minister enlighten us on the discussions between himself and his colleagues in the Treasury? It has been widely reported that there is considerable wrangling between the two Departments over the thorny issue of reinsurance. We want to know what the current state of play is, and whether there is proper agreement between the two Departments or whether disagreements continue to prevail.

Will the Minister tell us how much of a problem the lack of Government commitment to provide reinsurance is in the minds of the bidders for the ISG division of the ECGD? I imagine that all the bidders are anxious about the Government's commitment to provide political risk reinsurance. In Committee, I referred to the difference between the treatment of British exporters and the treatment of Dutch exporters if the Dutch company NCM were the successful bidder and if the British exporters with which it would deal via the privatised ISG did not have the access to reinsurance facilities that Dutch exporters dealing with the same company in Holland would have as a result of the Dutch Government's commitment. The Minister gave an astonishingly complacent reply—that there will always be differences in the export credit facilities offered by different countries. That will not tackle the problem of discrimination.

Are the other bidders concerned about the Government's policy on reinsurance? I understand that they are all concerned that the Government's commitment will be phased out within three years, with no guarantee thereafter. I should be surprised if they were not worried about the Government's intention to reverse the amendment agreed in Committee.

The Minister may say that there are technical or legal difficulties with the amendment that was passed in Committee—I understand that he said something along those lines to exporters—and if so we need a firm commitment, and preferably something in the Bill, to ensure that exporters know that some political risk reinsurance will be available after the three-year period. It would not be satisfactory if the Minister said, "There are technical difficulties and in any case we will phase out political risk reinsurance after three years."

The Government are optimistic that the private sector will take up the market, but, as far as I am aware, no one else is. The overwhelming majority of exporters who expressed their views to hon. Members highlighted that as their main concern. The Government's attitude is an acid test of their approach not only to exports but to our economic recovery generally.

Mr. Thurnham: I did not serve on the Committee and, although I do not wish to delay the House, I have been asked by a large engineering company in my constituency, Beloit Walmsley, which makes papermaking machinery, to make representations. In addition, a large steel construction company in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), Watson's, has also expressed concerns.

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will comment briefly on political risk reinsurance for four countries—Iran, Russia and China, which are of interest to Beloit Walmsley, and Indonesia, which is of particular interest to Watson's as it is negotiating a large contract there. Beloit Walmsley has received inquiries from Russia and China and an inquiry about an order worth between £175 million and £200 million from Iran. It would be pleased if the Government were to regard that major business opportunity as a unique case, rather than leaving it while a general review of arrangements is undertaken.

The inquiry is from the Karun Pulp and Paper company in Tehran, which is in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Given the developing relationship between Britain and Iran and the difficulties with Iraq and the fleeing Kurds, does my hon. Friend the Minister believe that we will have a more positive relationship with Iran? Adequate insurance for the inquiry would help to cement the relationship between Britain and Iran, to the benefit of both countries and particularly to employment in my constituency.

My constituents have pressed me to say that that case should be regarded as unique and not subject to review so that Beloit Walmsley can further its negotiations with Karun Pulp and Paper with the support of the Government. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will comment particularly on the possibility of that contract being treated as a unique case with which the Government can help, and in general on inquiries from Russia, China and Indonesia.

Mr. Cousins: The hon. Member for Bolton, North-West (Mr. Thurnham) went to the heart of the problem. The Government resemble one of the creatures in "The Adventures of Dr. Doolittle"—the Pushmi-pullyu, which tried to look the same at the front and the back and which faced in both directions. The hon. Gentleman gave a good

example of a Pushmi-pullyu at work. The face at the front, led by Ministers, is urging exporters to the Gulf to take on trading and commercial obligations with politically risky countries, but in the calm and comfort of Westminister the same Department is undoing provisions of the Bill that would offer exporters the assurance that they need—that they will be covered for their political risks. It is an extraordinary situation. The Government urge exporters to take on commercial obligations and do business with politically risky countries, but undermine the new clause and, by their amendment, negate the amendment that was moved in Committee by the coalition forces.

The Minister must consider his position. We can all bandy around the fact that in Committee and in this debate Labour Members have quoted the CBI to support their case, but the point is serious: the CBI's mind is made up and it regards the amendment that was passed in Committee as essential. It regards the guarantees that were given to exporters to politically risky countries as fundamental to the conduct of sound business and the expansion of British exports. The statement that it issued made it perfectly clear that it believes that the honour and integrity of Ministers' comments are on the line. It reminded its members—this point was made many times by members of the Committee—of the assurances that were given by the then Secretary of State when he announced the privatisation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in December 1989. He was clear that political risk reinsurance would be guaranteed for three years. That direct and explicit undertaking was given to the House and to the commercial world. The Government amendment undoes the worth and value of that. By so doing, it signals a lack of commitment to underpin commercial exports to politically risky countries, which will do considerable damage to the honour and reputation of the Government and to British business men and women in their work in other countries.

What will other countries make of this debate? What will they make of the assurances of a Government who try to undo the value of an undertaking that was given by a previous Secretary of State in December 1989?

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) successfully moved the amendment in Committee that the Government are now seeking to undo. He said that he hoped his hon. Friend the Minister would accept the amendment because it would constitute, to use his ringing phrase,

"the Sainsbury guarantee".

It is clear this afternoon that neither the Ridley guarantee given in December 1989 nor the Sainsbury guarantee, to which the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West drew attention when he moved his amendment, has been honoured. That is shameful and bad. It will go against the interests of British exporters at a time when they badly need Government assistance in seizing the opportunities that they now have in many politically risky situations round the world.

5.30 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: I start by sending a positive message to British exporters and emphasising the importance that the Government attach to promoting British exports and providing support to British exporters.

As I hope that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) recognises, it is necessary not just to say that we want to provide support, but to provide it sensibly, practically and realistically. It is insufficient to say that words in a Bill are adequate because the intention behind them is good. Her new clause 2 would not help exporters although I realise that that is her intention. We must recognise that her proposal would have statutory force. Similarly, clause 4(2), which amendment No. 16 would delete, would not be as helpful as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) intended.

The new clause and amendment deal with a complex aspect of export credit insurance. That may explain some of the misunderstandings about the national interest reinsurance facility that have arisen, and that, it is clear from our debate, regrettably still exist.

It is important that the House should recognise that these complex arrangements deal with the insurance and reinsurance arrangements for less than one half of 1 per cent. of Britain's non-oil visible exports. As of now, only the insurance and reinsurance arrangements for less than that tiny percentage would be the subject of what we seek to define as political risk reinsurance.

It may be helpful if I put the insurance arrangements for this small fraction of our exports in the context of the overall level of Government support for exporting. The promotion of British exports and the provision of support to exporters is an important part of the work of my Department. We are committed not just to maintaining that work but to constantly seeking ways to improve the service that we and other parts of Government provide to exporters.

Most recently, on 14 March I announced the merging of the export divisions of the Department of Trade and Industry and of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to form a new joint directorate, which will be responsible for the development of export promotion policy. It will improve the coherent and consistent delivery of export services. Exporters will now find that, whether they are seeking help from the regional office of the DTI or from a post overseas, the export promotion arms of both Departments will be operating under the name of Overseas Trade Services.

Overseas Trade Services will deploy more than 2,000 staff worldwide, all of whom will be committed to providing a wide range of advice, information and assistance to British firms seeking business overseas. Their help will extend to every stage of the exporting process —for example, in finding an export representative, in attending promotions and fairs overseas, in going on overseas missions, in providing export intelligence services about export opportunities, and in export marketing research schemes to look at the opportunities for a particular market for a particular product. A whole range of services will be available from the Overseas Trade Services arms of the DTI and FCO to help exporters.

The efforts of the DTI and FCO staff are supported by many others, most notably my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Like all other Ministers, he takes every opportunity to speak up for British goods and services and to promote British exports.

At overseas posts it is not just the staff who are committed full time to working for Overseas Trade Services—the commercial staff—who are involved in helping exporters. Throughout the world in all our overseas posts the head of the mission regards it as an important part of his task to look for opportunities to help British exporters, as do all his staff. In Britain, in addition to those whose full-time job is working in Overseas Trade

[Mr. Sainsbury]

Services, all the staff of the regional offices of the DTI regard helping exporters as part of their overall responsibility.

In addition, several other Departments, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment, the Department of Transport, the Department of Energy and the Ministry of Defence, through its Defence Export Services Organisation, provide help to the industries with which they are involved. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I receive valuable advice from the British Overseas Trade Board and its network of area advisory groups, which bring in expert advice on export opportunities from no fewer than 180 senior business men with a great deal of experience.

The support available to exporters through the ECGD's project group, which will remain in the public sector, is substantial.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I have been listening with great interest to everything that the Government and the Departments do to assist exporters and I congratulate them, but I am puzzled. If the political risk reinsurance is so insignificant as a percentage of our visible exports, why are the Confederation of British Industry and individual firms, as well as everybody who has written to me, kicking up such a fuss?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend raises a good point. Despite all the assistance, there is a great deal of misunderstanding. The remarks of the hon. Members for Gateshead, East and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), who has drifted from where he was a moment ago but who is still in the House, show that that confusion still exists. I am sure that my hon. Friend accepts that the manpower, time and resources committed to helping exporters are considerable. We are committed to continuing to provide that support as effectively as we possibly can.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) asked the Minister to explain why everybody except the Minister regards this approach as sensible and why only the Minister is convinced of the rightness of his course of action. Given the intense debate in Committee and the press criticism of his action, has the Minister sat down and examined in his own mind whether he might be wrong?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is joining the gang of the confused, alongside the hon. Members for Gateshead, East and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central. It was only too evident, during the discussion in Committee and in correspondence that I have had with several people since, that misunderstanding remains about the reinsurance arrangements that the Government intend to provide for the new company after privatisation. Therefore, it is not only helpful but vital that I describe them in more detail. I again emphasise that we are talking about political risk reinsurance—the reinsurance arrangements for less than one half of 1 per cent. of the non-oil visible exports from the United Kingdom.

Sir Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Before my hon. Friend explains the rationale of his case in a little more detail to those of us who fully confess to be mildly bewildered, perhaps he could explain one thing. If we are dealing with such a small percentage of British exports, does my hon. Friend accept that by seeking to nullify the effects of the amendment successfully moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) he risks sending the wrong message to the great majority of exporters? The amendment offered a relatively small concession and I believe that any attempt to nullify its effects would waste a great deal of the Government's valued reputation as an assistant of exporters without any great advantage.

Mr. Sainsbury: The last person in the House to be confused on matters of insurance is my hon. Friend, as he is an acknowledged expert on the subject.

I want to send a positive message to exporters, even those concerned with that small fraction of overall British exports. I want that message to be helpful, but if the Government accepted the new clause or the well-intentioned amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West that would not be helpful and would not achieve the purpose that that amendment was designed to meet. As I develop my argument I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir R. McCrindle) will see that I am seeking to give reassurance in the most effective way.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The proportion of exports is not insignificant. We are not particularly concerned with those transnational companies that switch goods between Britain, France, Germany and Spain because that trade does not carry much political risk. I doubt whether we are that concerned about the import and export of gold and diamonds, as people can arrange to be paid without much delay. My guess is that our biggest concern is for those in the manufacturing industries, including engineering, when there may be some time between the dispatch of a consignment and receipt of payment. I suspect that the reassurance that the Minister will seek to give will be addressed to that group rather than to those who are not subject to a serious risk.

Mr. Sainsbury: I believe that I shall give a positive reassurance on the issue to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention.

The longer-term exporters are the exporters whose exports are covered by the project group of the ECGD. That part of the ECGD will continue as a Government Department and therefore there is no requirement for the political risk reinsurance, which is the subject of the new clause and the Government's amendment. The new clause and my amendment are addressed to the political risk reinsurance that will be provided for the Insurance Services Group, which covers short-term—up to 180 days—exports. They will be covered by the privatised organisation that will take over the work now done by the Insurance Services Group.

After privatisation, the Insurance Services Group will be able to provide a more flexible and comprehensive service to its customers. It will enjoy the freedoms, but also be subject to the competitive pressures, that are the features of business in the private sector. The Government, through the continuing ECGD—I emphasise that it will continue to provide export credit insurance to long-term project exporters—will also provide to the new company that will take over the business of the Insurance Services

Group of the existing ECGD two different types of reinsurance to support and assist it in its transition into the private sector.

The two different types of reinsurance have caused confusion and still seem to be causing confusion among Opposition Members.

The first type of reinsurance will be ECGD provision of support to supplement the reinsurance that the new company will be securing in the private reinsurance market. It will cover both commercial and political risks. That temporary facility will be available for up to three years after privatisation. That type of reinsurance is not only normal but essential for an insurance company, which has to avoid the need for an unnecessarily large market capitalisation. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar is well aware of that.

In the run-up to the issue of the invitation to tender for the shortlist of likely bidders for the insurance services business, the Government's major priority has been to develop, with the private reinsurance market, a package of reinsurance support to be available to the privatised company immediately it begins operations. I am glad to say that the market has responded extremely positively to the new company's needs and I am confident that the vast bulk of the new company's reinsurance needs can be met by the private market immediately upon privatisation.

The placing in the private market of the Insurance Services Group's portfolio of risks is probably a unique event in the market's experience. We are talking of the risks attaching to more than £13 billion of United Kingdom exports annually. By any measure, that is an enormous amount and it is a credit to the skill and flexibility of the market and to ECGD and its advisers that the capacity has been found to meet virtually the whole of that requirement. However, there could be a small shortfall and the Government intend to fill that through the continuing ECGD becoming, in effect, one of the reinsurers of the new ISG.

5.45 pm

I must make it clear that it is that "top-up" support that is transitional. It will be available to the company for up to three years after privatisation. Given the expected successful placing of the vast bulk of the company's requirements in the market even before it starts its operations, I am sure that the House will understand why the Government are confident that, once the market has familiarised itself with the new company and its management, it will be able to meet the company's full needs for quota and excess of loss reinsurance within those three years.

The confusion between the second type of reinsurance and the first type that I have just described has given rise to some of the unnecessary worries that have been expressed. The second type of reinsurance is the "national interest" facility that I announced on Second Reading. The need for that arises because there are a few countries in which ECGD facilities are at present available, but where the management of ISG considered that to have offered the risks on those countries to the reinsurance market now could have prejudiced the market's response to the total book for business put to it. By definition, those are countries where the company and private market reinsurers are not at present happy with what they see as the political and commercial risks. Therefore, to avoid any sudden and sharp reduction in the facilities available to our exporters in the immediate aftermath of privatisation, the Government will provide support to enable some cover to be given on exports to those markets.

In order not to prejudice wider diplomatic and commercial sensitivities, I shall not specify precisely the markets concerned. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) mentioned four markets—Iran, China, the USSR and Indonesia. It is likely that the possible business to which my hon. Friend referred would be project business—longer-term export business—in those markets. Cover is already available for Indonesia and China, but cover for the longer-term markets in the USSR and Iran is at present under review. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall ask ECGD to look urgently at the Beloit Walmsley case in Iran to which he referred. Meanwhile, the companies concerned might like to contact their regional office or ECGD contact.

The countries that are regarded as requiring political risk reinsurance are few. Press speculation about the identity of those markets has been wide of the mark. The proportion of ISG business at present involving exports to those markets—not the proportion of total British exports—is still less than 2 per cent. of the total business insured in 1990-91. That is still a worthwhile amount of exports—about £300 million worth—but it is a small proportion of the total insurance book of ECGD and a fractional proportion of the total non-oil visible exports from Britain. Nevertheless, it still represents a valuable proportion of our exports. So although this is not a major facility, it is one of importance to some exporters.

The intention is that this national interest cover should be delivered through the continuing ECGD giving 100 per cent. reinsurance to the privatised company. It could well be—I hope that it will be—that most of these national interest markets will become reinsurable in the private market so that the need for this facility will fall away. The likelihood of this is, though, rather less clear than it is for the top-up arrangements for the company's more general reinsurance requirement.

It may help, at this point, if I say a little about the nature of the reinsurance market for credit insurance risks. This will, I hope, help to clarify the developing relationship between private reinsurers and the Government and explain some of the uncertainties. A key point is that this is a complex market and this complexity is compounded by the fact that it is a rapidly changing market.

The ECGD has, therefore, quite properly used the services of a specialist broker. The placing of Insurance Services' more than £13 billion of risk has obviously been a challenging task. There have been some suggestions from some quarters that it would simply not be possible to place Insurance Services requirement in the market because of the amount and degree of political risk inherent in the portfolio. Despite statements which I have made to the House and in Committee, some doubts still seem to exist; indeed, they were echoed in some of this morning's newspapers.

There are two important points to be made about the relationship between ECGD's Insurance Services and the reinsurance market. First, three quarters of Insurance Services' business is with the OECD markets; secondly, the ECGD is negotiating a package deal. Thus, for reinsurance purposes, non-OECD business is being packaged with the bulk of OECD business.

I have already explained that these negotiations are meeting with considerable success. The market has already

indicated its readiness to accept the vast bulk of the new company's reinsurance arrangements. The balance will be supplied by ECGD joining the reinsurance group under the transitional top-up arrangement, while a small balance —just 2 per cent. of the total—will be dealt with under the quite separate national interest reinsurance facility.

But that is today's picture. Every element in it is subject to change. It is necessary to understand that the reinsurance market is international; indeed, many non-United Kingdom players occupy a central place in it. The market already provides reinsurance to some of ECGD's counterparts in both the public and private sectors. However, meeting the reinsurance requirement for the Insurance Services Group will represent a step-change for the market but such rapid development is, as we all know from the changes which this Government have fostered through deregulating the financial markets in London, becoming a more common fact of life. Further changes will arise in future. The capacity and experience of the private reinsurance market is clearly expanding. The performance of Insurance Services as a new company will demonstrate its competence to the market. The economies of the importing countries and the political risks that the market perceives in them will change over time, as will the needs of British exporters.

Ms. Quin: The Minister has said that the situation is changing and will continue to change. Given the difficulty with predicting exactly what will happen, and when, why have the Government fixed on this period of three years by when the facility to which the Government has alluded will be phased out? Why should the Government stick to this magical figure?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sorry that the hon. Lady is still confusing the two types of reinsurance. The three years refer to the top-up or quota reinsurance being provided by the ECGD joining the market, covering more than 90 per cent. of the total portfolio of Insurance Services Group. What we are examining now and separately—this goes for the new clause as well—is the balance, the 2 per cent. of Insurance Services group's portfolio which is not being offered to the market because of the perception of the political risk inherent in the countries involved.

This has been a trail-blazing operation which reflects great credit on the skill and flexibility of ECGD and its advisers. In recent years there have also been changes in the make-up and direction of our exports and in the economies of many importing countries. All these factors bear crucially on the nature of the facilities which exporters will require from ECGD in the future. No one can predict with any certainty what the next changes will be, when they will occur and how they will alter credit insurance needs.

The new subsection, which amendment No. 16 seeks to remove, could have the unfortunate effect of requiring the Secretary of State for a period of at least three years—the subsection mentions these three years as well as the other three relating to the quota top-up reinsurance—to provide political risk cover, short, medium or long-term, in respect of any proposition put to him—irrespective of its merits or the degree of risk involved. I am sure that the House will recognise that such an obligation would be extremely unreasonable. Neither the project group nor Insurance Services has ever had such a statutory obligation to provide cover regardless of risk. It would oblige the Secretary of State to insure the sort of risks which were rather accurately described as long ago as 1949 by the then President of the Board of Trade, now Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, as unduly

"hazardous or quite crazy".

The subsection would expose the ECGD to a degree of financial risk that could not be in the interest of exporters.

So, although I sympathise with the intentions of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West—intentions which led him to propose his amendment—I do not believe it possible to find appropriate words which would fulfil them to include in what will become an Act. On the one hand, there is the rigidity of requiring the Secretary of State to cover any risk regardless of the destination or of the nature of the exports involved, which might even be arms. On the other, it is impossible to specify the detail of the arrangements, referred to in the new clause and in the new subsection, which the Secretary of State would be required to arrive at. For instance, would they be arrangements at a stated premium, or with or without a letter of credit, or with a confirmed letter of credit? We cannot specify in the Bill what they would be.

I do appreciate, however, that some exporters, together with the CBI and the hon. Member for Gateshead, East, are worried. I can assure hon. Members that the national interest facility for the second type of reinsurance that we have been discussing will be kept available after privatisation, and we shall keep the requirement for the facility under review. It would be the intention that, subject to its performing satisfactorily as an ECGD trading facility, it would continue for as long as the Government considered it essential to meet the reasonable needs of exporters.

So we are faced with three reasons why the new clause and the subsection which I am seeking to remove would not help exporters in the manner in which they were intended to. First, it is not possible to define with the accuracy appropriate and necessary for inclusion in an Act what the arrangements should be. Secondly, even were it possible to come up with a satisfactory definition, all the wording that has been suggested would require the Secretary of State through ECGD to provide reinsurance for any such risk regardless of how bad a risk it was. I hope the House will recognise that it is unacceptable to remove entirely the exercise of discretion in these matters.

Thirdly, in view of developments in the reinsurance market and the changing political and economic situations which lead to the need at any time for a country to be considered a particularly bad risk for the reinsurance market, it seems inappropriate to include a time limit. That is because Government-backed reinsurance may not be needed for that period and any time limit implies an arbitrary cut off point. That is far less appropriate than saying, as I have said, that the matter will be kept under review. I urge the House to reject the new clause and, on the basis of my assurances, to accept amendment No. 16.

6 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I have listened carefully to the Minister's arguments, which seem to fall into three broad categories. First, he tried to argue that the Opposition do not have the judgment to understand the complexities of export credit insurance dealt with by the new clause and by clause 4(2). He said that they covered such a tiny percentage of British exporters that it did not

matter whether the new clause was accepted or clause 4(2) was deleted. He ran into some hostile flak from his own side when he tried to put that argument.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): He encountered hostile fire.

Mr. McAllion: He did, and it caught him.

Even if a small percentage of our exporters were affected, that still accounts for a large number of British companies. Those companies depend on exports for profits and their workers' jobs depend on such exports.

I was confused by the Minister's final argument against the new clause and the amendment which was carried in Committee. He said that it would be impossible to find appropriate words adequately to cover the matters that we should like to see in legislation. That is a strange notion, because if they were given the proper instructions civil servants could come up with words that would give effect to the arguments that we seek to substantiate.

The Minister said that the amendment carried in Committee would have obliged the Government to give cover for any risk regardless of the financial consequences to the Treasury. Such detail can easily be dealt with by skilled civil servants. They could find phrases that would not allow the Government to be pinned in that corner and at the same time would provide the cover that many exporters seek from the Bill.

The Minister ducked the major argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) and by some of his own hon. Friends. That argument dealt with the range and depth of cover of political risk reinsurance that is provided in the Bill. Despite the Minster's reassurances, as he called them, he is sending out to British exporters the negative message that the Government are not prepared to back them in the way that other European Governments back companies that compete with ours. That is unfortunate.

I was impressed by some Conservative interventions because the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), whose amendment was accepted in Committee, found it convenient not to be here for the debate on that amendment during which we heard that the Government intend to delete it from the Bill. It will seem strange to those outside who take an interest in our proceedings that some hon. Members have the courage of their convicitions in Committee where they take brave stands in defiance of the Whips and their party leadership but that their courage fails them on Report. It will be interesting to see how those hon. Members vote on the new clause.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the term of the last Labour Government—and there is not much prospect of having another one very soon—members of the Tribune group used to calculate how many of them could vote against the Government while still making sure that the Government won.

Mr. McAllion: That is one the serious reasons why I did not renew my membership of the Tribune group, which I joined when I first came to the House. I am in favour of standing up for the things in which I believe in whatever way I find possible.

We are dealing with areas that are generally described as less secure export markets. There has been much academic discussion about the ins and outs of whether a Bill can technically express that concept, but no one has come to terms with substantive examples. Let us look at Iraq which, by any standard, must be considered a less secure export market. The Minister seems unsettled.

Mr. Sainsbury: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the United Nations embargo on exports to Iraq is still in force.

Mr. McAllion: It is in force at the moment, but I should like to examine what has happened over the past 10 years in Iraq. The Minister will remember that over that time that country experienced the horrors of the Iran-Iraq war. In 1988, the Kurdish rebellion was suppressed by resort to chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein who then invaded Kuwait and suffered the consequences of the Gulf war. He is now being subjected to further Kurdish rebellions in Kurdish and southern Iraq, and we all know about the tragedies in the mountainous areas bordering Iran and Turkey.

Throughout that tumultuous period Ministers continued to foster British trade with Saddam Hussein's regime. A succession of Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry traipsed through Baghdad in search of contracts for United Kingdom exporters, and in 1988 that culminated in the announcement of £340 million worth of export credits for trade with Iraq. It is not the purpose of the debate to question the morality of such behaviour by Ministers and the ECGD. However, it is relevant to note that Ministers and a Government-owned agency were underwriting British business in a very unsecure export market. Only the Government were prepared to take the kind of risks which we now know were involved in trade with Iraq.

Since Ministers and a Government Department issued export credits to underwrite trade with Iraq, that country has suffered at the hands of the west perhaps the heaviest air bombardment ever inflicted on a modern state. It has been invaded and occupied by foreign troops, its cities and infrastructure have been devastated and its very survival is threatened by the famine and disease which have followed the war. The prospects for its economic recovery have been blighted by United Nations demands for reparations to Kuwait. Iraq is now engulfed in a bloody and dreadful civil war, the consequences of which we do not yet fully understand.

The notion that private sector insurance would be prepared to underwrite business with a country such as Iraq is unbelievable. The Minister said that there is no problem, even with short-term insurance cover provided by the ISG being provided by the private sector in the long term, but that is not facing reality. Iraq may not be typical of the markets that we are debating in terms of the scale of the horrors to which Iraq has been subjected in the past 10 years, but it is typical of the nature of the risks in such markets.

Political instability is found in many parts of the world, and the Government will have to come to terms with that if British exporters are to be assisted in trading with politically unstable countries. It is disingenuous of the Government to say that nothing can be written into the Bill so that the Government cannot be tied down to a prerequisite of the sort of cover that will have to be offered. We are told to leave it to the Government's judgment and that for politically high-risk markets cover will continue to be funded by the Government through the newly privatised ISG and that it will be 100 per cent. for an

[Mr. McAllion]

undefined period. When we asked the Minister to list the countries and the markets for which the Government will give a commitment he dried up. It seems that it is not possible to tell the House or British exporters the markets for which the Government will provide 100 per cent. cover.

Nor is the Minister prepared to say how long the Government will provide such cover. It will be provided until the Government decide that it can no longer be provided. The fact that the Minister will not make a commitment is unsatisfactory to hon. Members and to British exporters.

Four markets were specified but the Minister's commitment was vague. He recommended to one hon. Member that he should tell the companies in his constituency to raise the matter with ECGD and write to the Minister concerned because he was not prepared to make the commitment that Ministers should make in dealing with such an important subject.

Elsewhere in Europe, competitors of British exporters receive reinsurance back-up from their Governments that is denied to British exporters. The Government are determined not to make the same commitment to British exporters as is made elsewhere in Europe. The Minister must come to terms with the fact that the world is becoming more unstable. More markets are becoming subject to political unrest and instability and we do not know what the future may hold for some countries. If markets are uncertain, returns from investment in those markets are even more uncertain. British exporters need to know that their Government will support them if the worst comes to the worst and their contracts fall through. They need to know that if the Government of the country concerned refuse to honour the contracts in which they have invested, the Government will be prepared to back them up fully.

So far in this debate, the Minister has made it clear that the Government are not prepared to give that support to British exporters because of the costs involved. It seems therefore that they are prepared to place British exporters at a disadvantage to others in Europe. That is unsatisfactory and disgraceful.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): As a member of the Standing Committee, I put my name to the amendment before the new clause was added to the Bill. Alas, when it was debated I was unable to be in the Committee. Had I been there, I would have voted for it, but as it happened, the amendment was passed anyway. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) did the House a service in moving the amendment. It has driven the Government to look at the clause anew, even if the new clause is flawed. We know that it is not perfect but most Back-Bench amendments are not perfectly drafted because we have fewer resources than the Government.

Many exporters and organisations have written to hon. Members. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) quoted extracts from correspondence showing the concern about the apparent gap in cover. When those concerned read the *Official Report* of the debate and my hon. Friend the Minister's speech, they will be "greatly reassured", to coin the Minister's expression.

I am not one to stand up in the House against a privatisation. The experience of most of us during the past 12 years has been that various industries and businesses previously run and owned by the Government are much better in the private sector. I believe that the transfer of this industry into the private sector will be beneficial. It is proving to be a special animal because it is privatisation with a couple of "buts"—it has a couple of legs of support from the Government, albeit temporarily, because of the special difficulties of reinsuring political risk. My hon. Friend the Minister's description of those legs should reassure exporters.

Although the Opposition may poke fun at the way in which the amendment was made by Conservative Back Benchers against the wish of a Minister—that is part of the political fun—the Committee stage involves the serious business of trying to improve a Bill. Conservative Back Benchers have as much right to try to improve a Bill as any other Committee member, and it is perfectly reasonable for us to do so. However, the two legs that have appeared for support from ECGD to supplement commercial and political risks for up to three years—reinsurance being leg no. 1, and leg no. 2 being the national interest facility of further support for reinsurance by the Government—are a strong arrow in my hon. Friend the Minister's quiver in defending the clause and seeking, more importantly, to assure exporters that their position will be taken care of. Although we may have had a bit of fun over the amendment, there is a consensus on both sides of the House that exporters must be given maximum support.

The Small Business Bureau, in which I have an interest, has stood up for small and medium-sized firms over the years. Larger firms do not need much help, but smaller and, more relevantly, medium-sized exporters are important. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) mentioned engineering firms, but many of those will be covered by long-term finance with ECGD and will be fully covered by that part of the service which is still run by the Government. Thousands of those exporters—small engineering firms—follow contracts given to large exporters such as GEC and bring thousands of minnows in their wake, and it is important that they be looked after.

6.15 pm

Sir Robert McCrindle: Like my hon. Friend, I am mainly concerned about the needs of small to medium-sized exporters and believe that the large ones can look after themselves. Like him, I think that they will be reassured by my hon. Friend the Minister's comments. Does he agree that, unfortunately, towards the end of my hon. Friend the Minister's speech, he said that, because it was impossible to find an appropriate form of words, he could not take on board the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson)? Can my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), who has been in the House for the same time as I have, recall any occasion when a Minister has said that it was not possible to give a reassurance that he wished to give because his civil servants had been unable to evolve an appropriate form of wording? Would not it be better for my hon. Friend the Minister to try again, perhaps in another place?

Mr. Grylls: My hon. Friend and I may have been in the House for the same length of time, but my memory is becoming worse and worse. I am sure that what he recalled must have happened on many occasions. Those words

have been spoken in the House and, as the Americans say, they are on the record and should be taken seriously. The two legs exist to back up what my hon. Friend the Minister said. He did not simply give a vague assurance that everything will be all right on the day, but offered the addition of those two top-up legs.

I welcome the Minister's comments about general help to exporters and the bringing together of services under one arm. That is important one-stop shopping for medium and smaller firms, particularly outside London, so that they know where to go for services and to encourage them when they are seeking markets, agents and market research. I welcome that change, as it will provide flexibility for exporters.

I welcome the privatisation, because of the ability of the private insurance sector to offer the cover that firms need when they trade under different circumstances throughout the world, and I believe that the British insurance market will respond to it. Perhaps they will not respond totally from day one. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir R. McCrindle) will know more about that than I do. It will take time for the insurance market, particularly the reinsurance market, to understand its market and know what it must develop to respond to the needs of all our exporters. That cannot be done immediately—the privatisation has not yet taken effect.

I am prepared to give the Government the benefit of the doubt, with the assurance that the two supporting legs have been offered and the market will develop and be able to provide in a much more flexible and general way than any Government service can do. It is difficult to be sure and know that, in a foolproof, belt and braces way, we have the system totally right. Having listened to the Minister's speech, my judgment, for what it is worth, is that the House would be wise to give him and the Government the benefit of the doubt, and accept that they have tried to meet the real worries rightly expressed in Committee. The House should believe that the proposals will fulfil the needs of most of our exporters. Some 0·5 per cent. of our exporters may not be satisfied, but certainly the generality of them will, in the long run, be better off through the transference to the private sector.

Mr. Morgan: Since the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) rose to speak, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) has arrived in the Chamber. It was like the United States fifth cavalry arriving at the last minute to defend to the death the amendment that he successfully steered through Committee with the support of the Opposition. We noticed a sort of legislative eternal triangle between the Minister, the Parliamentary Private Secretary and the successful rebel Back Bencher going into action straightaway. The hon. Member may have been successfully anaesthetised by a dart between the shoulders in the meantime. Perhaps before this debate ends he will say what his intentions are.

Before the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West, and possibly you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, arrived in the Chamber, the Minister said that he sympathised with the aims of the successful amendment tabled in an act of rebellion in Committee and supported by Labour Members. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Sir R. McCrindle) also referred to that fact. It seems odd, therefore, that the Minister voted against the amendment in Committee but now, at least, agrees with its purpose. The Minister said that there was an unfortunate lack of words in the English language with which to express the intentions of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West and his colleagues, some of whom are ranged here—and that was despite the vast resources of the Department of Trade and Industry. Personally—and I am probably speaking for 90 per cent. of hon. Members—I believe that when a Minister makes such a statement, he is not to be believed. The lack which he says means that intention cannot be transferred into legislative reality is a lack that exists in the Minister's mind, not in Chambers dictionary.

Will the Minister try replacing the word "shall" with the word "may" in line 1 of the amendment of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West? He suggests that the amendment, which is contained in the Bill and would be wiped out by Government amendment No. 16, would cause problems because it would imply that, without any payment of premium, everyone would have a right of access to full political risk insurance against every form of earthquake in an earthquake zone, revolution in a revolution zone, and failure to remit in a country with foreign exchange difficulties. That is nonsense because no one is suggesting a premium-free service—it would obviously contain appropriate premiums. The Minister's suggestion that the amendment of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West implied the ultimate exporter's free lunch, with a premium-free form of insurance or reinsurance, is the ultimate in weasel words.

We all listened carefully to the Minister's brief, which was evidently carefully prepared for him and from which he did not depart except when hon. Members made interventions, for the obvious reason that he must convey the message clearly. It was a damage limitation exercise, attempting to give some reassurance to exporters. He will be aware that, in spite of his efforts, the overwhelming impression given and the message that has got through to a typical, middle-sized, common or garden, British backbone exporter is that the No Turning Back group has hijacked the Department of Trade and Industry—not in the person of the Minister, but in the persons of the previous and present Secretaries of State—and has decided that what British industry needs, whether when exporting or manufacturing goods for use in this country, is another dose of the great cold shower of 1979-81. The group believes that if 20 per cent. of companies go out of business, as they did between 1979 and 1981, it will probably be a good thing because they were not efficient, otherwise they would have survived. It believes that a bit more of the cold shower in relation to export assistance in the form of insurance and reinsurance will be healthy because it will take out the softies who cannot live within the No Turning Back group's concept of a true free market world.

That is the message that exporters have received, why they have been writing to hon. Members and why the Government have attempted to produce the sort of retrospective reinsurance to meet some of the aims of the amendment successfully tabled by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West. That is why we, on behalf of exporters in this country, still maintain that the proper way for the Government to act would be to retain political reinsurance as a generalised, but not premium-free, right for common-or-garden exporters, whether involved on the

[Mr. Morgan]

project side or in short-term insurance requirements, until we see what other countries are also disarming themselves of the right to provide political insurance.

This country needs more exporters. Not all markets are stable—those in eastern Europe are rapidly changing their characters. The Minister said that the very fact of change is an argument against generalised political risk reinsurance. We say that it is a strong reason for providing it because otherwise British exporters will continue in their sad pattern—compared to Japanese or German exporters—of being exporters to small, back-street operations instead of high street ones. In order to get into the high streets, a company must have confidence when the market opens up, otherwise it will be the seventh or eighth exporter in the list, export only at boom times and never really become established.

From where we stand, Britain stands and Britain's balance of payments deficit stands, the idea that this country can do without political risk reinsurance during the next five or six years unless all other countries in the world give it up in legislation to be passed tomorrow or within the next five years is absolute nonsense. It would be a complete dereliction of duty by the House were it even to consider doing that—in spite of the Minister's weasel words.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I apologise to the Chair, the House and my hon. Friend the Minister for arriving late. I expected that the Opposition Benches would be crammed with keen and eager Members who would pursue new clause 1 excessively, as they did in Committee. I thought that I might just about be in time for the start of the debate on new clause 2.

In Committee, I offered my hon. Friend the Minister the opportunity of accepting the amendment and thought that I might go down in fame and glory as being the originator of the Sainsbury amendment. Unfortunately, I gather from an excellent, quick briefing from my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) that the Minister gave some firm assurances and expressed sympathy with the aims that we were seeking to pursue. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) put his finger on the crucial point—although many of the other European countries with which we compete are moving towards privatising the short-term business, they all automatically assume that the political risk markets will be supported by their Governments. It seems essential that, as long as that belief prevails among our competitors, the British Government must support British industry and not place our companies at a disadvantage.

I entered the Chamber in time to hear some of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), who knows so much about small and medium businesses. It seems that a particular sector of concern is those niche players with special products—the smaller companies going into difficult markets. Indeed, they are pathfinders in those markets in terms of other contracts that may ensue. As the amendment which was accepted in Committee was geared to sending a signal to British industry that the Government were behind it, there is a genuine belief within British business that the Government will maintain the reinsurance facility, although it will be under review. That is reasonable provided that the Government can guarantee that the facility will continue for as long as it is needed and not only as long as the Treasury feels that it can afford it.

6.30 pm

Perhaps the Treasury is at the heart of the problem. Perhaps that is why we are being approached by industry. The Treasury produced various memoranda that subsequently appeared in the public arena, and evidence was provided for the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. The attitude or mentality of the Treasury was entirely clear. I am not speaking of the Treasury now because this has been a long-standing Treasury view. British industry has always been somewhat jaundiced—I think rightly—about the rather dead hand of the Treasury in industrial matters. It tends to adopt a narrow, blinkered and short-term approach that is concentrated on the bottom line.

For some years the Treasury has been saying that the reinsurance business and export credit insurance are costly exercises because a good deal of money is being lost. Although the political risk market in short-term business is a tiny part of the sector, British industry has still felt that the Treasury would like to pull out from it.

I do not know what some would-be buyers have said to my hon. Friend the Minister. I read the newspapers, however, and as my right hon. and hon. Friends will know, the general flavour of press reports over the weekend was that at least some potential buyers are looking rather more uncertainly at purchases if there is not the guarantee of reinsurance in political risk areas. I have been told that the reinsurance industry does not believe that within three years it will be able to pick up all the pieces.

It is right to have an ongoing review because some political risk areas may become better risks than others which seemed at one stage to be quite good but which deteriorated. That is all right provided that there is a firm guarantee. That is all that I was seeking to provide for in introducing the amendment which was carried in Committee by my hon. Friends, with the help of Opposition Members.

I am nine-tenths reassured by the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister and so I shall not grieve if the terms of my amendment are removed from the Bill. I merely ask my hon. Friend to pause for one moment. It is to be assumed that the Government will carry the new clause and so remove the terms of my amendment, and as I am not a lawyer I must bow to the legal opinion that is offered to the Government. It may be, however, that the Bill will embrace many countries in which the political climate is such that we would never wish to engage in reinsurance facilities. If it is stated that the Secretary of State shall make arrangements, it seems that he will have to act in any market in which an exporter wishes to do business. In education legislation there is often a broad-brush approach—I have not seen this in any Department of Trade and Industry legislation—with details being left to subsequent regulations. It is stated that the Secretary of State shall make arrangements as appropriate. If that approach is adopted and it is considered that it is not appropriate to embrace countries such as Libya, the Secretary of State will not have to make the arrangements. If he wants to make arrangements for other countries as appropriate, so be it.

If the new clause is agreed to, my hon. Friend the Minister might like to think about including words such as

"the Secretary of State shall make arrangements as appropriate . . . for a minimum of three years." If such words were adopted, British industry would be reassured by the Government and would have greater self-confidence. It would feel that the Government were behind it. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider placing some such words in the Bill. However, I accept the generous way in which he has expressed sympathy for the intent behind my amendment.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): I, too, have been reassured by my hon. Friend the Minister. I ask, however, that the other place gives consideration to changing "shall" to "may". In that sense, I fully support the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). If the new clause is accepted and the subsection is deleted, I hope that those in another place will give careful consideration to the issues involved. We must ensure that firms, especially small and medium-sized undertakings, have some support while the whole of the Export Credits Guarantee Department is privatised.

Mr. Michael: We have had an interesting debate during which Tory Members' concerns and worries have been made manifest, even though they have been expressed in half-hearted and, in some instances, almost sycophantic terms. I am pleased to be able to welcome the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) belatedly to the debate. I do not understand why he thought that we, the Opposition, would drag out the debate to cover his late arrival. I hope that he will be rather more convincing when he casts his vote at the end of the debate.

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West said that he will not grieve if the amendment which we accepted in Committee is removed from the Bill. That is all very well, but it is clear that exporters will be less half-hearted and will grieve. It is clear also that considerable reassurance is needed for exporters and that that is not to be made available in the Bill.

Dr. Hampson: It is unfair to suggest that I expressed myself as baldly as that. I said that I would not grieve in the light of the expression of intent to deliver what exporters are wanting from my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Michael: I take it that the hon. Gentleman will, in effect, support the amendment which he proposed and which Opposition Members supported in Committee when the House divides so that the small percentage of dissatisfaction that he says he still retains is thereby assuaged.

It is interesting that several Conservative Members seemed during the debate to awaken for the first time to the dangers that are inherent in this pointless piece of privatisation. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) asked several questions. I recommend that he reads the reports of the proceedings in Committee with some care. The Opposition pressed the Minister, as did exporters and the CBI, yet it appears that the Minister takes the view that he is the only person who is in step. He has said that the matters referred to by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East probably involve long-term projects. What if they do not? Why not give the reassurance which was sought in Committee and which has been requested this evening?

The question that should be at the forefront of our minds is how we can protect, encourage and reassure our exporters. I must tell Conservative Members who are new to these discussions that the lack of justification for the Bill was exposed in Committee, along with the lack of reassurance that has been forthcoming from the Minister.

The Insurance Services Group within the Exports Credit Guarantee Department has received universal praise for the efficient and effective way in which it undertakes its work. The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) said that he was puzzled that the Minister seemed to be standing on his own. He asked why everyone seemed to disagree with his hon. Friend. The answer is that the Minister has it wrong. He has again sought to diminish the importance of the insurance services element within the Department's work overall. He told us that it is only about 2 per cent. of the overall business. I suggest that a reasonable piece of advice to the Government is that they should look after each 1 or 2 per cent. more effectively than at present so that the 100 per cent. with which they have dealt so disastrously over the past few years may look after itself more successfully. In other words, the Government should give more effective support, encouragement and reassurance to exporters so that we can move out of the dire situation in which the Government have put us.

The Minister sought to persuade us that he wishes to give a positive message to exporters. Given the way in which he has dealt with matters that have arisen during our consideration of the Bill, the only way in which he could give a positive message to exporters would be to resign from his present position. He told us that he must consider the words in the amendment, but hon. Members on both sides of the House have made it clear that that is not true. He could perfectly well have recognised the fears and promised to introduce an amendment worded to meet the fears of exporters. He spoke of the support that the Department is giving to British exporters, but his speech about his activities more or less rearranged the deckchairs on the Department of Trade and Industry as if it were some latter-day Titanic. It was irrelevant to the debate.

Before this privatisation measure was introduced, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I met the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). It became clear in our discussion that there was no justification for the measure. However, throughout the Committee and again today, we have sought to improve the measure and to suggest constructive changes.

The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) urged the Minister to listen and reassure exporters, but he said that he wanted as much privatisation as possible. I argue that the Government went too far in privatising the water industry and it is difficult to find anyone who wants this privatisation or believes that it will help in any way. Today, or, failing that, in the later stages of the Bill, we need reassurance from the Government.

The Committee accepted an amendment which gave legislative guarantees that the Government would retain an involvement with the insurance or reinsurance of political risk for at least three years after privatisation. At the conclusion of this short debate, I remind the House of the words of the British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Association, which were quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). It said:

"This seemed the very least that could be done to allay the fears of British exporters."

[Mr. Michael]

It complained that the timing of the Government's amendment had left little room for manoeuvre. In other words, the attempt to remove the guarantee from the Bill was sprung on the House too late for elements in industry to gear themselves up to object. BEAMA complained:

"uncertainty of the kind caused by this action has a potentially disastrous consequence for the confidence of Britain's exporters."

Those are serious words. I draw attention to the way in which the same objection was expressed by the Confederation of British Industry:

"CBI Members continue to doubt the Government's future commitment to provide political risk insurance or reinsurance for short term exports to 'difficult' markets following the transfer of ECGD's Insurance Services business to the private sector."

Again, we have references to insecurity and mistrust and doubt of the Government from elements of the industry. After our experience in Committee, that seems justified.

The nature of the doubt of people in the export industry is clear. We could get rid of the doubt by accepting new clause 2. It would not only provide for the three years after privatisation but ensure that the new company would value, consult and work with exporters on whom we depend. Our new clause originally said:

"The Secretary of State shall consult with the relevant trade and exporting associations to determine whether those arrangements should be continued for a further year and, if it is considered equitable in the national interest that those arrangements should be continued for a further year, they shall be so extended."

We address the interests of exporters and the national interest in a way that the Minister does not.

We have had a debate in which doubts about the Government's intentions have been expressed clearly. We shall set aside the temptation to press new clause 2 in order to seek the greatest consensus in the Chamber by voting on Government amendment No. 16 at a later stage. We set a test for Conservative Back-Bench Members who have expressed concern during this short debate. If any Conservative Member cares about exports and the fears expressed in the export industry, he or she will vote with us in the Lobby to retain the amendment agreed in Committee.

6.45 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: With the leave of the House, may I say that I shall not detain the House long because I set out the position at some length earlier. The hon. Gentleman referred to doubt. If the new clause or the amendment tabled with the best of intentions by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) were accepted, the doubt would be increased, for the reasons that I set out.

I fear that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth—is that right?

Mr. Michael: Uncharacteristically, the Minister has got one thing right—the name of my constituency.

Mr. Sainsbury: How nice to be congratulated, even so obliquely.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) did not listen to what was said. The drawback of the amendment is clear. The arrangements are not specified. Every piece of business involving exports to wherever and whatever the nature of the goods to be insured would have to be accepted. That would be a foolish measure to impose on the Secretary of State. Certainly it would not help exporters. It would increase doubt.

The best way to reassure our exporters, whom we seek to support in every possible way, is to say, as I have already said, that the national interest facility will continue to be available after privatisation. We shall keep the requirement for the facility under review. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West asked us to keep it for as long as it was needed. Subject to it performing satisfactorily as an ECGD trading facility, we intend to retain it for as long as the Government consider it essential to meet the reasonable needs of exporters.

Ms. Quin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH EXPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES

Mr. Michael: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 21 at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State shall ensure that arrangements made under this section are in general no worse in terms of both scope and cost in comparison with those available to persons carrying on business in other OECD countries.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 7, in clause 8, page 5, line 31, at end insert—

'(5A) Any arrangements made under a scheme under this section shall in general be no worse in terms of both scope and cost in comparison with those available to persons carrying on business in other OECD countries.'.

Mr. Michael: The amendment would require the Export Credits Guarantee Department to provide export support facilities to United Kingdom exporters at a level and cost equal to or better than the facilities available to overseas competitors. The Secretary of State would have the responsibility for ensuring that that was the case. Would Conservative Members speak or vote against that simple principle? The amendment is intended to establish a level playing field for United Kingdom exporters. Clearly, it would be useful for United Kingdom exporters to be able to tackle the Government if, in their view, the Government failed at any time to provide export support equivalent to that which their rivals were receiving from their Governments or, arguably, from anyone else, although real export support can come only from Governments because they are the only entities likely to subsidise exports.

The Government frequently use the phrase "level playing field", but they usually mean that they intend to tilt the balance against someone in our society. In this case, the measure tilts the playing field against British exporters. The amendment seeks to restore some fairness to British exporters within the legislation.

Amendment No. 7 follows a similar approach. It says that arrangements should be made which are no worse in scope and cost in comparison with those available to persons carrying on business in other OECD countries. Exporters, especially with a current export turnover of less than £1 million, are becoming increasingly worried that privatisation of the Insurance Services Group will result in

large premium increases. That is not a new point. It was made in Committee and we have strong evidence from exporting companies of the nature of their fear. They fear that high premiums will place them at a competitive disadvantage with their European Community counterparts, which will continue to have the benefit of direct support from their Governments.

The privatised company will not be required, as ISG is, to operate on a break-even basis, because profits to shareholders will be the primary motive of its owners. During the passage of the Water Bill through Parliament, we were continually reassured that any private company established as a result of the Government's action would behave in an uncharacteristic manner and would not be interested in the profit motive of its owners. We now know the truth of that matter. The Opposition, not the Government, had it right.

Additionally, the company will be subject to increased costs in the areas of taxation, including VAT, interest on borrowings, Treasury management, reassurance, on payment of dividends to the providers of capital, and on payment for professional and technical services, including taxation advice. All those costs will need to be met through increased premium income from exporters.

We fear that ISG may also incur higher salary costs, although that may be offset by lower staff numbers. The increased costs may be balanced by an increase in interest earned on cash surpluses and investments outside the Consolidated Fund. Reinsurance costs may be balanced by reinsurance benefits. However the new company will require additional professional and technical services, such as taxation advice.

The ISG will also have to recruit new skills into the management teams, such as reinsurance, Treasury management, company secretarial and taxation capabilities. The company will need to remain profitable after bearing all those additional costs. That is the degree to which the playing field is being tilted against exporters by the change that is being introduced.

I remind the House that the Kemp review into the operation of the department made great play of the requirement for a level playing field between official and private export credit insurers in the European Community —the perceived advantages enjoyed by the official credit insurers should be removed and complete parity should be introduced.

The level playing field argument is being pushed by private sector insurers, such as Namur, the Belgian insurer, whose case is before the European Court of Justice, and which is claiming that the European Commission has been dilatory in relation to the first non-life insurance directive, which currently exempts official credit insurers and Trade Indemnity, the current department's major rival in the United Kingdom.

However, in that report Mr. Kemp recognised:

"the arguments about a level playing-field do not all run in one direction. The state insurers generally provide a much wider scope of cover than do those in the private sector, many of which focus on a fairly narrow area of specialisation in which they are confident of operating profitably. The state agencies, on the other hand, have a responsibility to support national exports generally and a constitutional duty to treat all applicants equally. For these reasons, they regularly have to provide cover for risks or to types of clients that the private sector would reject as not commercially interesting. Advantages such as freedom from corporation tax enjoyed by the official agencies could be seen as no more than reasonable compensation for the more onerous duties laid upon them. As a matter of fact there is no evidence that the official agencies are regularly and significantly undercutting the private companies in prices at the present time."

I draw attention to the words:

"have a responsibility to support national exports generally and a constitutional duty to treat all applicants equally."

Is that not something that we in the House would wish to continue following the privatisation of this part of the Export Credits Guarantee Department?

The amendment is concerned with the fact that privatisation will mean that there will not be a level playing field on which United Kingdom exporters can compete with other EC exporters. The ECGD is curtailing its support for short-term exports at a time when none of the department's major EC competitors is moving that far. All of the United Kingdom's major EC competitors are retaining, at the very least, their reinsurance back-up for private or quasi-private export credit insurers. Exporters in many EC countries will therefore continue to have the benefit of direct support from their Governments and United Kingdom exporters will be at a competitive disadvantage, as even the proposed limited United Kingdom Government support, by means of reinsurance and national interest support, will cease three years after privatisation.

Our plea, in these two amendments, is to play fair by British exporters and to allow them to be supported in the same way as our competitors in Europe will support their exporters. We plead with the Minister to accept these amendments and not to press ahead with his declared intention in Committee to place our exporters at a competitive disadvantage.

Mr. Sainsbury: To hear the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) speak one would think that the Government provided no support to exporters. I hope that he was listening to what I said and that he appreciates that a considerable body of support is provided.

I was somewhat amused, in view of the hon. Gentleman's protestations about the importance that he and presumably his party attach to this issue, that at one moment during his eloquent address there was not one single member of his party on the Benches behind him. Now he has been reinforced—effectively, I am sure—by the presence of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). However, I would fear for British industry if that were a reflection of the Opposition's interest in these issues.

The amendments that the hon. Gentleman has placed before us would mean that the ECGD would not only be required to give medium or long-term coverage to any country for any project where another OECD country was willing to offer cover for a project, but that the facility to the new company would have to be provided irrespective of the cost and degree of financial risk. In effect, the ECGD would have to give cover on terms as good as those offered by any of the other 23 OECD countries.

As I am sure that the House will be aware, most member countries of the OECD, for a variety of reasons, want to be especially helpful in making export credit available to certain other countries. Their desire to be especially helpful to those countries with which they have traditional close links may show in the extent to which they make cover available in the first place, or in the terms under which it is offered, or both. It would not be sensible

[Mr. Sainsbury]

to require ECGD to match every competitor in every market all the time. Certainly, no one else does that at present or is ever likely to do it.

Nevertheless, it has been a longstanding policy of successive Administrations that where ECGD is willing to offer cover, it should match the length of credit available from other official agencies when United Kingdom exporters are competing for a specific project. That is an example of the sort of support that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth overlooks, because under the fixed rate export finance arrangements —which, interestingly, were introduced in 1972 by the then Minister for Trade and Consumer Affairs, who, as some of my hon. Friends will recall, was my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe)—the ECGD is able to support United Kingdom banks in the provision of export finance to overseas buyers of capital goods and projects sold on credit terms of two years or more in accordance with the terms specified in the international consensus. In practice, that means that the ECGD offers similar terms to other export credit agencies.

Meanwhile, the ECGD has introduced a portfolio management system and changes in the way that it calculates premium rates for project business. In future, rates should better reflect the quality of risk. Premium rates will fall for the better-quality risk, while they will rise for the worst risks.

Looking further ahead, increasing consideration is being given to the general agreement on tariffs and trade regulations, which require that premium rates for export credit insurance should cover the cost of administration and claims.

Only last Friday the OECD export credit group welcomed a paper which has been prepared by the ECGD on that subject. It is now clear that the campaign to eliminate subsidies from premium rates charged by official credit insurers is firmly on the agenda. The expectation must be that we shall be increasing pressure to that end, and that progress will be made steadily to reduce and eliminate subsidies.

In the past, I have no doubt that risks have not been sufficiently differentiated in premium terms and the changes now being introduced will mean that there will be increases—some large—in the riskiest markets. However, ECGD has found that exporters would prefer that some cover is available rather than no cover and price will assist availability.

I stress that premium rates are not being increased to recoup the ECGD's past losses. Perhaps the increases to which I referred should be put into perspective. If we take the ECGD's current average premium rate for project exports—long-term exports—of 5 per cent., a premium increase of up to 15 per cent. would add only three quarters of 1 per cent. to the export price. Other cost increases—increases in the cost of wages and raw materials, for instance—are therefore likely to be much more significant, especially if the long manufacturing delivery period associated with such exports is taken into account.

The drafting of amendment No. 7 shows the same lack of precision as that of amendment No. 3. It would not be realistic, for short-term business any more than for long-term business, to compare the terms and conditions on which cover is made available between the various schemes offering short-term cover.

I believe that the competitive pressures that result from privatisation—which is opposed so strongly by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth—will ensure that the exporter is offered a steadily improving service, and that the company will offer a wider range of facilities, on terms that are attractive to its customers; that includes prices. The amendments are neither sensible nor practicable, and I urge the House to reject them.

7 pm

Mr. Michael: The Minister said that it is "neither sensible nor practicable" to make arrangements that are, in general, no worse in terms of both scope and cost than those available to persons carrying on business in other OECD countries. What an admission of failure that is. I note that during his speech few Conservative Members were present. *[Interruption.]* Welcome back to school. What those Conservative Members have in common is that not one was listening to the Minister's speech. I am glad to note that they are, at least, listening to mine.

Characteristically, the Minister chose to ignore the case that has been made out to him—to ignore the interests of exporters, and to answer a different debate from the one that we had instigated. I did not say that his Department gave no support to exporters; what I do say is that the Government and the Minister give them inadequate support, and that the Bill will diminish that support. The Government are failing to give our exporters the support that our competitors are giving theirs. It is for that that the Minister stands condemned tonight.

We shall seek to withdraw our amendment tonight, because it—and amendment No. 7—will be pursued in another place. We shall, however, proceed to a vote on Government amendment No. 16, and it will be interesting to see whether any Conservative Back Benchers vote with the Opposition to seek to protect the interests of exporters in the United Kingdom.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SECTIONS 1 TO 3

Amendment proposed: No. 16, in page 3, line 1, leave out subsection (2).—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 285, Noes 188.

Division No. 108] **[7.03 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Baldry, Tony
Alexander, Richard	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Allason, Rupert	Batiste, Spencer
Amery, Rt Hon Julian	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Amess, David	Bendall, Vivian
Amos, Alan	Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Arbuthnot, James	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Ashby, David	Body, Sir Richard
Aspinwall, Jack	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Atkins, Robert	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Atkinson, David	Boswell, Tim
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*

Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dufty, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*

Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 6

COMMITMENT LIMITS

Mr. Sainsbury: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 4, line 30, leave out from 'at' to end of line 33 and insert

'intervals determined from time to time by the Secretary of State with the consent of the Treasury and in accordance with principles so determined.'

During the Standing Committee discussion of clause 6, it was proposed that the word "may" should be deleted and replaced with the word "shall." That was proposed as an amendment at several places in the Bill. In the debate the point was made that the Secretary of State has to determine principles for the conversion of foreign currency commitments into special drawing rights if he is to meet his other obligations under clauses 6 and 7. I agreed in Committee to consider the amendment further. The wording now proposed makes it clear that the Secretary of State is required to lay down principles for the conversion of foreign currency commitments into SDRs. He will do this whenever necessary and with Treasury agreement.

In Committee interest was expressed in the principles that the Secretary of State might be called upon to determine under subsection (5)(e). The principles usually relate to mechanical operations that may be subject to change over time and for which it is therefore difficult to make statutory provision. Perhaps I could give two examples. The first would be deciding the precise rate to be used for converting individual foreign currency into SDRs. The closing rate for the last day of the quarter, as shown in the *Financial Times*, is used. The second example would be how to convert currencies for which no SDR conversion rate is quoted in the *Financial Times*—say, Australian and Hong Kong dollars. The current practice is to convert them into United States dollars by taking the average of the buying and selling rates, as quoted in the *Financial Times*, and converting it into the United States dollar equivalent. Because of the need to deal with unusual situations, such as those involving Hong Kong and Australian dollars, it would be inappropriate that the precise conversion mechanisam should be spelled out in the statute. That would be unhelpfully inflexible. We have encountered this point on earlier amendments.

This is a minor technical change. I hope that the hon. Lady is listening when I say that we are grateful to the Opposition for drawing attention to this shortcoming in the text of the Bill. I have pleasure in presenting the amendment to the House.

Ms. Quin: We are grateful to the Minister for taking into account the points that we made in Committee and for his proposal to amend the Bill accordingly. Obviously, we shall not oppose the amendment. However, I should like to ask the Minister for some information. He referred to the principles that govern the conduct of the Secretary of State and the Treasury in dealing with the provisions of this part of the Bill. Will there be an opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of the principles, especially if they change?

Mr. Sainsbury: The amendment with which we shall next deal concerns the reporting arrangements. This is the sort of issue that could well be covered in the annual reports if the principles applying to the same sort of currency conversion should change.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7

RETURNS

Mr. Sainsbury: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 4, line 43, at beginning insert

'The Secretary of State shall prepare an annual report on the discharge of his functions under sections 1 to 5 of this Act. (1A)'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendment No. 19.

Mr. Sainsbury: During consideration of amendments Nos. 93 and 111 on 19 February in the Standing Committee, the view was expressed that there should be a statutory requirement on the Government to lay the ECGD's annual report and trading accounts before Parliament. During our discussions I drew attention to the high level of reporting to Parliament to which the ECGD, as a Government trading organisation, is committed. Already, annual trading accounts which are statutorily required under exchequer and audit legislation are laid before Parliament, as are annual estimates and appropriation accounts. Of course, the report of the Department of Trade and Industry itself, which, from this year, replaces the public expenditure White Paper, also refers to the work of the ECGD. Then there are the reports to Parliament, under clause 7, on ECGD commitments against statutory ceilings.

However, I recognise the merits of supplementing the existing reporting requirements with a statutory obligation on the Secretary of State to submit an annaul report. In Committee, I undertook to consider the feasibility of finding the right words for such a provision. The purpose of the amendment is to put into effect the wishes expressed by members on both sides of the Committee. It requires the Secretary of State to submit to Parliament an annual report on the discharge of his functions under clauses 1 to 5.

Amendment No. 19 is consequential. It places on the Secretary of State a statutory duty to produce a report. Although final decisions on the precise form and content of the new statutory report have not yet been taken, my basic intention is that the existing annual report—there is no statutory responsibility to table the existing report, but it has been placed in the Library—should represent the starting point for the new statutory report. Changes will be necessary to reflect the ECGD's changed role after the privatisation of the Insurance Services Group, and, indeed, with the new powers conferred by the Bill, particularly those provided for in clause 3.

The annual report—the one which we do not have statutory responsibility to table but which is placed in the Library—covers various topics. These include a review of the year's activities of the various groups and divisions, detailed reports and accounts of trading operations, a brief report of the non-trading operations—the public expenditure programmes operated by the ECGD, such as the fixed rate export finance scheme, to which I referred earlier—and developments within international forums, such as the OECD and the European Community's policy co-ordination group.

As new activities permitted by the Bill come on stream, provisions will need to be added to cover financial management activities authorised under clause 3—bond issues, cross-currency and interest-rate swaps, which were referred to during the Committee stage—and services that might be provided by the ECGD for a fee, as authorised by clause 5. In addition, it may be possible for the annual report to contain an expanded section on the non-trading operations of the new ECGD, possibly building in elements currently contained in the public expenditure report of the Department of Trade and Industry. The report might contain also a summary of returns made under clause 7 of commitments logged against the statutory ceiling. It is my intention also that the separate annual report required in relation to investment insurance activities should be subsumed into the new report.

I hope that the House will accept these amendments, which reflect the wishes expressed in Committee. They will further improve the already quite extensive reporting arrangements for the ECGD.

Ms. Quin: These amendments are not controversial. They go a little way towards meeting some of the concerns that we expressed in Committee. Parliamentary accountability is a theme that we raised several times during the course of the debate. Since the legislation as a whole is controversial, we are concerned to ensure that the ECGD, in its new form, will be properly scrutinised by Parliament, just as we are concerned that Parliament should have some involvement in how the privatised company—the new ISG—operates. We welcome the extra commitment that these amendments represent.

The Minister did not say anything about the timing of the presentation of the report and the returns. Of course, the Bill provides that they should be made as soon as practicable after 31 March each year. I should like the Minister to confirm that that is the situation. In Committee he said that in the first year it would be difficult to meet the deadline of 31 March but that the Government's aim in subsequent years would be to present the report and the returns very shortly after that date. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us a clear commitment on the matter.

We take very seriously the issue of parliamentary accountability. We shall certainly want the maximum information on the operation of the continuing ECGD. It is well known—we have highlighted the issue already this evening—that exporters are very concerned about how the continuing ECGD and the privatised company will operate. Especially in the early days, we shall want to scrutinise very closely the practical implications of these changes for exporters. For that reason, the information given to Parliament will be very important. We shall need to be in a position to debate the information, having had access to it in good time.

Mr. Cousins: I do not want to detain the House unduly, but it would be churlish not to welcome the Minister's remarks and his commitment to use the annual report as an important source of information to the business community and to members of the public who are interested. This is something that many of us on the Standing Committee suggested. We welcome the proposal to deploy the annual report to some degree as a means of engaging in the continuing debate about the direction of the remaining activities of the Export Credits Guarantee Department. To that end, following the Minister's suggestions as to what the annual report might contain, can he tell us whether it will contain an area-by-area analysis? By that I mean areas of the world. The annual report for 1986-87 contains an interesting breakdown of

[Mr. Cousins]

area-by-area exposure in different country groups. I hope that that helpful feature will continue to appear in annual reports.

The Minister mentioned some changes that he proposed to make in the work of ECGD in regard to the assurances he gave in our previous debate. Can he assure us that the annual report will rehearse and repeat the way in which those undertakings are borne out in practice, and that any intention to review the continuation of political reinsurance on a national interest basis, as the Minister said might happen, will be flagged up clearly in the annual report so that there will be plenty of time to consider its implications?

7.30 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: On the timing of the report, as the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) said, it will be as soon as practicable after 31 March. As I said in Committee, those words mean exactly what they say. After the first report, which obviously carries certain difficulties, it is our intention to meet that deadline or improve on it. If we did not do so, and if there were any unreasonable delay, because those words will be on the statute book, a Secretary of State could be got at for failing to discharge his statutory responsibilities. That is the value of including those words in the statute.

Issues such as area-by-area coverage, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), could certainly be included in the annual report and could even be expanded. He referred to national interest reinsurance. There are commercial and diplomatic reasons which I explained earlier for not listing the countries for which reinsurance is required, particularly as that could be damaging to the interests of exporters to those countries. We take it as a primary purpose of the report that nothing in it should do anything other than help, and certainly should not in any way hinder, British exporters. With that proviso, we shall seek to make the report as full as is reasonably possible.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 5, line 3, leave out 'A return' and insert 'Reports and returns prepared".—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Clause 8

SCHEME OF TRANSFER

Mr. Michael: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 5, line 28, at end insert—

'(4A) A scheme under this section shall contain no provision which may force any person to cease to be employed in the service of the state.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 23, in page 5, line 35, at end insert—

'(8) No civil servant will be transferred to the new organisation until such time as they have given their consent, in writing, for such a transfer to the Permanent Secretary.'.

No. 9, in clause 9, page 6, line 7, at end add—

'(c) he shall be allowed, on his request, to re-enter the service of the state within two years of the commencement of his employment by a transferee.'.

No. 26, in clause 9, page 6, line 7, at end add—

'(4) No member of the executive, administrative and support staff shall transfer unless he or she has previously consented to do so in writing.'.

Mr. Michael: These amendments raise issues concerning people who are now in public service and who are worthy of respect as civil servants. Despite what the Government appear to intend, they are not chattels to be despatched into the private sector with disdain and lack of consideration.

Amendment No. 4 addresses the fact that staff in the Insurance Services Group fear that so few of them will volunteer to join the privatised company that, to ensure its viability, management will try to compel them to transfer to it. One understanding of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 is that any employees occupying ISG posts at the time of the transfer to the purchaser must transfer to the privatised company. Even if the employment terms offered by the purchaser are, as the Government have promised, broadly comparable to current civil service terms, there are advantages to civil service employment that are unlikely to be replicated in the private sector. Not only is a fully index-linked pension scheme unlikely to be offered, but the security of employment in a large, nation-wide staffing pool cannot be available in a private company and that entails an increased potential for redundancy and a reduction in promotion and personal development prospects.

The amendment is intended to prevent any member of ECGD being compelled to join the new ISG insurance company or being made compulsorily redundant under the terms of the scheme established to convert it into a Government-owned company.

Amendment No. 23 addresses what many see as a disregard of the reasons for which people enter the civil service. Many of them chose to make a career in that sector and have given years of dedicated service to it. That should be respected. I am gravely disappointed by answers that I have received from Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry, and particularly from the Minister responsible for the civil service, about protecting staff who wish to remain in public service. The amendment would ensure that proper consideration and respect is given to civil servants when they decide whether to join the new company.

Amendment No. 26 also emphasises the importance of choice. I should have hoped that all right hon. and hon. Members would enthusiastically support that.

Amendment No. 9 would allow an employee to "re-enter the service of the state within two years of the commencement of his employment by a transferee". That change would make it possible for all staff currently in the ECGD who join the new ISG insurance company to return, if they wish, to the civil service at any time up to two years after they start work in the new company. It is not open-ended; it is time-limited and it is reasonable. It would mean that staff who, perhaps for domestic reasons such as children at school or a spouse at work in Cardiff, have no choice but to join the new company would have the right, for a limited period, to rejoin the civil service. That might be when the children have left school or their spouse is able to find a new job elsewhere. The amendment would guarantee a return not specifically to the ECGD, but in general to public service.

There has been disappointment at the failure of Ministers to respect and protect the position of civil

servants, whose choice to remain in public service should be protected by the House. In recent years, the Government have sought to undermine public service and to discredit it publicly just as they have sought to discredit local government service. That is both sad and wrong. It is greatly to the credit of civil servants generally that so many of them continue to display such dedication and integrity in their work. It is greatly to the credit of the civil servants to whom I refer that the Insurance Services Group is so highly respected. Without exception, those who have made representations to us during the passage of the Bill have paid tribute to its efficiency and effectiveness. The tributes have come from employers in the private sector and those involved in our export industry. For that reason, I hope that the Minister will join the Opposition in protecting, and respecting, those who have chosen to make a career in the public service.

Mr. Morgan: I support what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said about our attempts to beef up the protection of the staff affected by clauses 8 and 9 and to strengthen the rights given to employees under the scheme of transfer and the regulations in clause 9. My hon. Friend put his finger on the button when he said that there was something Orwellian about the Government's attitude to the public sector. It is a matter of "public bad, private good". They do not analyse the particular circumstances or consider the people involved because they have a straightforward ideological belief.

As Members of Parliament for Cardiff, we meet the real people involved. One cannot tell those civil servants who have been involved—perhaps on a life-time career basis—and dedicated to their work, some nonsense about the public sector being bad and the private sector good. It does not fit in with reality.

Our constituents who are ECGD staff generally fall into three broad categories. The junior staff have generalised skills in administrative, clerical, financial and personnel work and can transfer to other Departments without too much difficulty because there is not much difference between administrative or clerical work in the ECGD and in other Departments. There are other civil service Departments in Cardiff, Newport and elsewhere to which they can transfer—the Business Statistics Office, the Welsh Office, Companies House and the Inland Revenue. They employ thousands of people and junior staff may get jobs there when they are trawled under the civil service transfer procedures. We are anxious to enable people with such generalised skills to be given the time that they might need to make their choice.

The most senior category of people have highly specialised skills, but they nevertheless think of themselves primarily as civil servants. They may have joined the service at 16 or 18 years of age and may have gone through 10 promotions to reach the position of great responsibility that they now hold in the ECGD. They are probably 50 years of age or over and are beginning to think of themselves as life-time career civil servants. They might not find it very attractive to transfer, because within seven, eight or nine years they will draw their civil service pensions. Their functions are highly specialised and we should consider whether it is fair to push them into the private sector company when they have little time in their life-time careers to adjust to the idea of being employed by Trade Indemnity or Assicutazioni Generali. When they are asked at the golf club or down the pub, "What do you do for a living?", they have always said that they were civil servants. Suddenly, they would have to say that they worked for Assicutazioni Generali, and they do not want that. They are too old to be able to absorb such a change. They are used to the idea of being able to draw a civil service pension at 60 or, if they have worked for 40 years, a little sooner—as is common these days—and they do not want to transfer.

What should we do for such people, because they are very important to the organisation? If they have been with ECGD for 20 years or more, they are probably in responsible positions and without them the business will be in difficulties. If they feel that they are being treated like chattels, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, the transfer scheme will be heading for big trouble.

The middle group of people are those who have worked for perhaps 10 years for ECGD and have what might be called executive responsibilities. Their jobs are also fairly specialised and we have attempted to cover them by saying that they may be willing to give Assicutazioni Generali from Trieste a reasonable shot if it is the successful bidder. They may be willing to join the company, but it might not suit them and they might find that Triestino ways of working are not those of Cardiff or of Britain. If, after two years, they decide that it is no good, they may beg, "Can I please be given a chance at the Inland Revenue, Companies House or BSO or a transfer to London?" They may have come from London 11 or 12 years ago. What can we do for them? Apparently, the legislation will mean that they are forced to go and have no choice. If they do not like it, they are out and must accept redundancy. They will be treated like the GCHQ trade unionists and, if they hold out, they will receive redundancy, a bit of a premium and a goodbye. Is that the attitude that the Government want to communicate to civil servants who, the Government say, provide an £1 service to exporters through their commitment to the job and to advancing technology in the job?

We ask the Government to take seriously our attempts to strengthen the rights of employees, because that will help them to make the employees believe that the Government really care about them and that the Government realise that it is people-oriented business. It is all about computers and a lot of valuable people. If the people walk out of the job, the transfer scheme will not work and British exports will suffer.

7.45 pm

I look forward to hearing from the Minister, not the usual waffle about the amendment not achieving the objectives or the wording not achieving what the Opposition hope, but genuine respect for the people for whom we are legislating. If he does not show that respect, the Government do not deserve to have the Bill passed or to be able to effect a successful transfer to the privatised sector.

Mr. Sainsbury: I can say straightaway that we recognise and pay tribute—as I did on several occasions in Committee—to the skill, commitment and calibre of the work force of ECGD. I am sure that everyone will recognise that the calibre of the staff is one of the most—if not the most—important aspects of any business. In the world of financial services, which we are talking about,

[Mr. Sainsbury]

it is especially important and we have heard many tributes paid to the quality of ECGD staff. I hope that we shall be committed to providing a first-class service to British exporters after privatisation—or an even better service than is provided now.

We must consider the amendments against the background not only of our commmitment to the staff and our respect for their calibre and what they have given to the business, but of the importance that we attach to their commitment to the success of the Insurance Services Group. We shall expect the buyer of the new company to show an immense commitment to the success of the ISG and, as a purchaser, he will expect a similar commitment from his staff. Against that background, the amendments would not be helpful.

Amendments Nos. 4, 23 and 26 would limit the staff to be transferred to the new company to volunteers only. It is possible that the number of volunteers will not accord with the business requirements of that company. The ECGD privatisation is unlike some others in that only about half of the total organisation—measured by the number of staff—will be privatised. That gives much more scope than is normal for meeting the preferences of individual members of staff. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) stated as long ago as 18 December 1989 that all ECGD staff would be asked to express a preference on whether to join the new company and that

"ECGD will use its best endeavours to meet their wishes where these are consistent with the business needs of ECGD and the company."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. *23*.]

I hope that the Opposition will accept that that is perfectly reasonable.

They have spoken about the need to support British exporters and that is one aspect of that need. On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh)—the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs—reiterated what my right hon. Friend said. The terms and conditions on offer to the staff will be one factor that the Government will take into account in assessing the bids. I should expect the terms and conditions on offer to staff transferring to the new company to be at least as good as those that they enjoy now.

It is not unreasonable to expect staff to transfer on a permanent basis, because it is only by doing so that they would demonstrate the commitment to the business that we would expect the purchaser of the Insurance Services Group to show. Anyone who considers the position will recognise that if staff were able to walk out of the business at any time in the first two years for whatever reason—or for almost no reason—an effective organisation could not be built up. It would make the business's position extremely uncertain and would damage the interests of exporters.

Amendment No. 9 suggests that everyone who transferred to the new company would do so on secondment. That would be an unsatisfactory position not only for the company and for exporters but for the Government. One would not know how many people—if any—would want to come back. One would hope that there would be none. Such a possibility would be uncertain and unsettling. If many people exercised that option, it would be difficult to find them employment.

Both hon. Members for the various bits of Cardiff—the hon. Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—implied that people would want to stay in Cardiff. However, there are not many jobs available at any one time in the civil service in Cardiff.

Mr. Morgan: To cope with what I anticipated would be the Minister's reaction, I split the staff into three categories. Much of what the Minister has said does not apply to one third of ECGD staff who have common skills which could be used in other branches of the public service. They include administrative, personnel, establishment and finance staff who are not specialists in insurance.

The second group of whom the Minister has failed to take note, although I tried to draw his attention to them, is the one quarter of staff at ECGD-ISG in Cardiff, half of whom are in executive and administrative positions, who joined ECGD in London. They were persuaded to move to Cardiff in the public interest on civil service terms. They might say, perfectly reasonably, "I accepted a move down to Cardiff in 1978 because I was persuaded that it was good for me, as a civil servant, to move in the public interest and on public service terms. If I am not going to work for the ECGD as a civil servant I would rather move back to London. I was never completely sold on the idea of coming to Cardiff, so given that it will not be a civil service ECGD, I may want to move back to London because that is where my mother, brother and sister live." Does not the Minister accept that it is perfectly reasonable for people to feel like that? They were willing to accept a move in the public interest, but they are not willing to accept the move if they are not civil servants.

Mr. Sainsbury: Having heard the hon. Members for Cardiff, West and for Cardiff, South and Penarth speak at some length on the merits of Cardiff, I am astonished to hear the hon. Member for Cardiff, West suggest that there could be even one person who would want to leave Cardiff for anywhere else. However, it is a possibility. Equally, staff might not wish to leave the town in which they work and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be familiar with that position. It can create considerable difficulties in finding alternative employment. The objective will be to avoid a position in which redundancy may occur. However, amendment No. 9 would make that more rather than less likely. We would not want to have to make people redundant because its provisions were included in the Bill.

I appreciate the understandable concern that the hon. Members for Cardiff, West and for Cardiff, South and Penarth have shown for their constituents, but they must take into account the reasonable needs of the staff and the Government's assurance, which I repeat, that the terms and conditions on offer to staff will be one factor which we shall consider when assessing the bids because we are aware of the value and importance of the staff, and of their skills and the importance that is attached to them by exporters. In the light of that, I urge the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth not to press the amendments. They would not be in the overall interests of the staff, of exporters or of the continuing, privatised Insurance Services Group.

Mr. Michael: I assure the Minister that on occasion, family reasons may lead people to leave even the delights of Cardiff. That is a rare occurrence and is not to the detriment of our fair city.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I represent some parts of Cardiff, but two Cardiff constituencies are represented by Conservative Members. We sincerely hope that that will be the case for only a short time longer. I point out to the House the failure of those hon. Members to be present for this debate. Clearly, they are not here to support the Minister, but neither are they here to support the interests of their constituents, as we seek to do. As both of them are in the House at present, it is sad that they are not in the Chamber to participate in or at least to listen to our debate. I express some surprise at that.

The Minister quoted the words of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) with surprising approval. It is clear from the right hon. Gentleman's words that people's wishes come second to the interests of the business. That may be the way in which the Minister seeks to run the public service, but I do not think that it is right. I believe that one has to take people with one in attempting to build a good service.

The Minister referred to the importance of the calibre of staff. I am glad to know that the Minister has heard as many tributes as we have heard to the calibre of the staff now working for ISG. The Minister has confessed that he wants them to transfer even if it is against their will. That would take away choice. It is clear from the Minister's response that the Government are against choice. The motivation of staff is important, as is their ability. Clearly, the Government do not have the confidence in their own proposals to depend on persuasion to take people into the privatised company which they wish to create. What happened to the free market? It is not free for individuals who have given their lives to the public service; it is not free for employees.

I referred earlier to a question that I put to the Minister of State, Privy Council Office. I asked him whether he would make training opportunities and career development opportunities available to people within the Insurance Services Group so that they could, if they wished, fit themselves for jobs in the public sector and thus stay within the civil service. I did not receive a positive answer. We have had today a far from positive answer to the interests and concerns of people within the civil service whose careers and prospects may be damaged by this measure, which should carry a Government health warning.

At this stage, we will ask leave to withdraw the amendment. I am certain that our proposals will be discussed further in another place and I am also certain that civil servants, not only within ISG but generally, will have heard the Minister's sad message in this short debate. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Cousins: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 5, line 28, at end insert—

'(4A) 'A scheme under this section shall make provision for the functions so transferred to be made available through services in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 27, in clause 10, page 6, line 39, at end insert—

'(c) transfer any shares held on behalf of the Crown in any vehicle company unless he has made provision for that vehicle company or its subsidiaries to continue to operate through a regional network which assures an office in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom.'.

Mr. Cousins: The amendments are an attempt to secure within the privatised part of ECGD, which is the main subject of the Bill, a strong and continuing commitment to a regional organisation. When the need to retain a regional organisation in the project group was discussed in Committee, the Minister spoke about the continuation of regional offices in the part of ECGD that is to be privatised. He said:

"After privatisation the regional offices will be the responsibility of the new owner of the insurance services group. They will be committed to providing a first-class service to the customers. I suspect that their judgment will be, as it has been, that the regional office network is an important part of providing that first-class service. We cannot, however, commit them by writing it into the Bill, as they will not be part of the ECGD, what regional offices they will have. I am convinced that they will wish to keep a close contact with their customers, because that is a good way to do business."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 7 February 1991; c. 96.]

The Minister emphasised the importance of retaining regional offices for the short-term work of the ECGD. The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that the network of regional offices remains after privatisation.

8 pm

The present network of regional offices, of which there are nine, does not extend to each of the standard planning regions of Britain, but the amendments would ensure that there was a regional office in each standard planning region, alongside the regional offices of the Department of Trade and Industry.

It is obvious from the annual reports of the ECGD and from elsewhere that answering the flood of inquiries is an important part of the work of regional offices. The Minister referred to the importance of people being able to seek advice and information from regional offices. The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), who has considerable knowledge of small and medium-sized business, mentioned the importance of a one-stop shop where advice on export credit insurance could be given. The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that the network of face-to-face contacts in regional offices continues.

Regional offices deal with many inquiries, most of which relate to the short-term work of the ECGD, the part which will be privatised. That emphasises the importance of the amendments. About 250,000 inquiries are dealt with by those nine regional offices, which are important because they offer advice on export credit to small and medium enterprises that may be exporting for the first time.

The Government increased the grant of the Northern Development Company by almost 30 per cent. this year. That company made it perfectly clear to me that when it sets up a trade mission or receives an inquiry from a small company it is essential that it can immediately refer that business to an easily accessible regional office where face-to-face advice can be offered. That is particularly important in regions of Britain where, for historical reasons, small and medium-sized enterprise is not playing

the part in the economy of those regions that it should. The growth of those small and medium-sized enterprises does not depend solely on the passing of the amendments, but were they passed it would be an important assurance to those enterprises that a one-stop shop in their region will be able to deal with their inquiries and that they will be able to continue to rely on somebody being at the end of a telephone or in an office to deal with their complicated problems.

In Committee, the Minister said that he expected those arrangements to continue. Surely it is not too much to ask him to accept the amendments and ensure, rather than expect, that that network of regional offices survives.

Ms. Quin: Before the Minister replies, I should like to say a few words in support of the amendments.

Earlier, we spoke of sending signals to exporters, but we must consider the importance of sending signals to the regions on the privatisation of ISG. In Committee, we tabled an amendment to ensure that the regional network of offices continues. The Minister said that that was not necessary because the project business of the ECGD is best located in London and that exporters had become used to that system. We said that we were asking not for a huge organisation to be set up in the regions but for the contact point that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) suggested.

The amendments refer to the Insurance Services Group, which shortly will be privatised. We are concerned about the likely service to the regions. We should be interested to hear whether the Minister intends to ensure that the services of the privatised ISG are properly available in all parts of the United Kingdom.

The principle of regionalisation and regional access to services figures highly in the Labour party's policy review document. The regionalisation of the services of the Department of Trade and Industry, including the ECGD, and the availability of regional services, even if they are in the private sector, are important to our chances of economic success. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Opposition Members who considered the Bill in Committee represent constituencies outside the south-east and therefore understand the importance of regionalised services.

Mr. Sainsbury: Labour does not have many Members of Parliament in the south-east.

Ms. Quin: That is true, but we have an even spread throughout the rest of the United Kingdom, with representation from Scotland, Wales and the north, and we were all concerned to ensure a balanced regional structure.

Despite the good efforts of the ISG, the present balance of regional offices is not satisfactory. We pointed out in Committee that there are not offices in every standard planning region, which is why the amendments, and the amendment that we moved in Committee, specifically refer to the standard planning regions. We are worried that the spread of offices could be worse after privatisation, which is why we believe that this point is so important.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that export activity is not evenly spread throughout the United Kingdom. I am sure that he has seen the recent survey of exporters carried out by Barclays bank—it appears in its second quarterly survey—which shows a variety of export activity from one region to another. In particular, some of the older industrial regions, which are dear to the hearts of many of us on this side who served in Committee, do not have as much export activity as other regions. In the survey the export ratio of the old, industrial, English regions of the north, the north-west, Yorkshire, Humberside and the east and west midlands was below average. I wonder whether the Minister has examined those figures closely and drawn any appropriate lessons from them.

The figures are important as they show that priority needs to be given to Government efforts, including those of the ECGD and, I hope, the privatised Insurance Services Group, to improve the export services to firms in the regions. That will encourage to export firms that may previously not have thought of exporting. I am sure that the Minister will appreciate that, even if only 10 per cent. of the firms that do not export decided to do so, it could make a dramatic difference to our trade balance. We want to ensure that all measures are taken, including measures for the regionalisation of the ECGD and the privatised ISG, to enable would-be exporters fully to take advantage of the export opportunities which may be open to them. For all those reasons, I strongly support the points made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Sainsbury: I fear that the amendment reflects both a continuing misunderstanding of, or perhaps a reluctance to consider, how private industry operates and the long-established, always recurring phenomenon of Labour party interference with, intervention in, and excessive regulation of the private sector. In this case, the amendment would lay down where a particular company should have its operations.

The Labour party ignores how the private sector works. It assumes that a private company has no regard for the interests of its customers and that in a mysterious way it can make profits without either having or attracting customers. I assure the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), as I had to in Committee, that that is not how private industry works. It succeeds by satisfying its customers and giving them what they want. It seeks to do so continually and is in general a great deal more successful, more flexible, and faster to change and respond to customer needs than nationalised industries. That is one of the many reasons why privatisation has been so successful.

The way in which the amendments have been proposed reflects a failure to appreciate the relationship between an exporter and a regional office of the ECGD. We should not object to—indeed, we should welcome—any exporter who called at a regional office, but regional offices are more a base from which ECGD members of staff visit exporters than the other way round. The large number of inquiries to which the hon. Gentleman referred are largely by telephone or, these days, by fax. It is not as if many people are queuing at the door wanting to make export inquiries when the office opens in the morning. That is not what happens.

We share at least one objective—the wish to help and encourage investors—but there are many better ways to do so than by trying to regulate in statute where and how many regional offices the privatised insurance services business should have. As I said in Committee, I am confident that the new owners of the ISG will wish to keep a network that reflects both its needs and those of its

customers, and developments in business communications. I hope that hon. Members will at least recognise the speed at which business communications have changed and are likely to continue to change.

It would be unreasonable and unhelpful to impose on a private company—which, incidentally, is in competition with other private companies—a statutory requirement about where it should have its regional offices, and how many there should be. The regional offices and their staff will be among the assets transferred on the privatisation of insurance services. The present locations are of long standing. They were chosen to provide a balance between the needs of insurance services customers for local service and contact, and the costs of running a widespread regional network, which would have to be funded by the premiums paid by exporters.

8.15 pm

The regional office network has never been entirely consistent with the United Kingdom standard planning regions and there is no particular reason why it should be so. The factors determining the locations are not regional in the sense of standard planning regions, but relate to the needs of customers and the balance between the costs of the network, the methods of contacting customers, the modern communications used and what assessment is made by the new owners of the base from which they wish to send out their representatives to contact customers.

I urge the House to reject the amendments which, once more, show a failure to understand private business. They would unnecessarily interfere with and intervene in such business, certainly not to the advantage of its customers.

Mr. Cousins: The Minister's answer is both curious and disappointing. It is curious because it substantially concedes the case that we are trying to make. In view of his remarks in a previous debate this afternoon, the Minister could not seek to deny the value of the regional offices. Nor did he seek to do so in his reply. It is clear in his mind that those regional offices deal with large numbers of inquiries and provide an extremely important counselling service. They undertake effective missionary work regarding the promotion and encouragement of exports, particularly among small and medium-sized industries, along precisely the lines that my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) described. The Minister does not in any way dispute our arguments about the value of that network of regional offices.

The Minister's speech was curious because he said that we did not need to take any measures to retain the network of regional offices in the arrangements following privatisation. If the offices are as valuable as the Minister concedes, they must be worth preserving. There would be nothing extraordinary or unusual for the seller to ensure that the purchaser undertook to retain a network of continuing activity for a reasonable period. That does not constitute meddling or excessive regulation. It is slightly curious for a Minister from a Department that gave us the Financial Services Act 1986 to deliver lectures about the nature of excessive regulation.

It may be far easier to make a provision in the sale to continue regional offices than to attempt to intervene later by administrative regulation or Government involvement to patch together what could have been saved at the outset by a simple inclusion of this point in the terms of the sale.

If we think that the network of regional offices is valuable, now is the easy moment to preserve and develop it. To return after the disposal of these activities to a private company and attempt to reimpose, rebuild, comment on, criticise, develop and worry about counselling services that may have disappeared so that the only service is somebody sitting beside a fax machine in London will be to act too late. Then the matter will be complicated and will require regulation and unnecessary Government intervention in the work of a private agency. We are now engaged in the process of disposal and this is the simple and right moment to ensure that the network of regional offices survives.

Amendment negatived.

Ms. Quin: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 5, line 28, at end insert—

'(4A) The Secretary of State shall ensure that no scheme shall be made under this section without proper and timeous consultations with the relevant trade and exporting organisations and the accredited representatives of the employees' trade unions.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 21, in page 5, line 31, at end insert—

'( ) A scheme under this section shall contain a provision that there shall be a period of not less than three months, starting from the date of the announcement of the agreed purchase, for consultation and agreement on employment terms and conditions at transfer between the transferee and the employees' trade unions.'.

No. 10 in page 6, line 7, clause 9, at end add—

'(3) A scheme under Section 8 of this Act shall contain a provision that there shall be a period of not less than three months, starting from the date of the announcement of the agreement between the transferor and the transferee, for consultation and agreement on employment terms and conditions at transfer between the transferee and the employees' trade unions.'.

Ms. Quin: The amendments deal with the important issue of consultation with the work force who will be affected by the establishment of the privatised ISG and the conditions under which those consultations should take place.

Amendment No. 6 refers to

"proper and timeous consultations with the relevant trade and exporting organisations and the accredited representatives of the employees' trade unions."

Although we believe that consultations with the work force at Cardiff are important, we have also referred in the amendment to the importance of consultations with the relevant exporting organisations. The way in which the Government have proceeded with the Bill has not led to such satisfactory consultations.

Amendment No. 21 refers to

"a period of not less than three months, starting from the date of the announcement of the agreed purchase, for consultation and agreement on employment terms and conditions at transfer between the transferee and employees' trade unions."

That is the minimum that should be required. Despite the so-called process of consultation, we are not convinced that there has been any meaningful consultation to allow the views of the work force to be heard. We do not believe that their ideas have been noted and accepted.

Such consultation would be normal in most parts of the European Community. Given that one of the reasons the Government feel the Bill is necessary is as a response to possible changes in export credit in Europe, it would be a good idea if the Government followed the European

[Ms. Quin]

practice for consultation with the work force in Cardiff. We know, however, that the Government are opposed to the European social charter and that they do not like the idea of being obliged to consult employees, or to take their views into account. Presumably that explains their attitude to the privatisation of ECGD.

Amendment No. 10 also refers to

"a period of not less than three months . . . for consultation and agreement on employment terms and conditions".

We believe that the discussions between the Government, the trade unions and the employees who will be affected must be wide-ranging to cover all the various terms and conditions that will obtain at transfer.

Some of those terms and conditions will be the subject of later amendments and I know that the issue is also likely to be considered in another place when the Bill is subject to further discussion. However, we make no apology for referring to consultation and agreement now, as they are of vital concern to the employees who will be affected by the transfer.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since the outset of discussions leading to the proposal for privatisation, ECGD has been careful to involve and consult interested parties, and that includes the staff, their trade unions and the relevant exporting associations. I am surprised at the suggestion of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) that there have been no such full and comprehensive consultations with the trade unions and individual members of staff. That suggestion is contrary to the facts.

Before the decision to privatise was taken, Mr. Kemp received comments from all interested parties during his review, as did the inter-departmental working group of officials set up to study the options in the Kemp report. Those interested parties included trade unions. Major exporters and exporting organisations submitted their views to the Select Committee for Trade and Industry when it examined the future of ECGD. Numerous written representations have been taken into account. The trade unions also submitted evidence to the Select Committee through the Council of Civil Service Unions.

Since the intention to privatise ISG was announced on 18 December 1989, the trade unions have been kept informed of developments and have had numerous opportunities for making their views known to ECGD's management at meetings of the department's Whitley committee and its sub-committees, including a special sub-committee relating to privatisation issues, which meets monthly.

The hon. Lady will be aware that there have already been an exhaustive number of meetings. From time to time, there have also been meetings of the management and the chairmen of various sub-committees dealing with particular aspects of the privatisation. The topics covered in those meetings include personnel records and preliminary staff projections for the new company as well as for the proposed organisation of ECGD post-privatisation. I assure the hon. Lady that ECGD's trade unions will continue to be fully consulted as required by TUPE—Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

All the invited bidders have already met the ECGD trade unions or have arranged to do so. The bidders will be able, if they wish, to have further discussions with the unions before they submit their bids. The preferred purchaser, when identified, will have the opportunity to have further discussions with the trade unions about the terms and conditions offered.

I cannot, of course, commit the preferred purchaser to any particular approach to those discussions, but the opportunity for them will exist. There should be sufficient opportunity for such discussions before the package of terms and conditions on offer is formally presented to all staff. When that has been done, the staff will be given at least a month to express their individual preferences. I believe that is an adequate time scale and there is no need to specify a different or longer one in the Bill.

It would be unreasonable to include in statute a requirement that the parties involved should reach an agreement on terms and conditions within a set period, whether that meant three minutes, three weeks or three months.

I agree with the hon. Lady about the importance of full and proper consultation, and that is exactly what has already taken place. Therefore, the amendments are unnecessary and, insofar as they suggest that there should be a period of not less than three months for consultation starting from the date of the announcement of the agreement, they would be unhelpful and would lead to uncertainty and difficulty not only for the staff, but exporters. I had hoped that it remained the hon. Lady's view that we should provide good assistance to exporters rather than make their job more difficult.

Mr. Michael: It is not adequate to quote in support of consultation with staff consultation and comment on policy to a Select Committee in response to the Kemp report. That is no substitute for proper consultation on the current details of the way in which the privatisation will affect staff.

To date there has been no meaningful consultation with ECGD trade unions by the management departments. That is illustrated by the fact that it was necessary to take the case to the central arbitration committee to force the management to release a report prepared by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte on the terms and conditions and pension right arrangements that are likely to apply to existing ECGD staff who agree to transfer to the newly privatised company.

Mr. Sainsbury: I remind the hon. Gentleman that when that point was made previously I had to point out that the staff had sought the release of that document before it had been prepared. It would have been extremely difficult for Messrs. Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte to hand over a report that had not been completed.

Mr. Michael: The Minister repeats what he said in Committee, but the staff have also repeated their statement since the Minister made that statement. They have repeated that it was necessary for them to take such action to obtain the details of the terms and conditions and pension arrangements that were likely to apply to existing staff. It is surely right that the staff should be given information as early as possible and be fully consulted about it.

The management's intention is as follows: once the purchaser of ISG has been selected, a package of employment terms and conditions will be presented to staff, who will then have one month in which to consider it and to decide whether to join the privatised company or

to remain in the civil service. That does not allow enough time for expert advice to be obtained on employment terms or for meaningful consultation to take place—the more so given the current backlog of items on which consultation and negotiation are needed.

8.30 pm

The Minister has said that he agrees with the Opposition on the need for consultation. Sad to say, such words come easily, but staff are still not to be given adequate consideration during the process of privatisation. If the Minister agrees with us so readily, why does he not accept the amendments? If he is so willing to accept the principles behind them, why does he not accept them in full? The Minister has promised full and adequate consultation with staff at every stage from now on. I ask him to ensure that that happens in practice.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman asks why I do not accept the amendments. Amendment No. 6 states that

"no scheme shall be made under this section without proper and timeous consultation".

Who is to determine what "proper" means? A good reason for not accepting the amendments is that they are far too vague. Apart from the wide-ranging and continuing consultation with the trade unions to which I have already referred, 700 counselling interviews with members of staff have been held.

Mr. Michael: On the second point, the Minister knows about the unsatisfactory answers given by the Department and by the Minister responsible for the civil service. On the first point, the last refuge of a Minister who has lost the argument is to suggest a difficulty in an amendment that would be impossible to resolve in law. The test of what is reasonable is well established in English law, and there would be no problem about testing these points in that way. I seem to remember that in Committee the Minister defended the word "reasonable".

Mr. Sainsbury: The amendment contains the word "proper", not "reasonable".

Mr. Michael: The Minister is quibbling. He is seeking a test of what is reasonable, and if the amendment, including the principles with which he says he agrees, were incorporated in law, the test of what is reasonable would suffice to determine whether a particular course of action was satisfactory. Either the Minister should accept the amendments, therefore, or, given the quality of advice that he has at his disposal, his colleagues in another place should return with fresh amendments to give effect to the principles with which he says he agrees.

We are disappointed with the Minister's response and we shall keep these matters under close scrutiny. How the Minister pursues the undertaking that he has given in this short debate will also be a matter of scrutiny and debate in another place. In the meantime, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 9

Transferred Staff

Ms. Quin: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 5, line 39, after '1981', insert

'and the EC Directive 77/187 (The Acquired Rights Directive)'.

The amendment contains a reference to European Community directive 77/187—the acquired rights directive. We tabled the amendment because we understand that there may well be a discrepancy between the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the directive, under which the TUPE regulations were introduced in the United Kingdom.

I refer the House to article 6 of the acquired rights directive:

"The transferor and the transferee shall be required to inform the representatives of their respective employees affected by a transfer within the meaning of article 1(1) of the following: the reasons for the transfer; the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for the employees; measures envisaged in relation to the employees.

The transferor must give such information to the representatives of his employees in good time before the transfer is carried out . . . If the transferor or the transferee envisages measures in relation to his employees, he shall consult his representatives in good time on such measures with a view to seeking agreement."

The TUPE regulations only require the employer to inform recognised representatives long enough before a relevant transfer to enable consultation to take place, and they make no reference to seeking agreement.

If the acquired rights directive is not fully honoured on this occasion, would employees in these circumstances have some sort of legal resource? To avoid any move of that sort, it would perhaps be sensible explicitly to invoke the acquired rights directive to cover the transfer of the ISG to a private buyer. By including a reference to the directive, which we have signed, a greater obligation to consult meaningfully with trade union representatives over the transfer would be imposed—an imposition that would include not only consultation but a commitment to seeking agreement between employees and Government over the proposals. That would be an important commitment, especially to the employees at Cardiff. By assuring them that their views are being fully taken into account they would know that the consultation is not just a cosmetic exercise that will not result in any changes.

Mr. Sainsbury: I can assure the hon. Lady that the consultation is far from a cosmetic exercise. It is a full and comprehensive consultation—I have already mentioned 700 individual interviews—involving both trade unions and members of staff.

The amendment is not appropriate. The acquired rights directive requires member states to enact provisions in their own law to give effect to the policy described in the directive. Under Community law directives are binding in effect, but the choice of form and method of achieving that effect is left to member states. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981—we happily refer to them as TUPE—were the enactment of the directive in United Kingdom law. To apply the directive to the same transactions as those to which TUPE apply would be unnecessary and confusing for anyone trying to determine what his or her position in law was. It would apply two statutory provisions different in drafting style and expression and one of them, the acquired rights directive, was not framed with United Kingdom concepts of law in mind. It was not designed directly to operate in the context of the United Kingdom's legal system. The result would be increased uncertainty and possible doubt about the law.

Having chosen to implement the acquired rights directive by means of TUPE, it is doubtful whether it

[Mr. Sainsbury]

would be in accordance with Community law to try to implement it again in relation to a specific transaction to which TUPE would also apply. If we did that, we could be accused of avoiding the choice of a formal method, which is required under Community law. The amendment would injure the interests of ECGD staff by creating confusion about their rights. I urge the hon. Lady to withdraw the amendment and to stick to TUPE, which enacts in United Kingdom law the requirements of the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister tried to dodge the entire issue by claiming that TUPE is the British style enactment of the acquired rights directive. He must be able to demonstrate that the 1981 TUPE version of the 1977 acquired rights directive is relevant to 1991. In their 11 or 12 years in office, the Government have tried to cut this country away from the entire general drift of industrial relations provisions for consultation on major changes in employment by large firms. They have tried to cut Britain adrift from Community legislation on employment and from the social charter.

There is an interesting and relevant item in *The Independent* this morning relating to the Government's problems on this issue. It shows that in 1991 this issue is still a burning topic. It is not enough to say, as the Minister has said, that TUPE incorporates the necessary legislation. If that is true, why was it necessary for the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), the chairman of the Conservative party, to write on the topic to Wilfrid Martens, the chairman of the Christian Democrat Federation? *The Independent* seems to have acquired a copy of the letter which relates to the application by the British Conservative group in the European Parliament to become members of the Christian Democrat group. A typical Christian Democrat would have accepted our amendment straight away because it incorporates the latest and most up-to-date thinking about what employees deserve by way of consultation rights. The Government will not accept the amendment because of the current battle for the soul of the Conservative party.

In his letter, the right hon. Member for Bath said that Britain supported

"'a social dimension to the social market'".

Many Conservative Ministers, including the two who are in the Chamber, would find that deeply offensive and contrary to their fundamental beliefs. The letter speaks of a social dimension,

"that takes into full account the criteria agreed at the Madrid European Council in June 1989."

It refers to the principle of job creation and recognises the principle of subsidiarity. I cite that letter in the context of the struggle for the soul of the Conservative party. Under the acquired rights directive or any legislation dealing with rights acquired or given to employees in any kind of transfer from the public to the private sector or, as is more common, during a takeover within the private sector, do the employees of a large enterprise have any right to be consulted?

8.45 pm

Most Conservative Members who are present in the Chamber think that such employees should not have any rights at all, but they are obliged to give them some under European directives because the Government need to ensure that they can hang on to the people that they need to make a success of the transfer. The Minister said that British law in 1981 covered the 1977 acquired rights directive, but we need to know his interpretation for 1991 and beyond. Given what has happened in the past 10 years, is that the last word on acquired rights?

More time should be given and we should make more use of formal trade union negotiating machinery. Will everything be done without reference to the formal negotiating rights of the Whitley council and the civil service trade unions? The Government like to bypass the trade union negotiating machinery so that they can pick people off one by one using special offers. They want to be able to make transfers to the private sector with as little consultation and trade union bargaining machinery as possible. We want from the Minister a bit of honesty about what the Government are playing at in seeking to effect a transfer with the minimum of acquired rights. People in Britain should have maximum acquired rights in the same way as people in other European countries.

Ms. Quin: I should like to reinforce some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

The Minister rightly said that European directives provide a framework for national legislation which is enacted in detail. However, there can be legal challenges if it is felt that a country has not satisfactorily implemented a directive. There have been legal challenges on many directives, such as the directive seeking to ensure equal opportunities for women in the workplace and the equal treatment directive. It has been claimed that the United Kingdom has not properly implemented directives. Surely it would be possible under the acquired rights directive to have such a challenge.

The Minister said that, basically, we are debating two different statutory provisions—the acquired rights directive and the TUPE regulations. Is not it the case that, when the subject area is the same, the EC directive can override national legislation? In any legal dispute, the European directive has precedence over national regulations. Therefore, the two matters are not quite as separate as the Minister gave us to understand.

Mr. Sainsbury: As I think I said, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations date from 1981. It would be possible to challenge whether they effectively implement the acquired rights directive, but they have been in place for 10 years and no such challenge has been made. I have not heard anyone suggest that they fail in any way satisfactorily to implement in United Kingdom law the acquired rights directive. It would be confusing to try to include the acquired rights directive as well as TUPE, which is the method of implementing that directive in United Kingdom law. TUPE takes account of our legal concepts but the acquired rights directive does not.

Ms. Quin: The Minister has admitted that a legal challenge is possible. In any dispute between the TUPE regulations and the acquired rights directive the directive will be dominant. His reply confirms our wisdom in tabling the amendment. The issue is complicated and there are many different aspects to consider. Rather than pressing the amendment to a vote—I imagine that it will be examined in the other place—I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 10

VEHICLE COMPANIES

Mr. Sainsbury: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 6, line 42, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 43 and insert

'or any person acting on behalf of the Crown has a legal interest in them'.

This is one of those celebrated technical amendments which, I am happy to say, we have not come across quite so often in the Bill as we sometimes do in other legislation.

Clause 10(4)(a) is designed to ensure that any shares in a vehicle company which are contracted to be sold to the purchaser of the Insurance Services Group before those shares are created and issued are treated as a Crown holding for the purposes of subsection (4) of clause 10. That requires all the shares in a vehicle company to be held by the Crown as a condition of the Secretary of State acquiring any shares in it or making loans to it. If the shares are contracted to be sold before they are issued, there is concern that the purchaser might be treated as the beneficial owner of the shares and they would not, therefore, qualify as a Crown holding.

The amendment redrafts the subsection to cover the normal practice whereby shares, which are sold or transferred soon after issue, are often issued and registered in the name of a nominee for the vendor, usually his solicitor or accountant, before they are transferred to the purchaser. The amendment ensures that a temporary holding of shares in a vehicle company by one of the Secretary of State's advisers, following the practice that I have described, will rank as a Crown holding for the purposes of subsection (4) of this section.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 6, line 46, at end insert

'(6) A vehicle company under this clause shall have its headquarters located within the Cardiff area. For the avoidance of doubt, this subsection shall apply to the initial and to any subsequent transfer.'.

The amendment seeks to ensure that a vehicle company shall have its headquarters located within the Cardiff area. It also states that, to avoid doubt, the subsection should apply to the initial and any subsequent transfer.

I hoped—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) shares my hope—that all four Cardiff Members would be here to argue that that source of major employment should remain in the Cardiff area. I recall that in Committee we discussed the importance of Cardiff to the Export Credits Guarantee Department, although not on this amendment—the reasons for that will be clear in a moment. In responding to that debate, the Minister—who unfortunately is not with us now—made several comments which were helpful to the case made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West and me. He said:

"I see no reason why the new company should wish to move from Cardiff where it has operated more successfully during the past 10 years than at any other period in its history."

That is a correct reference to the encouragement that the department was given on its arrival in Cardiff and throughout the period since then. The Minister went on to say:

"None of the organisations that has expressed an interest in owning the company and bidding for it has suggested moving from Cardiff."

However, he also said that

"the ultimate location of the privatised company must remain a decision for the management and owners of that company."

That is not the case. There is no "must" about it. It is the Government's choice to leave that liberty in a way that they do not seem, from today's debate, interested in doing, with the employees of the department. It is perfectly proper for the Government to accept the amendment and to ensure that the employment of those people stays within the Cardiff area.

When the Minister summed up his remarks in that debate, he warmed to his theme. He almost waxed eloquent, saying:

"What are known as campus offices on the edge of town—they are spread out and provide good parking facilities—are often attractive. They may be just beyond the city boundary, yet be the most convenient place to which to attract staff. It would be inappropriate to include the amendment because it would be binding for ever."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 6 March 1991; c. 346-47.]

Our amendment in Committee sought to limit the location of the headquarters of the privatised company within the boundaries of the city of Cardiff. In putting forward our amendment today, we have helped the Minister to accept our amendment. Clearly, he understood the principle upon which we based our argument in Committee. The amendment states:

"A vehicle company under this clause shall have its headquarters located within the Cardiff area."

There is no difficulty with that in English law—I use that phrase advisedly as I believe that we are not allowed to speak of Welsh or British law—because the test of what is reasonable comes in. For instance, it would not be within the Cardiff area were the headquarters to be relocated in Glasgow. It would be in the spirit of the amendment were the company to be relocated a short distance outside the boundary of Cardiff in south-east Wales, from which employees are now drawn.

The arrival of the Insurance Services Group and the employees of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in Cardiff was not an accident. It was a choice to bring such employment to the area, as we in Cardiff suffered the effects of high unemployment and of the closure of some of our heavy industries. The gradual build-up in which some of us participated—my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West was involved in economic development and I was very much involved in those spheres in local government—encouraged the development of financial services and modern forms of employment within the Cardiff area. It would be a sad day were that employment to drift away from Cardiff.

The amendment seeks to make the Government recognise the validity of the Minister's words in Committee. They should recognise that it is reasonable for employees to be reassured that their jobs will remain in Cardiff, to recognise that it is reasonable for private companies bidding for ISG to be on a level playing field, knowing that the headquarters will be required to stay in Cardiff, and to have the matter dealt with once and for all.

Having taken to heart the Minister's comments in Committee, I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, who, during the Committee proceedings, seemed to have taken a vow of Trappist silence, will respond with enthusiasm and will accept the amendment. That would be in the interests of

[Mr. Michael]

the service that will be provided, the stability of staff and the security of the future of the privatised company. We do not seek to move the ISG into the private sector, but, if it must go there, we want it to be stable so that it continues to provide the service to exporters in which the Government seem to have less interest than ourselves.

Mr. Morgan: I shall merely add a few words to what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said. He mentioned the principle that we are required to comply with English law. If we were writing the legislation in compliance with the principles of Welsh law, the amendment would read:

"A vehicle company under this clause shall be garaged within the Cardiff area for the sake of the lower insurance rates."

However, we cannot do that, but must stick to the turgid language to ensure that the legislation provides, and continues to provide, 700 jobs in the Cardiff district.

9 pm

Ministers have said 50 times if they have said it once that the Bill deals with the retention in the business, but under different owners, of the 700 people who live in Cardiff and the immediate surrounding commuting district who have provided high-class service to exporters since the business was transferred to Cardiff from London in 1977, leaving the project group in London. Originally, there were some doubts among people who said that there would be loss of face-to-face contact and talked of the greenness of the local labour force when they were hired rather than staff being transferred from London on civil service terms. It was questioned whether local people would have the experience of the financial services industry and the specialised forms of insurance. People asked whether they would pick up the skills. They did pick them up and have continued to provide a high-class service.

As there is easier recruitment in the south Wales district, everyone is more than satisfied with the results. The employees are satisfied because they have, effectively, had a higher standard of living through lower house prices. The exporters are happy because there has been greater commitment to the job—perhaps because there is less choice of employment and people pitch in that little bit extra and yield that extra commitment to the job because they know it really counts in south Wales, whereas such jobs in the London district might be ten a penny, given the proximity of the City.

Those people deserve not to be messed about—one could say, not to be messed about for a second time in less than 15 years—simply because the Government want to effect a transfer of ownership out of the public sector into the private sector, so is effectively putting jobs and careers on the auction block without guarantees about what will happen afterwards. That is particularly true since we now learn that one of the bidders on the list of the half a dozen presented to us in that peculiar hole-and-corner fashion in the closing days in Committee has dropped out. Now, three of the bidders are foreign and two are British.

Therefore, there is now more than a fifty-fifty chance that employers may well finish up working for a non-British private sector company. That naturally increases their fears that a company based in Belgium, Amsterdam or Trieste may want a base in London, where much of the private insurance is located. Such foreign companies might not see the advantage of continued employment in Cardiff in the way in which a British company would because it would know the difference in supply and demand for labour in the financial services industry in Cardiff compared to London. Such advantages might not be so readily apparent to the majority of the bidders—three out of five of them come from other European countries. One way to overcome the natural fears of people in the Cardiff district, try to smooth the transfer and make the Government seem less hard-hearted and utterly ruthlessly ideological in their approach would be to write in a guarantee clause to show that the Government will bind the successful bidder to the continuation of the operation in Cardiff.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, the Minister said that he agreed with us in spirit but did not like the wording because it was too specific as to the city of Cardiff and its boundaries. He does so all the time; whenever we propose any amendment, he says that he would love to be able to help us, agrees with us 100 per cent., but our wording does not do the trick and will cause all sorts of doubts and complications. We have come up with a wording that overcomes those difficulties, but I know that he will refuse the amendment. We have heard weasel words from start to finish. The Committee stage was full of weasel words from the Minister—as is the Report stage. As we have a change of Minister, will the hon. Gentleman for once try some badger or frog words—any words but weasel words—and give some reassurance to the 700 employees whom we represent in the absence of the two Cardiff Conservative Members of Parliament?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): I am grateful for the comments of the hon. Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). However, I have to disappoint them tonight because the privatised company's ultimate location must remain a decision for its management and owners. To place on them such a restriction would inhibit their freedom to manage the business as they see fit, and would be likely to prejudice the sale prospects and the proceeds. It would certainly be a most unusual, if not unique, restriction on a commercial company. I say that in answer to a point made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. Presumably it would be possible to put such a suggestion in a statute, but it would be most unusual, if not unique, to do so.

Subject to the owner's views, the present insurance services management intention is that the company's headquarters should remain in the Cardiff district. I see no reason why the company would wish to move away from a location where it had operated so successfully for 10 years—indeed, from where it has operated more successfully than ever before in its history, and where costs are considerably lower than in other areas, especially the south-east of England. That must be the answer to the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West.

In any service business such as the Insurance Services Group, the staff are its major asset. It is a pleasure for me to reiterate the praise heaped upon the staff of the ISG by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West. It is the understanding of the members of that staff of the needs of exporters and

their knowledge of overseas markets that exporters are selling on which the business is built. That is the primary strength of the business.

In the past few years there have been significant improvements in the speed of the service that is provided to the ISG's customers. That has been brought about by the use of new information technology systems. As hon. Members will know, the full benefits of these systems are realised only with a fully trained work force of the type that is to be found in Cardiff. It is testimony to the skill and dedication of the ISG staff that more than 80 per cent. of credit limit applications from overseas buyers are processed within 24 hours. It is difficult to imagine any reason the owners of the new company could have for risking their most important asset by moving their operations away from the Cardiff area. None of the organisations which has expressed an interest in the possibility of owning the company has indicated any wish to move from Cardiff.

An amendment with a similar intention behind it to that which we are now discussing was moved and debated in Committee. I have taken the opportunity to re-read the report of the debate, and I refer to columns 345 to 349 of the *Hansard* report of the Committee's ninth sitting. That amendment was withdrawn after a full discussion, and reference has been made to that discussion this evening. It was said in that discussion that ultimately these are matters for management to decide and are not appropriate for statute. I return to the original contention that it would be almost unique to decide such matters by statute. I hope that Opposition Members will feel able to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Cousins: Having listened carefully to the Minister, I ask him to clarify, both in the context of Cardiff and elsewhere, what the Government's policy is towards the disposal of the property assets in which the Export Credits Guarantee Department is based. The assurance that he has given about the future of the department at Cardiff would be greatly reinforced if it were known that the property assets in which the activities are located will form part of the sale.

Mr. Leigh: The main property is held on lease. Nothing that I have said affects that. The hon. Gentleman, as a member of the Committee that considered the Bill, will know that there has to be a move from the present offices. That is accepted. I think that it has been made known locally that the move will take place and that a period of grace of three years has been given to the ECGD. We are not looking for any instant moves. It is clear that the department will have to move from its offices, and nothing that I have said affects that.

Mr. Cousins: Perhaps the Minister will let me know later, if not now, what the policy is on the disposal of the property assets in which the department is situated.

Mr. Leigh: I do not think that that issue is relevant to the debate. We are discussing whether the location of the company should be in the Cardiff area. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said, as has my hon. Friend the Minister of State. If we can provide him with further elucidation by letter, we shall do so.

Mr. Michael: Perhaps I can help by referring to the generosity of Cardiff city council in working to keep employment within the city by relaxing covenants, as the Minister has said, despite the council's opposition to the privatisation, to allow the privatised company time to find a new location within Cardiff or the immediate area.

I think that I begin to understand why the Minister kept quiet in Committee. He was almost over-enthusiastic in replying to this debate. Tributes to Cardiff, to the department's staff and to improved services were building up to a crescendo. There were references to skill and dedication to the extent that we thought that the hon. Gentleman was about to accept the amendment. Unfortunately, he let us down in the end.

Just as the Minister sought an excuse in Committee for not accepting the amendment, he has not accepted the amendment today, even with the obstacle which his hon. Friend identified removed from it. We are sad because the amendment which we debated in Committee was withdrawn on the basis that the location could not be limited so tightly within the city boundary. That is why we have come back with this constructive amendment tonight. It is clear that the Government do not intend to accept it, even in the spirit that was demonstrated in Committee. We were offered merely words, not a real promise to retain the headquarters in the Cardiff area.

I am sure that I can speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) in saying that the attractions of Cardiff as a location and the quality of the staff there are strengths on which we can depend. It is unfortunate that the Government have not sought to turn that good chance into certainty. With sadness, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Ms. Quin: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 7, line 9, at end add—

'(8) The Secretary of State shall not dispose of any shares in or securities of a vehicle company unless the purchaser of such shares or securities has given an unequivocal and binding guarantee to the Secretary of State that the purchaser will at all times operate with the objective of encouraging or facilitating, directly or indirectly, the supply by persons carrying on business in the United Kingdom of goods or services to persons carrying on business outside the United Kingdom.'.

The amendment places on the new privatised company an obligation to operate with the objective of encouraging or, if appropriate, facilitating directly or indirectly the export of goods and services. The Minister will remember that in Committee we expressed our great anxiety over the fact that the commitment to encourage exports that appeared in the earlier Bill was not repeated in this Bill. We discussed that commitment to encourage exports in relation to the continuing ECGD.

We feel that it is important at this stage to ascertain from the Minister whether the newly privatised company will have a statutory commitment to encourage exports. I imagine that the Minister will say that the new privatised company will obviously want to promote and encourage exports. None the less, he will be aware that exporters were worried that the phrase "encouragement of exports" was omitted from the Bill. They will wish to be assured that both the continuing ECGD and the privatised ISG will have a strong commitment to encourage exports.

In Committee we had an interesting discussion about the relative strengths of the words "facilitate" and "encourage". The Minister will see that the amendment contains both expressions so that there can be no doubt about the extent of the commitment of the new company to promoting exports. The amendment would ensure that

[Ms. Quin]

ISG is not tempted to turn away business simply because it is not immediately or obviously profitable even though it may lead to good long-term prospects for British industry in overseas markets. We are worried that short-term export credit insurance may not be available for many overseas markets and that export premium costs might rise steeply.

If there is a statutory commitment to the encouragement of exports, the company will have an additional objective to the simple one of dealing with profitable markets. There will be a wider commitment to the health of United Kingdom exporters and the United Kingdom economy as a whole. We would like to hear the Minister's response to the amendment and we hope that he will look favourably on it.

9.15 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Lady asked for my response to an amendment that is well-intentioned but, as is so often the case with such amendments, so vaguely worded that, were we to include it in the Bill, I do not know how we could ever determine whether a purchaser had operated at all times with the objectives set out in the amendment. I do not know of any criteria or test that one could apply to determine, with sufficient accuracy for something included in a statute, whether a requirement had been met.

There is a much better way to ensure that that requirement is met—I appreciate that it is a way that the Opposition find hard to accept and even harder to understand—and that is competition, which is an effective test of whether a company is providing a good service. If it is not, the customer can take his business somewhere else.

The amendment completely overlooks the fact that the Insurance Services Group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department is already operating in a competitive market. There are other providers, and there is every sign that the number of providers and the degree of competition will steadily increase.

In addition, the commitment to ISG's business and to its existing customers has already been a key factor in selecting the shortlist of those invited to tender. That arose out of earlier discussions with potential bidders. As I have already said, that commitment—not only a commitment but an understanding—and the resources necessary to carry out the work of ISG will be a major factor in determining the final purchaser from the shortlist.

Examination of the shortlist of bidders will confirm that the Government are negotiating with parties who clearly understand the market and are committed to it. I am totally confident that a purchaser, to meet the competition that the Insurance Services Group will encounter, will endeavour to provide a quality of service to its customers that will persuade them to continue coming to the ISG for export credit insurance.

Therefore, privatisation will be good for exporters, not only because of the competitive element but because it will enable privatised business to provide a more flexible service, combining export and domestic credit insurance where that is appropriate. It certainly seems to be required by a number of existing customers.

In summary, one could say that as the amendment is misguided, unnecessary, inappropriate and impractical, it should be rejected.

Ms. Quin: The Minister often criticises our amendments as being too vague or too precise. It seems that we are not able to please him at all with the ideas that we have suggested. I am perfectly well aware of the importance of competition and of market forces. Competition can be healthy and can have a healthy effect. Nonetheless, throughout the passage of the Bill, the Minister has demonstrated the wildly over-optimistic belief that somehow everything will be successfully sorted out by this policy of privatisation and competition. The two may not work in harmony because one of the problems that we mentioned in Committee was that in certain cases privatisation might reduce rather than increase competition. That argument has not been dealt with by the Minister.

We are also aware that the climate in which competition takes place may not always be conducive to balanced economic growth, which explains some of our previous amendments—for example, that on regional networks. Also, within the European Community—our focus with the privatisation of the ISG—there can be many substantiated claims of unfair competition.

Part of the wording that the Minister objects to is already in legislation—for example, that on the encouragement of exports. For that reason, I do not believe that the amendment is as inappropriate or as misguided as he suggests. The evidence shows that exporters have been able to live happily with the wording in existing legislation and so his comments on the amendment are not justified. However, once again I am sure that the importance of encouragement to export will form part of the deliberations in another place. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 11

Reinsurance of ECGD risks

Ms. Quin: I beg to move amendment No. 30, in page 7, line 10, leave out from beginning to 'under' in line 11 and insert

'Any transferee shall be obliged to consent to make, if so requested by the Secretary of State, arrangements with the Secretary of State'.

This is a probing amendment. Clause 11, as drafted, would enable the Secretary of State to establish an arrangement with the privatised company under which it would provide reinsurance for the insurance business underwritten by the ISG before privatisation—in other words, in respect of insurance policies that are still to run off.

We wonder whether a problem might occur if the privatised company refused to reach such an arrangement with the Secretary of State. The amendment is intended to oblige the privatised company to agree to the arrangement, if the Secretary of State wants one. Its aim is really to get at the reasoning behind the wording of the Bill.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand from what the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) has said that we are dealing with a probing amendment. I have noted the number of occasions on which Opposition Members have

asked leave to withdraw their amendments on the ground that they wish to leave further deliberation to another place. A remarkable degree of enthusiasm for the work of the other place seems suddenly to have been generated, and Opposition Members appear to be almost anxious to add to its work load by not taking a decisive view of any of their amendments. None the less, I appreciate that this is a probing amendment.

It may be helpful if I remind hon. Members that clause 11 enables the Secretary of State to transfer to the new company the bulk of the insurance service business that exists on the date of privatisation. The transfer will be achieved through the company providing reinsurance to ECGD in respect of existing and future risks under policies issued by the ECGD after 31 March 1987. Although it will be the reinsurer, the company will continue to administer the risks on behalf of the ECGD, which will remain the primary insurer.

This method of transferring a business is not uncommon in the insurance market, and avoids any complications that may be involved in directly transferring liabilities under insurance policies to a new insurer.

Given the circumstances, the amendment is unnecessary. Furthermore, it would not be appropriate for legislation to dictate the detailed terms of a sale contract that is yet to be negotiated. As has already been made clear, the intention is to privatise the Insurance Services Group as a going concern. The invitation to tender sets out the Government's proposals for an arrangement that enables the bulk of the existing credit insurance business to be transferred to the new group.

The draft new contracts are in the invitation to tender —a copy is available in the Library. They provide a way of putting that into effect. Bidders, however, are not precluded from submitting alternative proposals for consideration. It would be disadvantageous to the sale process if we imposed, by means of the amendment, detailed terms on bidders. Therefore, we should not accept the amendment. It would be better to leave the opportunity for another method of transfer to be accepted, if that should prove advantageous.

Ms. Quin: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Cousins: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 7, line 14, at end insert—

'1(A) The Secretary of State shall make arrangements with any transferee under which all companies carrying on business in the United Kingdom for whom the tranferee will provide export credit insurance or similar assistance, not confined to the arrangements set out under section 1(4), shall have the right of access, and the opportunity to make representations, to the Secretary of State in relation to, any aspect, of the conduct and operations of the transferee.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we may take amendment No. 31, in page 7, line 14, at end insert

'(1A) The Secretary of State shall make arrangements with any transferee under which all companies carrying on business in the United Kingdom for whom the transferee may make available export credit insurance or similar assistance shall have the right of access, and the opportunity to make representations to, the Secretary of State in relation to any aspect of the conduct and operations of the transferee.'.

Mr. Cousins: The amendments are intended to ensure that, if and when the concern is privatised, the range of businesses—many of them small—whose export credit insurance will be conducted privately will continue to have access to the Secretary of State. The Minister made much of the markets. It is an inevitable fact of life that the markets reflect the power of the various actors in those markets. With the privatisation of the Insurance Services Group, we are dealing, on the one hand, with a very large insurance company and, on the other, with a mass of exporters, many of them small, who rely on that insurance company for short-term insurance. Inevitably, therefore, the power of the markets may work very much to the advantage of the supplier of the insurance facility and very much to the disadvantage of those who depend upon it. That point has been made time and again during the discussion of this issue by bankers and companies, both large and small.

It is significant that the major clearing banks are concerned about that aspect. They are worried that their customers in other parts of the commercial world will become dependent upon a monopoly insurer for that critical part of their business. They are also worried about its consequences for premium rates, the availability of cover for particular markets, access to cover for particular deals, additional conditions that may be imposed, or the withdrawal of cover facilities from certain companies or individuals. That is what may happen if there were a major supplier of an insurance facility and a mass of small to medium-size enterprises that depended upon it.

The amendments would introduce a statutory right of access to the Secretary of State by small and medium-size companies. It must be reasonable, even to someone who is absolutely committed to the workings of the market, that a fail-safe provision should be included in the Bill. A survey into the changes was carried out by the Export Credits Guarantee Department on behalf of the Government. A key question was put to 400 companies in the survey. The Minister will recollect his doubts about surveys, but this one was carried out on behalf of the Government. Those 400 companies were asked whether the proposed change in the ECGD's status to that of a trading company would result in a better service to exporters. The majority had no view to express and did not know what to say. Their doubts about what the future may hold for them would be dealt with by the acceptance of amendments Nos. 13 and 31.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is here while we are discussing this amendment. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) has a touching faith in the powers of Secretaries of State. I know that my right hon. Friend shares my view that competition and the opportunity to take one's business elsewhere is a much better choice for the consumer than an appeal to a Secretary of State—even one as able as my right hon. Friend. The amendment fails to grasp the realities of the market, which provides competition, and it also fails to understand the purpose of the Bill.

To provide a means of appeal to the Secretary of State on the activities of a private sector company seems to me to go against what we know works and what we know is effective. It is yet another example of the Labour party seeking to impose Whitehall interference and excessive regulation on industry. The normal commercial and legal remedies would be available to customers of the privatised

[Mr. Sainsbury]

Insurance Services Group who had difficulties with the privatised company about the performance of any contracts. That goes without saying.

Of course, the privatised company will have to comply with the requirements of the Companies Acts, and the insurance company will have to be authorised by the Secretary of State under the insurance companies legislation. The Secretary of State is responsible for the administration of the legislation. Anyone is free to make representations to him about issues arising; no special arrangements have to be made.

I urge the House to reject an amendment that, once again, seeks to introduce Whitehall regulation as a substitute for competition.

9.30 pm

Ms. Quin: If the sale of ISG were to result in the existence of only one major short-term credit insurer in the United Kingdom—a virtual monopoly—would the Secretary of State be willing to receive representations from exporters concerned about rises in premium rates or about the possibility of the withdrawal of facilities? Does the Minister accept that regulation is important? The Government have told us that they are rather keen on regulation as a framework within which private companies operate. That makes our amendment seem very reasonable.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have already made it clear that the regulatory arrangements to which I have referred will certainly apply. As the hon. Lady knows, the market is becoming steadily more competitive, and there is every indication that whoever is chosen from the short list of those invited to tender for the purchase will continue that trend. If the purchaser—who might well at any time have a large part of the United Kingdom market—were to become uncompetitive, there would be no shortage of people willing to take on the business at more competitive rates. There would be no shortage of other suppliers of export credit insurance to whom customers could turn.

There would be no point in the purchaser's taking advantage of his customers. In a competitive world, that is not the way in which people go about their business. Business men seek to keep their customers—indeed, to build up their trade. That is why competition works, and why regulation—actually, interference and intervention—by Whitehall is not nearly such an effective means of giving the customer what he wants.

Mr. Cousins: The Minister's reply is mystifying. These amendments do not suggest any right of appeal in any sense that would be recognised at law; nor do they create any regulations or machinery that could produce regulations. They seek merely to guarantee a right to consult the Secretary of State in the event of difficulty.

The Minister talks glibly about how competition works. With the privatisation of the Insurance Services Group, we are dealing, on one hand, with a very large and commercially powerful supplier of financial services, and, on the other hand, with a range of often quite small businesses. No one doubts that a large, sophisticated multinational company, such as GEC, would readily be able to find alternative sources of insurance. It is very unlikely that the same would apply to a far less sophisticated business, working in a particular market and providing a very narrow range of products, outside the major commercial centres of Britain. Such a business will be extremely vulnerable to the withdrawal of insurance facilities in respect of either some range of its activities or some of its markets.

I should have thought that the Minister could accept these amendments as a means of providing Government access to knowledge about the workings of the insurance market. It is astonishing that the Minister not only does not seek to welcome the right of access to such knowledge, but regards it with contempt. It is a pity that Ministers should take that view about the representations that might come to them from smaller businesses. No doubt they will have picked up from the tone of tonight's debate just in what regard the Minister places them.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 15

SHORT TITLE, INTERPRETATION, COMMENCEMENT, ETC

Mr. Michael: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 8, line 16, at end add—

'(7) This Act shall not come into force or replace the old law unless and until it is rendered necessary by directives agreed within the European Community.'.

After discussing a number of amendments, it is quite interesting to come back to base and discuss whether the legislation is necessary in the absence of any requirement from Europe for the changes which are the basis of the Bill.

It is a fact that existing EC legislation on official, state-backed export credit insurance does not prohibit the ECGD from providing insurance for United Kingdom exporters exporting to other EC markets and that if new legislation were to be introduced prohibiting such insurance official export credit insurers such as ECGD would have sufficient time to adjust—probably two to three years as with single market legislation. It is a fact that if existing legislation, for instance the distortion of trade restrictions under article 92 of the treaty of Rome, were to be interpreted afresh in relation to official export credit insurance, again there would be plenty of time for bodies such as the ECGD to react and change. As we said before the start of the Bill's sad progress through the House, there would be plenty of time for any changes to be made were there to be such pressure from Europe, but there is no such pressure. To push ahead with ISG's full privatisation is unnecessary at this stage in relation to EC legislation. If ISG were to be changed to a Government-owned company, the Government would be able to continue to provide full backing—though not as direct as at present—for United Kingdom exporters, while retaining the flexibility to effect a full privatisation if any new EC legislation were to arise. The fact that the Government have not chosen that course demonstrates the dogmatic and extreme nature of the legislation.

The question of increased competition for ISG services to United Kingdom exporters from other EC export credit insurers is slightly different. With effect from 1 July 1990 when the second non-life insurance directive came into force, EC insurers have been able to provide insurance for exporters in one member state in the EC without needing to have a representative or branch office in that member state. Some state-backed credit insurers, notably COFACE of France, have had offices in the United

Kingdom for several years without having any serious impact on the ECGD. However, the directive has forced the pace of change and has meant that the ISG should face greater competition for its services—although that has not materialised yet—which could threaten its future viability and which it cannot counter. That is because the Act under which the ECGD operates relates only to United Kingdom exporters, and the Government are very unlikely to agree to a change of the Act to allow the ECGD to insure exports from other EC countries and thus compete on an equal basis with other European credit insurers.

It is sad that the Government do not wish our own institutions to compete on an equal basis with European institutions. Although other EC business would be profitable, the insurance provided for it by the Government would be regarded as an additional contingent liability. It must be the case that a Government-owned company, and the ISG as it is currently constituted, could provide export credit insurance for other EC exporters just as easily as a privatised ISG would be able to, and such insurance could be provided under a separate account operated on a strictly commercial basis.

As I said, we come back to the beginning of the sad series of events. When an announcement was made of the Government's intention to take the Insurance Services Group into the private sector, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I went to see the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—who usually managed to stay awake during debates. We asked him to tell us what made the privatisation necessary, but he was completely unable to do so. That is why I want the full attention of the present Secretary of State. The Minister who represented him in Committee throughout the privatisation process was unable, when challenged, to give us a reason why the legislation was necessary as a result of any legislation, regulation or other changes within the European Community. There is no reason for the Bill. No reason other than that it is an EC requirement has been given. The only reason offered by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), when he announced the intention to proceed with the legislation, was that it would be required by European Community directives. The amendment merely states:

"This Act shall not come into force or replace the old law unless and until it is rendered necessary by directives agreed within the European Community."

All we ask is that the reason given for the legislation by the then Secretary of State should be the criterion according to which it is acted upon. Surely that is reasonable. Surely the Minister and the present Secretary of State agree that the amendment would require them merely to stand by their own logic in introducing the legislation.

Mr. Salisbury: Of all the amendments tabled by the Opposition, I suspect that this is the most damaging to the interests of exporters—and it has had some competition. The amendment is wide ranging and covers the whole Bill. If it were accepted—especially against the background presented by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—it would delay for a considerable time—and from what he said, he would prefer it to delay it for ever—the opportunity for the ECGD to exercise its new powers contained in part I. It would also prevent the ECGD from using the new financial management powers contained in clause 3, which permit arrangements to contain, control and possibly reduce the costs of the ECGD's portfolio. That hardly seems sensible. It would delay the modernisation and improvement of the powers of the continuing ECGD. The new arrangements on investment and insurance and the new reporting arrangements would all be prevented by the amendment.

Perhaps more seriously, the Opposition persist in their erroneous belief that there is no reason to suspect that there would be any challenge from the European Community to state export credit insurance operations. They have argued that, because there is not yet any European Community legislation prohibiting state involvement, Government plans to privatise the insurance services business are over-hasty or premature. I can only imagine what accusations they would make when, if EC legislation were passed, we were not prepared for it and our exporters suffered as a consequence. I suggest that the Opposition's belief means that they are turning their back on reality. Debates on the implication of official export credit insurance operations have been a regular feature of discussions within the relevant experts' working groups in Brussels in recent months in anticipation of the completion of the single market at the end of 1992. There have been a number of Commission initiatives to regulate or to harmonise officially supported export credits. The possibility of a challenge to official short-term operations has become more immediate.

There was the delivery of the Advocate General's opinion following the action brought by a Belgian private credit insurer against the European Council and the European Commission. The Advocate General considered the case inadmissible on technical grounds, but otherwise well founded in substance. That is fairly conclusive evidence that the legal challenge to which we refer is real and imminent.

The case was brought by Les Assurances du Credit SA, known as Namur, against the EC Council and the Commission. Namur alleges that the various directives relating to non-life insurance discriminate against private sector companies by placing official agencies in a privileged position. That legal opinion reinforces a view commonly held about official export credit arrangements. I suggest to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth not only that the amendment is ill-conceived in that it would delay getting the benefit of the improvements in the powers of ECGD which are contained throughout the Bill, but that it ignores the reality of the legal challenge that is looming from the European Community. I therefore urge the House to reject the amendment.

9.45 pm

Mr. Michael: The Minister has repeated his arguments. They are no stronger and no more valid than they were in Committee when they were roundly dismissed. He says that it is damaging not to be ready for change. It is even more damaging to fail to support our exporters. The Minister says that it is a damaging and wide-ranging amendment. Despite its brevity, the debate has demonstrated that the Government's only argument for introducing the Bill is, as it always was, misplaced and false. We are content to stand by our demonstration of that in this debate. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

9.47 pm

Mr. Sainsbury: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill is excellent and will provide further assistance to British exporters in a number of ways. The Opposition's resistance to it has been another manifestation of their attitude to privatisation, which the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has derided as unnecessary, unproductive and unhelpful to exporters. It is quite the contrary. A privatised Insurance Services Group will be able to provide a still better and more flexible service to exporters. It will be able to provide the domestic credit insurance that it is presently unable to provide and it will, therefore, cover its customers' needs more comprehensively, which customers are clearly anxious to see. Furthermore, it will be able to pursue business overseas if it so wishes. I scarcely think that the Opposition would propose that taxpayers' money should be used through a Government-owned ECGD to enable that business to provide export credit indurance for the exports of other countries competing with British exports.

The primary reasons for the privatisation are business reasons, which the Opposition have persistently failed to recognise. Privatisation is the only realistic way in which to enable insurance services to compete freely with other credit insurers in Europe and to meet the needs of United Kingdom companies by allowing them access to a package of credit insurance covering both domestic and export business. At present, the Insurance Services Group's ability to respond to competition is restricted. The Bill will remove those restrictions and enable the Insurance Services Group to provide a still better service to our exporters. It will also allow the Insurance Services Group to meet any legal challenge. It is clear from what I said on Report that the legal challenge is real and near.

The legal challenge may be mounted at any time against state export credit insurers as representing a state aid incompatible with article 92 of the treaty of Rome. Furthermore, the Bill contains a number of other improvements, especially those in clause 3, which will enable the continuing ECGD to manage its important portfolio of investments to the greater benefit of the taxpayer and, therefore, to the greater benefit of exporters.

The Bill is the most radical overhaul of export credit arrangements in their 70 years of existence. The Government have never shirked from taking radical steps when they are necessary and beneficial to British industry, as the Bill is. It will help by providing a more flexible, more responsive, more customer-oriented and up-to-date service through the privatised Insurance Services Group and it will enable the ECGD to provide a better service for project exports. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.49 pm

Ms. Quin: The Third Reading takes place after detailed consideration of the Bill, particularly in Committee. I pay tribute to my hon. Friends for the way in which they scrutinised it so carefully in Committee. In doing so, they effectively stood up for the interests of industry and exporters.

The Minister has tried to come across as the voice of sweet reason. One would think that he has been listening carefully to exporters and industry and to the work force at the ECGD in Cardiff and their representatives, and that he is part of a Government who strongly support exports. One would never realise the reality—that, first, the Bill is highly controversial legislation which does not command the widespread support that the Minister suggested and, secondly, that exporters are deeply suspicious and worried about the future of the ECGD and about privatisation.

Exporters are worried about how the ECGD will work. In particular, as they have told us several times, they are worried about the workings of the portfolio management system and about the continuing pressure to reduce cover for many countries and markets. They believe that the restrictions on the ECGD will not allow them to win business and contracts in those markets.

It is clear from the correspondence and meetings that Labour Members have had with firms and their representatives that they are deeply worried about certain aspects of the privatisation. Manufacturing industry is particularly worried. Some of our major exporters, who sub-contract to many smaller firms, are deeply worried about the effect of privatisation and what it will mean for premium rates and the amount of insurance and reinsurance that will be available. The Minister sought to offer industry some comfort about the system for reinsurance and political risk reinsurance. None the less, the strongest objections and concerns have been expressed to us, and nothing less than a statutory commitment to continue political risk reinsurance, in its fullest form, will be acceptable to industry.

One would never think that the Bill is being considered against the background of three years of trade deficit or at a time of recession, when industry is suffering considerable hardship and difficulty. The Bill is an inappropriate response to current circumstances and we are not surprised that industry is so concerned about it.

In Committee, some Conservative Members were unhappy about what was being proposed. They have been less vocal tonight, but we have noticed some mutterings and expressions of continuing unhappiness on the Government Benches. Those hon. Members are in close contact with firms and industries in their constituencies and are aware of the amount of discontent that is being expressed.

Mr. Barry Porter: I do not wish to involve myself in the mutterings which it has been suggested come from this side. It strikes me that most Conservative Members accept the general principles of privatisation, competition and so on in the Bill. Mutterings arise only about whether industrialists and exporters are getting equality of treatment with competitors. That is the problem. Perhaps the hon. Lady will ask the Minister whether that is to be kept under continual review. I do not like to use the phrase "level playing field", but there is in the Bill an element of digging holes in the pitch.

Ms. Quin: Indeed, the arguments about the level playing field were consistently advanced in Committee. Certainly exporters are not so much muttering as shouting discontent about this issue. Many statistics have been given for the different premium rates charged in different parts of Europe; they show that our exporters are disadvantaged compared with their European counterparts.

Even if privatisation were shown to be desirable, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is right to say that the timing of the measure is unfortunate as we do not know what the European

Community is likely to propose. It is simply silly to guess its proposals in advance. As a result of whatever the proposals are, the Minister may well find that this legislation is inappropriate.

The legislation will now proceed to another place. I hope that the Government will not be able to rely on the supine support of their supporters there. It is well known that there are independent-minded members who may support the Government on certain issues, but may not do so on this legislation. We urge the Government to listen carefully to the amendments that are likely to be tabled in the other place.

Better than accepting the amendments tabled in the other place, it would be advisable for the Government even at this late stage to abandon this ill-judged, ill-thought-out and dogmatic legislation.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 194.

Division No. 106] **[9.57 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen

Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Education (Scotland)

10.12 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That the Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 2104) dated 24th October 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be revoked.

I regret that the Secretary of State for Scotland is not with us. I do not know the reason for his absence, and I do not want to make too much of it. This is an important debate with far-reaching consequences, and it is unfortunate that the head of the house, in Conservative terms at least, has decided not to be present.

The issue has been subjected to a creditable and serious debate, although there have been the odd exceptions. I have a cutting from the *Daily Record* of 12 April which states that the leader of the Conservative group on Strathclyde regional council, Councillor Fergus Clarkson, when asked to consider the fact that about two thirds of the parents in Strathclyde withdrew their children from the tests, said:

"What beats me about Glasgow was I didn't think two thirds of parents there were able to write letters."

That has not done much for the standard of the argument.

This is the first debate on the issue in the House and hon. Members will have a chance to express their anxiety and to reflect the concern that is widely felt in their constituencies. I am conscious of the fact that time is not on our side and that the arguments must be concise—perhaps almost in precis form. The Opposition strongly feel that what is happening is a tragedy. National testing for primary 4 and primary 7 pupils is being imposed, grafted on to primary education, in an unnecessary and counter-productive way. That is sad because it is muddying the waters and endangering a great deal of agreement and good will.

That good will stems from the fact that most of us accept that there is merit in the five-to-14 programme—the Labour party certainly takes that view. We accept that there is both a need for national levels of attainment, and a flow of information, and an important place for continuous assessment and diagnostic testing. There is widespread support for that, but unfortunately it is mirrored by equally widespread opposition to national testing. There is a genuine fear that national testing will distort the curriculum and ultimately lead to league tables within schools and the misapprehension of the worth of schools and the way in which they perform. There is a fear that it is part of a general drift towards seeing education as a commodity that can be manipulated by market forces.

There is an unfortunate feeling that questions have not been fully answered and that there has been a lack of consultation. There is a feeling, which I share, that it would have been very much wiser to let the five-to-14 programme become properly established and well-bedded into the system before the issue of national testing was addressed, if the Government insisted on addressing it at all. There is resentment of the fact that, of the six working papers in connection with the programme that have been produced, only working paper number 5, dealing with national testing, does not have a consultation period built into it.

I have put the arguments in shorthand, and I say to the House genuinely that they are not frivolous. I notice that there is support for them not only from parents and teachers, but from the educational hierarchy—if those involved do not object to that title. I noticed that in the *Glasgow Herald* on 7 March, Mr. Ian Collie, director of education of Central region, questioned the educational case and expressed concern about the stress and difficulties that might result from the introduction of a rigid national testing system.

There is also a fear of a hidden agenda. The Minister may feel, when I say that, that he is being much misunderstood, but I am afraid that the record invites some suspicion. It is interesting that in the MORI poll published in *The Sunday Times* this weekend, 59 per cent. of parents who said that they voted Tory believed that the introduction of national testing was a preliminary to the return of streaming in our schools. That shows how widespread and non-partisan the fears are, given the record of recent years.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office is perhaps inured to such a position, but on this issue he is a lonely figure. There has not been a great deal of covering fire of authority or quality for his position. There is every reason why he should think again. The teachers' opposition has been sustained not by fringe interests and fringe enthusiasms, but by deeply held and widely based views. Above all, the opposition of parents has shown that they give a massive vote of no confidence to the national testing system as proposed. That striking vote of no confidence is impressive and unambiguous, covering and coming from all regions of the country and all social groupings in the community. The MORI poll showed that by far the largest block of opinion—47 per cent.—was against national testing per se. More interestingly, 80 per cent of those polled were against national testing being a compulsory system built into school administration.

The polls predicted opposition and the reality far exceeded expectations or fears, depending on which side of the argument the observer took. In every district of Scotland, parents have acted out of conviction by withdrawing their children from the tests. I am told that in Strathclyde, 41,000 out of 53,000 children in the relevant groups have not been tested. In Fife, 5,000 individual letters from parents were received, in a mass test of opinion, and 60 per cent. of the eligible group were withdrawn from testing.

There is always a little difficulty about the figures and accuracy, but as I understand it from a trawl around the education authorities, and this is confirmed from a number of sources, a clear majority of parents have now withdrawn their children from the primary 4 and primary 7 testing round this year—probably more than 60 per cent. of the eligible group. That is an almost unprecedented happening in my experience and suggests that there is an unease and disquiet that we ignore at our peril.

Furthermore, it is a breakdown of consensus, a protest, that the Minister would be unwise to ignore. More than any other, the Minister must recognise what has happened as a judgment. To be fair to him, he has championed parent power and argued for a greater role for parents in the formation of education policy. Therefore, it would be unwise, undignified and damaging to his credibility were he now to turn round and defy one of the clearest expressions of parental opinion on an education matter that I can remember in my career. The Minister established school boards to institutionalise and channel parental influence. He now knows that the boards have bitten the

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

hand that fed them. They have been largely responsible for focusing and leading the opposition to national testing. Again, that is a clear expression of opinion using the machinery that the Minister said would be of increasing significance and that was set up for that purpose.

I do not wish my brief contribution to be abrasive, but I urge the Minister to respond to the parental concern that he knows exists and that I have described. Recognition of that fact by the Minister would be in the interests of pupils and our school system. If he will not recognise it, he has a duty to spell out what will happen now. Will he pursue the education authorities and insist that they insist? Is he saying that parental opinion should be ignored in this matter, perhaps forcing some parents who feel strongly enough to withdraw their children from education for the period of the tests? That would have consequences that none of us would want. Does he want to outlaw balloting or other tests of parental opinion on this issue? What sanctions will he apply if he misguidedly goes ahead with the scheme in the current atmosphere? By what authority would they be imposed?

I genuinely believe, having talked to many parents, that the problems will mount on every side if the Minister persists in what will be an embittering and pointless exercise. I appeal to him to recognise the reality of the situation and to take national testing off the agenda, at least at this stage. He should establish on strong foundations the five-to-14 programme, which commands respect and assent, and build from there. The alternative is confrontation, which is damaging and unnecessary. It is a legacy that no Minister should wish to place on our education system.

I remind the Minister—I know that he is familiar with the quote as it has been used before—of what he said on 9 May 1989:

"it would be a failure of good Government if, at the end of the day, we could not ensure that national testing was introduced in an orderly and consistent manner throughout the country." —[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 9 May 1989; c. 1374.]

On that basis, it is time for him to think again, and I hope that he will show his willingness to do so during this debate.

10.23 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was kind enough to refer to my comments in Committee in respect of national testing. I recall that he and his colleagues did not vote against the power that we took in that Bill, as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) pointed out, to introduce testing.

Seldom can a measure have been more subject to wilful misrepresentation and misguided hostility than the proposal for national testing in our schools. I am sure that the House will agree that some testing is beneficial for individual pupils and their parents and for those concerned with judging the effectiveness of schools. Children's strengths and weaknesses need to be diagnosed and assessed so that appropriate steps can be taken. Parents want to know how their children are developing against a broadly agreed, objective yardstick. A measure of the progress that a school is making with pupils should form an important part of any system of assessing a school's performance.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): How does the Minister, as a parent, know how his child is getting on in the private school in my constituency? Why is my son being compulsorily tested in his primary school in the Borders region, regardless of the wishes of his parents, when private schools are not being tested? What happened to parental choice and how can the Minister call it national testing if privatised schools are left out of it?

Mr. Forsyth: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman disagreed with my opening remarks. They were taken from "Children Come First", which sets out the Labour party's policy for raising standards in schools. The hon. Gentleman is wrong about my son attending a school in his constituency, but it is right that my children go to independent schools.

One of the extraordinary features of the regulations is that independent schools are not required under them to implement the testing proposals, but virtually all of them are doing so voluntarily. Independent schools are writing to parents to tell them that they are doing so because they believe that the testing will be of value to the children, to parents and to the education system. I venture to suggest that it is not in that sector that perhaps the greatest need exists for further progress on standards of assessment.

I said that the House might accept my opening remarks——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: If I might make some progress, I shall give way.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) was quoted in *The Scotsman* on 27 March. He was explaining a challenge that was put to him to explain why he was whistling a different tune on primary testing from his English counterpart, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). The report said:

"'I start from the Scottish system', explained Mr. Worthington. 'Jack Straw starts from the English one. One of the advantages of living in two worlds is that you can look at the chaos and muddle that is the English system. What Jack Straw was saying was that he wished that he could get some rigour into the English system.'"

That was in March. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, prior to our previous debate on this issue, was quoted in the same newspaper. The article reads:

"On the eve of a major Commons clash over Scottish education policy today, Tony Worthington, Labour's Front Bench spokesman, confirmed that the party is in favour of making the results of pupil testing known to parents; identifying schools which fail to match the standards of those with similar intakes."

The hon. Gentleman was putting forward a policy, which the hon. Member for Garscadden has just repudiated, of making league tables of schools. I ask the hon. Member for Garscadden whether the Labour party supports national testing. It is no good saying that testing is all right in one part of the country but not in another. Testing either has a place in education and assessment practice or it has not.

The hon. Member for Blackburn, who is the Labour party's education spokesman, seems to be clear on the matter. It is fair to say, however, that what the hon. Gentleman was saying in 1987 was different from what he

is saying now. He was saying in 1987 of the Government's policy of compulsory testing—I quote from *The Times* of 29 October——

"Under the guise of higher standards, the Bill"—

that is the Government's Bill—

"will label children as failures at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16, impose selection and segregate children by class and by race."

That is what the hon. Gentleman said in 1987, but in 1990, according to *The Times*, he mused:

"Does a parent want to know every four years or rather more frequently?"

He then said that annual tests might be better. The article in *The Times* added:

"Nor is Mr. Straw any longer much troubled by the publication of test data, which he once said would set child against child. Labour would ensure that a child's results were released to its parents, would sample figures to establish whether national standards in the three Rs were rising or falling, and would adjust test scores for social class so that parents could compare schools. Such an approach would stop schools from citing deprivation among their intake as 'an alibi for failure', he said. 'That is the case for it. It is not just a crutch, it is so you can be tougher on schools.'"

I ask the hon. Member for Garscadden how it is possible for the Labour party to be in favour of national testing and more information for parents about the three Rs in England but not in Scotland. What have Scottish parents done to deserve the Labour party's policy which would deny them that information?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I should be grateful if the Minister would address himself to the educational matters in the debate. When he considers the national picture of standards, has he placed in context the report published in 1989 on the assessment of achievement? The report showed that standards in reading in particular were not only remaining stable but improving. The Minister already has a national picture, so why is it important to him to implement this legislation? The organisation which produced the report will test primary 4, primary 7 and S2 every three years at the request of the Scottish Office Education Department. The tests would be undertaken by independent surveyors.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady is right. I have extended that programme. If she were being fair, she would also point out that the same programme showed a decline in standards of achievement in mathematics. But she confuses two purposes. One is to find the overall pattern of performance in the school. The other, which is the purpose of national testing, is to provide parents with the information about the individual performance of their children to which they are entitled.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I should like to make some progress.

I asked the hon. Member for Garscadden to explain the curious schism in Labour's policy north and south of the border. The only conclusion that I have been able to reach is that north of the border the Educational Institute of Scotland told the Labour party to oppose the tests, just as when the EIS told it to oppose school boards, it did so. When the EIS changed its mind, the Labour party changed its mind on school boards.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister has been reduced to insults, which suggests that he does not have much confidence in his case.

I made it clear in my opening remarks that we were in favour of diagnostic testing, continuous assessment, improved communication and the passage of information between parents and schools. All that can be achieved within the five-to-14 programme, which I welcome and on which I congratulate the Scottish Office Education Department. But we have said consistently that in the Scottish educational tradition—we believe in devolution and we practise what we preach—it is not sensible to enforce on a system that does not deem it necessary and on parents who do not want it a rigid national testing system, with all the bitterness and difficulties that will arise from it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Member for Moray points out, the hon. Gentleman did not vote in Committee against national testing. He argued that he was not opposed to the principle. His hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn, Labour's education spokesman, seems to take a different view. The hon. Member for Garscadden is being fair. He argues that the position is different in Scotland. I have looked at some of the material produced by Labour-controlled education authorities in Scotland on testing, particularly that produced in Central region. The hon. Gentleman quoted Mr. Ian Collie, the director of education in Fife. Both authorities have campaigned against the proposals.

I asked the inspectorate to look at the maths tests for primary 7, which were being set in Central region. What it reported to me is important. It said:

"it should be noted that the desire to scrutinise standards came from the headteachers themselves and that this was to be done at P3 and P5, as well as P7. Neither these headteachers nor the education authority consider teachers' own continuous assessment to be sufficient. The tests scrutinised here are those from primary 7. So far as we understand, the region has not yet produced those for primary 3 and primary 5."

Those are the inspectorate's conclusions, not mine. It is interesting that it compared the tests with the national tests which the hon. Member for Garscadden has repudiated. In brief, its conclusions were as follows:

"The national tests are directly related to nationally agreed and published attainment targets. The national tests include important additional aspects of the mathematics curriculum, such as problem-solving and enquiry. They reflect a balance across the different aspects of mathematics and are therefore more valid. They are contextualised in line with contemporary good practice in teaching mathematics. They take less time than the Central Region units and can be administered over a longer period, thus enabling teachers to fit the units into the rhythm of classwork. They are more attractively presented and better in their lay-out."

Central region and other authorities have been running their own tests, which are inferior to the national tests, but are certainly not diagnostic.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: They are as old-fashioned as the tests that the hon. Member and I sat at school, and I give way to him.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister accept that there is widespread support for the quality of the testing material? He knows perfectly well that that is not the point at issue. Will he explain to the House what happened to his conviction that parental choice should be the determining factor? How does he define parental choice, how will he take it into account and what do parents have to do to convince him that they do not want his national test?

Mr. Forsyth: What happened to the hon. Gentleman's conviction that parents should be excluded from curricular and professional matters, which he argued forcibly during the passage of the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988? Has he now changed his position? The hon. Gentleman argued in Committee and sought to persuade me to make the School Boards (Scotland) Act off limits for parents, as far as curricular and professional matters were concerned—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked me to define parental choice. If the position of Opposition Members has now changed, and they wish the Government to consider extending parental choice to curricular areas and to extend the powers of school boards in that area, of course I should be very happy to give that consideration. However, that is a completely——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I would like to return to the argument about Central region, because, while the hon. Member for Garscadden and his colleagues in local government were preventing this leaflet, which gave information about the testing proposals, from being distributed to parents, one of the arguments was that the leaflet was breaking new ground. It was positive evidence that testing was the 11-plus in disguise, because it contained the sentence:

"The results will help secondary schools to plan each child's further progress in education."

Therefore, you can imagine my surprise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in discovering that Central region, with the mathematics tests that I have just described, asks its head teachers

"to pass the whole script and the results to the pupil's secondary school on transfer."

A Labour-controlled education authority, which is not prepared to put out a leaflet because it might result in tests being passed on to the secondary school, is running tests that are the same, and telling parents that the tests are educationally invalid.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said that the quality of the tests was not in doubt. He is right. Even the Labour activist who speaks for the Lothian Parents Action Group was quoted in *The Scotsman* on 23 January as saying:

"The actual tests are therefore very user friendly and answer many of the objections related to their impact on children. The different levels are designed to take into account children's different abilities."

That is right. So, if there is nothing wrong with the test materials, what is the objection? I suspect that the objection is that the idea came from the Government and not from the Opposition.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton) *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have given way—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] If the hon. Gentleman allows me to make some progress I shall give way to him.

The reason why the test materials are good is that they have been written by practising teachers in Scottish schools. The evidence is that they are enjoyed by the children. Where no fuss of a political nature has been made, the tests have been carried out—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] If hon. Members doubt me I can give them evidence. The Chief Inspector of Schools has just returned from the Western Isles—I am not sure whether the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) is here—where he visited schools. He has reported back:

"On testing one was left wondering what all the fuss is about. In each case the head teacher, assisted by someone from the authority, had discussed testing with the school board. Individual parents' questions had been answered as they arose but testing had deliberately not been given a high profile; for example, there had been no mass meetings of parents. As a result, in all three schools, testing was proceeding in orderly fashion, untrammelled by any of the emotional response and posturing by teachers and parents evident elsewhere. For example, in Stornoway primary, with some 170 plus pupils due to be tested across P4 and P7, only one parent had asked that their child be not tested and their opposition had swiftly dissipated following a discussion with the head teacher."

The same picture can be seen in the Borders.

It should also be recognised that there is a certain correlation between some of the activities that have been going on in some education authorities and parental reluctance to become involved in the tests. The words and actions of some teachers, head teachers and even education authority personnel in recent weeks have been nothing short of scandalous:

"My child is dragged out each morning and asked where his withdrawal slip is—you're the only one not handed in" *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member may think that that is funny. That was in a telephone call from a parent in the Dumbarton division of Strathclyde:

"I've been told that if I insist on testing he'll be put at a desk in a corridor to take the test."

That was another telephone call to the Department.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): That is scraping the bottom of the barrel.

Mr. Forsyth: Since when has reporting parents' complaints to the House of Commons been scraping the bottom of the barrel? If the hon. Gentleman had any integrity and any belief in parental choice——

Mr. McFall: The Minister mentioned Dumbarton. I am as concerned professionally as the Minister in that regard. If there were anything wrong, I should take it up. But it should at least be incumbent on the Minister to listen to hon. Members and organise a debate on a proper intellectual basis rather than making snide comments.

Mr. Forsyth: Let me quote further:

"Within 10 minutes it was obvious he was to advise parents to vote against national testing".

That is in a letter from a parent in Tayside region, talking about a presentation to a school board by a directed official.

"I expected to be given both sides of the argument but what I and the rest of the parents got was nothing short of propaganda".

That was from a letter from a parent in the Renfrew division of Strathclyde. It is insupportable that teachers and education authority personnel should behave in that way. It is totally unprofessional, dishonest and an abuse of a position of trust.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take this opportunity to say that he agrees with me.

Mr. Dewar: I do not know anything about the two individual cases to which the Minister has referred. If there have been abuses, they should of course be investigated;

but I think that there is a much more important question. Is the Minister deducing from the alleged abuses that the opposition of the parents is sham and fake?

Mr. Forsyth: No, indeed. I am deducing that in parts of the country where the education authorities and teachers have explained to parents what is involved the testing is proceeding without difficulty; it is where opposition has been politically led that there have been particular difficulties in schools. The hon. Gentleman may scoff. Does he agree with the education convener of Tayside education authority, who said in the 2 April edition of *The Dundee Courier and Advertiser*—an excellent newspaper:

"It is becoming apparent now that there may well be exceptions where youngsters may go untested because of industrial action and logistical problems . . . I can see no moral justification for the authority being over-vigilant in its pursuit of those teachers."?

Where is parental choice now? Parental choice for the Labour party seems to be a one-way street. If parents choose to have their children tested, the Labour party supports those whose refuse to allow the tests to be carried out. That is what Councillor Rolf is saying. Would the hon. Member for Garscadden care to confirm what Labour policy is? Will the Labour party support the Government in taking the view that teachers ought to implement tests where parents wish them to be carried out because they are serious about parental choice? Parental choice is not a one-way street; it does not extend just to what the EIS thinks parents should choose.

Mr. Dewar: I have never supported a teachers' boycott, or said that authorities should not implement the tests. The point that has arisen, however, results from a genuine surge of opinion from parents against the tests—not politically motivated; most of the parents whom I have met have not been in a political setting, and I do not know their political views. But I know the strength of their opinions, and I think it specious and dangerous special pleading for the Minister to delude himself that this is a sham and fake opposition not built on a genuine conviction and interest in the welfare of the children concerned.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that he takes the view that a boycott should not be supported. Therefore, I take it that he will fully support the Government when they take action under the regulations against education authorities that do not accede to parents' requests that their children should be tested in accordance with their wishes. If I have misrepresented the position, the hon. Gentleman is free to come back.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I have already given way to the hon. Lady. As she will probably want to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that I ought to wind up my remarks.

Education authorities should be in no doubt about our determination to ensure that parents get the information to which they are entitled about their children's performance in the three Rs. The five-to-14 programme, which the Opposition opposed when we first introduced it, and that was the subject of a degree of scepticism, to put it mildly, will ensure that for each subject for each year in primary school levels of attainment are defined and that levels of achievement are reported to parents on the report card. Testing is limited to the three R subjects in order to provide objective standards by which to confirm teachers' judgments. The three Rs are important; they are the grounding in the basics that are the key to the wider curriculum.

Opposition Members have got themselves in a fix. They support testing south of the border, but they are against it north of the border. They have had to rely on a campaign of misinformation of parents in order to stir up opposition to the tests. When parents discover how, once again, they have been misled by the Labour party—just as on access to schools, just as on choice in education, just as on school boards—the Labour party will change its position. I believe that the tests will be implemented and will play an important part in raising standards in our schools.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The note on the Order Paper makes it clear that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments drew the special attention of the House to the instrument in its report since it thought that the intra vires of the regulations was in doubt. The report is in the Vote Office. The Standing Orders of the House place an obligation, if not clearly, at least by implication, on the Minister to respond to the note on the Order Paper by making known the Government's view on the report of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which I chaired.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Minister may seek to catch my eye in order to respond to the debate which I hope will now ensue. Perhaps he will have regard to what has just been said. However, the House will be anxious to turn to the substance of the regulations rather than to the point that the hon. Gentleman has just raised. In the obvious circumstances, may I appeal for very brief speeches, please?

10.47 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Shortly after this Tory Government came to power, I was appointed to a Standing Committee that considered one of the Bills relating to Scottish education. I can remember distinctly that the great Tory rallying cry then was, "Power to the parents" and "Parental choice." Specific reference is made in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 not just to the desirability but to the obligation to educate pupils according to the wishes of their parents. It is somewhat ironic that the Government are now trying to foist upon pupils a national system of testing when, according to all accounts and to all the available evidence, the vast majority of Scottish parents oppose national testing.

There is also widespread opposition among the teaching profession to national testing to the extent that many teachers rightly have refused to conduct the tests. That could lead to disruption in many schools, on a scale unprecedented since the disruption that the Government provoked a few years ago during the teachers' pay dispute.

The Minister ought to have the humility to recognise that teachers, as trained professionals, are in a better position than are Government Ministers to decide what is the best form of assessment for pupils. I do not know of any teacher who is absolutely opposed in principle to assessment. I believe that most, if not all, teachers are in favour of some form of diagnostic testing and continuous assessment. But national testing, as proposed in the regulations, will put enormous pressure on teachers simply

[Mr. Dennis Canavan]

to teach to the test—leading to distortion of the curriculum and to neglect of the development of many of the other talents of pupils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Can the hon. Gentleman, as a former teacher, refer the House to any systematic assessment of achievement at P4 or P7 level? Is there any means of making comparisons among local education authorities throughout Scotland?

Mr. Canavan: I do not think that the hon. Gentlemen knows much, if anything, about Scottish education. Scottish colleges of education and many other educational bodies could provide material suitable for diagnostic testing and continuous assessment—material that has far more credibility in the teaching profession in Scotland than has the scheme that it being imposed by a Minister who, I understand, has no education experience whatsoever.

It is almost incredible that the Minister has managed to find nearly £1 million to administer and advertise the scheme when he cannot find a penny for extra learning support. Indeed, it is arguable that, as a result of this scheme, less learning support will be available to many pupils. The simple reason is that much teaching time will be taken up by administration of the tests, and less will be devoted to actual teaching. It is sheer arrogance to ignore the professional opinion of teachers and the wishes of parents. As has been said, foisting this scheme on local education authority schools while fee-paying schools are given some freedom of choice is an example of double standards.

I want to devote my remaining remarks to what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) described as a hidden agenda. I suspect that there is more to the system of national testing than meets the eye. My remarks will be based not on political prejudice but on my experience as a teacher in both primary and secondary schools in Scotland—experience that goes back to the 1960s, before the introduction of comprehensive education in many areas. At that time, in Scottish education, there was almost an obsession with formal testing, including IQ tests, VRQ tests and the qualifying examination, which in some areas was called the control examination. This obsession was such that some people involved in education thought that, on the basis of the evidence of one test, they could virtually predict a child's future when that child was 11 years old.

Of course, the post-test division of children into different categories, different groups, different classes, sometimes different schools, and certainly vastly differing education environments providing very different opportunities helped to ensure fulfilment and reinforcement of what the test was designed to predict. The result was that many pupils—in some schools, the majority of pupils—were written off as failures. Many teachers of that era, including myself, can think of former pupils who, despite having been written off at the age of 11 or 12, managed to beat the system and went on to a successful career at college or university.

Many of us raised questions at that time. The most basic was that, if those who managed to beat the system were the exception, how many more were lost in an education system that was unnecessarily divisive, unfair and talent-wasting, because at that time there was no equality of educational opportunity? If the House accepts the regulations, I fear that the Government will be encouraged to use or abuse the tests to turn the clock back and thereby to deprive countless young people of the educational opportunity which is their birthright. I therefore ask the House to reject the regulations.

10.56 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): There seems to be general agreement that the test material which has been prepared by teachers is good. There is also some agreement that for some time there has been a problem with pupils leaving school who are not as well educated as they should be, because they are unable to apply the three Rs effectively at work. That holds them back at a critical stage in their life, and some people never recover from that impediment.

There is also some agreement about the fact that many of the pupils who fall into that category are not backward or dim. The system has failed them. We must ask ourselves whether, if the system is failing quality individuals who have not been able to emerge as they should have done, we should look carefully at the system. The tests have been accepted as being of quality, so the argument seems to be about their application. It is interesting that the Labour party south of the border seems to agree with national testing, but that the Labour party north of the border does not.

I happen to agree with my hon. Friend the Minister —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I will now explain why. I have written to him on behalf of parents in my constituency who were very unhappy about the way in which the matter was explained to them in the schools. They said that it was biased——

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish. I am talking about schools in my constituency —[HON. MEMBERS: "Which?"] I will name them if necessary.

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman will know that 205 meetings have been addressed across Tayside by education officials, not by councillors. The only councillors who have turned up at the meetings have been Tory councillors who have praised the education officials for their unbiased, knowledgeable and professional approach at the meetings. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the slur against education officials in Tayside?

Mr. Walker: My comments referred to the letters that I have received from my constituents about the way in which officials have presented the case in schools. They said that they were biased. I am explaining to the House —and I thought that the debate was about this—the views of parents. Parents in my constituency who have said categorically and clearly that they wish their children to be tested are now asking my hon. Friend the Minister what he will do about the education authority.

I now come to the councillors and the Labour administration. I have not mentioned them until now; only the hon. Member for Dundee, East has done so. I will do so now. What about the Labour administration?

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is not from north Tayside.

What about Merv Rolf, who stated categorically that he would not implement the law? That is effectively what he said and was another example of councillors failing to honour the legal obligations placed on them by Parliament. At what point do councillors supersede the views of Parliament?

The Labour party says that it believes in parental choice, but it cannot have only the Educational Institute of Scotland version of choice, which is Hobson's choice—do it our way or not at all. That is not acceptable to parents in my constituency. Many schools in my constituency, particularly primary schools, are very good. I should be happy for the system to show clearly that our good teachers are doing an effective job. The problem is the teachers and others in schools who know that they would not measure up under a testing system that would show clearly where they are failing.

I vividly remember the debates on school boards. It is humbug and hypocrisy for Opposition Members to say that they believe in school boards, because they did not when the legislation was proposed. When the EIS makes a pay claim, it will say that testing will require more money to do the job that we thought it had been doing. Diagnostic testing has considerable educational value, but it cannot give parents information based on national criteria. It is interesting that the Opposition, in their attempts to support the EIS, are calling for the support of parents. Parents in my constituency believe in choice and support school boards—I am pleased to say that school boards are functioning well in my constituency—and I want them to be given their right of choice, as they have demanded.

11.2 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): It is a bit rich for the Minister and the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) to lecture the Opposition about parental choice. The Minister has consistently argued that he wants to increase parental involvement and to take parents' views into account.

The Minister has failed to persuade the majority of parents that the national test is a desirable or acceptable addition to the education system. In the circumstances, he should at least withdraw it until he has had an opportunity to obtain their support. He should not be imposing it against their will.

The Minister did not answer my question nor explain how he intends to determine the parental view, how he intends to consult parents and whether he will accept that parents are entitled to differ from him. He should respond to their wishes rather than spend their money on promoting a particularly inappropriate advertising campaign to change their minds.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and many other hon. Members have said that the material that has been produced for testing, and the guidance assessment, is valuable. I have not met a teacher or anybody involved in education who has stated a different view. The Minister must know that the objection is not that that useful additional information is being imposed but that, in the context of a five-to-14 programme, we are suddenly imposing a primary 4 and a primary 7 test—sudden death testing.

The Minister has said a number of times that testing is not a matter of passing or failing. He then said that he might find money for remedial education for those who do not come up to the mark. This is a test that a child cannot pass, but can fail. That understandably gives parents considerable cause for anxiety. The test is not genuinely to seek out how to improve the performance of an individual teacher, nor is it centred on the interests of the child.

The Minister must recognise that parents want to know how their child is performing generally. That cannot be achieved by insisting that the child sits a test over a six-week period in primary 4 and that the teacher must decide several months in advance at what level to submit each child. The teacher cannot later rescind that or change that decision, unless he orders several different tests. If the child does not perform to that level, he cannot be resubmitted at a later date either at a lower or higher level. That is what most people would understand as a genuine addition to curriculum and assessment. The Minister's proposals cut right across the whole five-to-14 programme.

Will the Minister now acknowledge that, by expressing their extreme anger and taking positive action, parents have in practical terms effectively defeated the pilot scheme? In reality, the overwhelming majority of children in Scottish schools have not been submitted for this national test. Can the Minister tell the House how many children have been tested, or at least report how many have been tested, at the end of the period? I understand that, in nearly all regions, parents are being told that they do not have to submit their children to this test if they do not wish to do so.

The hon. Member for Garscadden mentioned the Secretary of State's absence, but the Minister did not say why that was. Perhaps a reason why he is not here is that he would be embarrassed to have to confront the results of a referendum conducted in Dumfries and Galloway, which is his constituency. Parents had to answer either yes or no to the simple question whether they were in favour of national testing. The response was overwhelming with almost 90 per cent. of the parents of all children responding. The response was 66 per cent. no, 34 per cent. yes. If that is not a sufficiently clear, decisive majority against the Government's national test in the Secretary of State's own constituency, I do not know what needs to be done to prove to him that parents do not wish the test to be imposed.

I agree with the Minister to some extent on one matter. It would be appropriate for teachers who have not co-operated with the test to suspend action because parents are doing the job for them. Parents have won the argument and the point has been made. I make a direct appeal to teachers to accept that they have won. In those circumstances, the Minister should agree not to press any further action against them.

Great anger has been aroused and many parents have asked teachers not to impose the test. Most local authorities have found ways to co-operate with parents and ensure that the test is not imposed against their wishes, in part because this is a grey area of the law. Those parents who want the national test should be entitled to submit their children to it, but where at least two thirds do not the Minister has wholly failed to convince us of the justification of his proposals.

It is not good enough for the Minister to suggest that he is interested in the views of parents, but only when they

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

support his particular prejudice. Where they have overwhelmingly, clearly and unequivocally stated that they do not want the national tests provided by him, he should do the honourable thing and accept that he must abandon the pilot scheme. He should sit down with parents and teachers at the Scottish Office Education Department and discuss how the material and progress made can be properly built into the curriculum, with the full support of teachers and parents, to meet the real interests of children.

11.9 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The classic mistake made by the Minister in his doomed attempt to turn the clock back in Scottish education was that of bad timing. We do not need this debate tonight as we should have had it in November when the regulations were introduced.

The timing is also wrong in that, three quarters of the way through the testing period, the regulations are meaningless because three quarters of pupils have not been tested. We no longer need the regulations because long before they are due to come into play in March next year, they will have been swept out of existence, along with the Government who introduced them.

Scottish parents must be commended on their determination to stand firm in the face of Scottish Office attempts to impose an irrelevant and unwanted system of testing that will serve no useful purpose. I also pay tribute to the spontaneity of the action of the many parent groups that sprang up when the testing regulations were introduced. Those groups were in direct contrast to the £250,000 that the Scottish Office spent on the advertising campaign to launch those regulations. A further £750,000 was spent on administering the tests. Such expenditure is shameful and the Minister should have found additional resources for learning support. If the Minister is genuinely concerned about improving standards and assisting pupils with learning difficulties, the well-established system of learning support is the means by which to achieve that.

Regional councils have been forced to cut educational budgets, and in some regions teachers are facing compulsory redundancy. It is a scandal that £1 million has been wasted on the futile national testing exercise. It is a classic example of a wasted opportunity. It would not be so bad if it were only the Government's popularity that had suffered as a result of the testing, but our young people's education has been the loser.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has already outlined the extent of the opposition throughout Scotland to the testing. I am pleased to say that a number of representatives of the parents' coalition are in the Gallery to hear the debate. Sooner or later, the Minister will be obliged to heed the views of parents and teachers. The Scottish Parent Teacher Council has articulated the views of parents and teachers, and the teaching unions, particularly the Educational Institute of Scotland, have opposed the scheme. Why does the Minister continue to ignore the views of such groups? Surely he cannot deny that parents and teachers represent their constituencies.

Time is restricted and I simply want to say that teachers, parents and the Opposition do not oppose diagnostic testing. However, we all oppose the ill-conceived, ill-prepared and ill-explained national testing scheme. It will not survive, nor will the Minister or the Government who introduced it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that other hon. Members will follow the hon. Gentleman's example.

11.12 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is the greatest of pities that, whenever we discuss one of the most important aspects of life in Scotland, it always becomes a political football. Why we cannot discuss education without making it so important politically is beyond my comprehension. That has always been so, even 20 years ago when, for better or worse, I was Minister responsible for education. Then we had problems because of a lack of accommodation, shortage of teachers and facilities. Now, the education system in Scotland is in infinitely better shape. We have adequate teachers and the pupil-teacher ratio is much lower than ever before. It is a pity that we do not appreciate those favourable circumstances.

When I was Minister, the Opposition opposed raising the school leaving age to 16. In the past, they opposed the TVEI—the technical and vocational education initiative—and the school boards. They have been opposed to almost every progressive thought of the Scottish Education Department. If the system of testing had been called continuous assessment, I dare say that the Opposition would not have raised their head.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: It is not continuous assessment.

Sir Hector Monro: Yes it is, in effect. That is what teaching is all about. Bearing in mind that the testing scheme was approved by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, and that the tests were developed by teachers, I find it difficult to understand why the Opposition have such a rooted objection to them.

So far, no one has mentioned the fact that this is a pilot scheme. As such, it should be given a fair run and conducted as flexibly as possible in March and April of this year to see how it goes and to learn lessons from it. In that way, it can be improved and we can determine whether to proceed with it. I cannot for the life of me understand why the Opposition, including the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Nationalists, are not prepared to try some progressive ideas in Scotland, and to find out whether they work. If the scheme does not work, we can think again.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) talked about Dumfries and Galloway. One can make anything out of statistics. He said that 6,854 children's parents said no and that 3,529 said yes. It appears, however, that about 2,000 children's parents—I cannot get firm figures on this from the authorities—said nothing at all. So only marginally more than 50 per cent. voted against. The other 48 or 49 per cent. of children have every right to be tested, if they want to be. It is wrong to spend so much time trying to prove that the vast majority do not want testing when that majority is, after all, pretty marginal.

What will happen to local authorities that do not carry out their legal obligations? In Dumfries and Galloway, the education authority has voted by 10 to seven to give parents the right to opt out. What, therefore, is the council's legal position? Does the matter have to be put to

the full council? What happens if the decision is upheld by the full council, even though the council is setting out to break the law of the land? Will the law be upheld for parents who want their children tested? Presumably, about 4,000 parents in Dumfries and Galloway want their children tested, and they are entitled to know where they stand.

Many of us are deeply anxious about illiteracy and the fact that we are short of statistics about it. Do all our children have a fair chance of being educated to a standard of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to go into further education? If we do not know the statistics, it is difficult to know how important the tests are in showing up levels of literacy——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Get on with it.

Sir Hector Monro: There is no point in the hon. Lady champing at the bit: she is not going to get into the debate anyway.

We shall not make much progress in raising standards of education in Scotland—the whole objective of the testing system—if there is bickering between the Government and authorities. We should all concentrate on one aspect alone—raising the quality of education throughout our primary and secondary schools.

11.19 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Although there is a great deal that I wish to debate, of necessity I must curtail my speech. It is a tragedy that a matter of great importance to the Scottish education system has been compressed into such a short debate. That surely spells out more strongly than ever the case for a Scottish Parliament in which we could address such issues, or at least a Scottish Select Committee in which we could debate Scottish education.

The Minister's speech in Committee on the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill, reported in columns 1373-74 of the *Official Report* of the First Standing Scottish Committee, now rings extremely hollow because he said that he hoped that he would be able to implement national testing with support from all quarters and that he would be able to introduce it without resorting to legislation. It is clear from all the opinion polls in Scotland that there is widespread condemnation of aspects of the suggested testing. That condemnation was voiced by teachers and parents and by no less a figure than Ian Morris, the former chief inspector of primary schools, who said in *The Times Educational Supplement* that the grounds were "educationally unsound" because

"the scheme of national testing currently advocated is reductionist and a product of structuralism."

Perhaps the Minister will comment on that.

I wish to pose three brief questions to the Minister. He spoke about the possibility of action being taken against teachers who would not implement the tests. Will he spell out exactly what kind of action he has in mind? Secondly, what is the amount of the additional funding for learning support? In answer to my previous questions, he said that when working paper No. 4 on assessment had completed its consultation process he would be able to advise us on the amount of additional funding to be provided for learning support and diagnostic testing. Finally, when will the booklet on reporting from the review and development group emerge? That is a critical part of the jigsaw that the Minister is trying to complete.

The debate has not given us enough time to address the education aspects of this legislation. Scottish teachers and parents will be sad about the fact that we could not devote more time to this matter.

11.23 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): It has taken nearly six months to have this debate. That is regrettable, but one of the great advantages of the delay is that it has given us the opportunity to debate the issue on the basis of fact rather than theory. The fact is that where parents have had a choice they have overwhelmingly rejected the tests and the thinking behind them. I commend those ordinary parents from across the political spectrum and from all parts of Scotland who have spontaneously organised to say that they do not want the tests.

We have seen the consequences of pushing the law beyond a reasonable consensus. In 1988 the Government's consultation paper on testing produced 1,000 responses. Lothian Parent Action Group found that 3 per cent. were in favour of the Government's proposals and the Church of Scotland education committee found that 2 per cent. were in favour. Nevertheless, the Government went ahead.

On this issue as on others, the Labour party greatly stresses the importance of obeying the law, and it has never deviated from the argument that there is a duty on the local authorities to test. There is no doubt about that.

Everything that parents and local authorities have done has been with legal advice, which has been that it was within parents' power to withdraw their children from the tests. The Government have not produced anything against that. The legal advice given by Lothian, Strathclyde and local authorities generally shows that parents have the power to withdraw their children.

The tragic factor in this issue is that there is so much consensus and agreement that would improve standards in Scottish primary schools and improve the quality of information available to parents. We support the five-to-14 programme.

There is agreement that there needs to be continuous assessment and the setting of high standards. There is agreement that much better quality information needs to go to homes, and that the assessment of an achievement programme is an important element.

However, everyone has seen through the Minister of State on the subject of choice. He has promulgated the importance of parental choice up and down the country, but on the important issue—where we agree that parents should have a choice in law over the tests—will the Minister unambiguously give choice to the parents who have withdrawn their children?

All over the country, there has been massive rejection of the tests. In the city of Glasgow nearly 80 per cent. of parents have withdrawn their children, saying that they are against the tests. The other 20 per cent. are not for the tests but include those who have said nothing.

The Minister claims support from parents on the basis of an NVA survey, but the man in charge of the research, John McBeth, said that primary national testing does not have majority parental support. Parents are keen on tests that have information for diagnostic purposes, but not ones that label their children for the rest of their school lives.

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

A week last Sunday, the MORI poll in *The Sunday Times*—the "Chester Street Bugle", the Tory party house magazine—showed that 80 per cent. of parents in Scotland believe that there should be a choice allowing their children not to do the tests. If the Minister had any sense, he would abandon the tests that have already been abandoned by the parents. There is no question but that the Labour party will abandon the tests. Will the Minister see sense and abandon them?

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leave withheld.

11.27 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am 47 years old, but I can remember the day when the house master read out results to the school classroom and three or four young girls broke their hearts because they did not get the marks needed for further education. That is the fate to which the Minister is consigning our children.

In my constituency, most of the primary schools have clearly rejected the Government's proposals. In one of the primary schools, the votes for testing were 40, against testing were 86, so 67 per cent. of the school's parents were totally opposed to the testing. In another school, nearly 70 per cent. of the parents were opposed to the national testing.

This issue is similar to the poll tax. The Government do not listen to the men and women in the country, who vote to bring in trash such as the Government. A Government who do not listen to the ordinary men and women are not fit to govern this country. National testing should be stopped now.

11.29 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): We have not heard the Opposition's spokesmen explain why they oppose testing. We did not hear from the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milnagavie (Mr. Worthington), who has teaching experience, how the Opposition would monitor assessment. I heard something similar to the arguments advanced by the Opposition's spokesmen before the William Tyndale primary school disaster in inner London, when everyone said that continuous assessment worked. It was not until two thirds of the children had been withdrawn from the school that the education authority introduced any changes.

The education authority in London used to welcome every Scottish teacher because Scottish teachers had the reputation of being interested in achievement. That was when we had a Labour-controlled education authority. No doubt, it was similar to the ones that we have heard about, which will test——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [22 March]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 187, Noes 251.

Division No. 110] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Hardy, Peter
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Harman, Ms Harriet
Allen, Graham	Haynes, Frank
Anderson, Donald	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Henderson, Doug
Armstrong, Hilary	Hinchliffe, David
Ashton, Joe	Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Home Robertson, John
Barron, Kevin	Hood, Jimmy
Battle, John	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Beckett, Margaret	Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Beith, A. J.	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Benton, Joseph	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Illsley, Eric
Bidwell, Sydney	Ingram, Adam
Blunkett, David	Kennedy, Charles
Boateng, Paul	Kirkwood, Archy
Boyes, Roland	Lambie, David
Bradley, Keith	Lamond, James
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Leadbitter, Ted
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Leighton, Ron
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Lewis, Terry
Buckley, George J.	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Caborn, Richard	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Callaghan, Jim	Loyden, Eddie
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	McAllion, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	McCartney, Ian
Canavan, Dennis	Macdonald, Calum A.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	McFall, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	McKelvey, William
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	McLeish, Henry
Cohen, Harry	Maclennan, Robert
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	McMaster, Gordon
Cousins, Jim	McNamara, Kevin
Crowther, Stan	McWilliam, John
Cryer, Bob	Madden, Max
Cummings, John	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Marek, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Darling, Alistair	Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Martlew, Eric
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Maxton, John
Dewar, Donald	Meacher, Michael
Dixon, Don	Meale, Alan
Doran, Frank	Michael, Alun
Duffy, A. E. P.	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Eadie, Alexander	Morgan, Rhodri
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Morley, Elliot
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Mowlam, Marjorie
Fearn, Ronald	Mullin, Chris
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Murphy, Paul
Flannery, Martin	Nellist, Dave
Flynn, Paul	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Foster, Derek	O'Brien, William
Fraser, John	O'Neill, Martin
Fyfe, Maria	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Galbraith, Sam	Parry, Robert
Galloway, George	Patchett, Terry
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*	Pendry, Tom
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*	Pike, Peter L.
George, Bruce	Prescott, John
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Primarolo, Dawn
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Quin, Ms Joyce
Golding, Mrs Llin	Radice, Giles
Gould, Bryan	Randall, Stuart
Graham, Thomas	Redmond, Martin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	Reid, Dr John
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*	Richardson, Jo
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Robertson, George
Grocott, Bruce	Rogers, Allan

Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Bill

[Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at tomorrow's sitting, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) and No. 15 (Prayers against Statutory Instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Lang and Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Legal Aid and Advice (Scotland) may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon, and, if these proceedings have not previously been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at the expiry of that period put the Questions necessary to dispose of the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Lang.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 18th April, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), if proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Agriculture have not previously been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put the Questions necessary to dispose of them, including the Question on any Amendment proposed to the said Motion which he may have selected and which may then be moved, and such Questions may be decided after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Malta (Memorial)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

11.45 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I am especially pleased to have the opportunity to speak tonight, because tomorrow afternoon the British-Maltese parliamentary group will be hosting a reception here for the Prime Minister of Malta, Mr. Fenech-Adami. I know that he will read the report of tonight's debate with interest, and will be particularly interested in the Minister's reply.

Given all the horrors that surround us today, highlighted so vividly on our television screens night after night, this may seem to some people rather a strange time for the George Cross island memorial siege bell trust to be set up. The aim of the trust is to fund and provide support, from both Malta and the United Kingdom, for the building of a suitable monument to the gallant people of Malta and all our service men—including many of the 14,650 Maltese who enlisted—who between 1940 and 1943 lived under siege conditions, facing constant attack from air and sea, as well as suffering great hardship through lack of food and all other basic necessities.

In my view, there can never be a wrong moment to commemorate heroism and sacrifice. What more appropriate time could there be for a monument such as this to be dedicated than 1992, to mark the 50th anniversary of the award of the George Cross to the island of Malta?

I was about 14 in 1940, and served as an air-raid messenger throughout the worst of the bombing raids on London in both 1940 and 1941. They were hard times, and there was little good news to give us comfort. However, I well remember that we all took heart from the example set by Malta, and we were all delighted when the courage and fortitude of all those involved in that siege were recognised in such a unique way by His Majesty King George VI on 15 April 1942, with the award of the George Cross to Malta.

In his message to the people of Malta, His Majesty said:

"To honour her brave people, I award the George Cross to the island fortress of Malta to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history."

Many people believe that that siege was much greater than the many earlier sieges from which Malta suffered.

The award came just after the worst bombing of Malta. Between 24 March and 12 April 1942, more than 2,000 sorties were made by the Germans and the Italians against the Grand harbour, with 1,870 tonnes of bombs dropped. In April 1942, 6,700 tonnes of bombs fell on the island, almost evenly split between the dockyard area and the airfields.

That Maltese ordeal continued until June 1943, but always the morale of the islanders was buoyed up by the, at times, unbelievable bravery of our armed forces, who battled their way through to the island with all the men, material and supplies necessary to sustain resistance to the enemy.

As an aside, I point out that when I read the history of those times I was struck forcibly by the fact that, for a large part of the siege of Malta, many of the Maltese people were genuinely near to starvation. The ration for a service man in those days was 4,000 calories. In Malta that was reduced to 2,000 calories. Dock workers, working

perhaps a 12-hour day under the terrible conditions that I have already described, were reduced to a ration of 1,750 calories a day. The ration for a woman was only 1,500 calories a day. On top of all the bombing and hardship that the Maltese people had to suffer, there was a slow but gradual decline in the well-being of the population, a point that we tend to forget.

After that digression, I return to what our forces did at that time. They fought their way through to the island. The losses in all such operations were appallingly high. They reached a climax in Operation Pedestal in 1942, when a convoy, vital to the survival of Malta, battled to get through to the island. The story of that convoy and the losses sustained by it bear witness to the dedication of our armed forces throughout the battle for Malta. From that one convoy, originally consisting of 14 ships, only five survived to unload in Malta. Nine of them were sunk at sea. Of the five that limped into Malta—limping is, I believe, the right word—about three of them were very severely damaged and only survived because of the work and dedication of the crews of those ships.

The monument, when erected, will commemorate this great page in the history of two island peoples. It must, and indeed it will, be completed by April of next year. The trust has a target figure of £250,000. With the support of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh as patron and of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin, both of whom served in the Mediterranean during the war, almost £150,000 has already been raised. That figure includes a Foreign and Commonwealth Office commitment of £25,000, for which I know that the officers of the trust are very grateful.

At this point, may I ask my hon. Friend who is to reply to the debate one question? Grateful though the trust is, as are all the trust's friends, for that donation, is there not another Department of State that might consider it right and proper to search in its coffers and find some contribution, however small, towards such a worthy cause? If there were any way in which my hon. Friend could forward such a process in that Department's thinking, I should be deeply grateful to him. I know that life might then be slightly easier for Lord Lewin, who will be on the warpath trying to get money wherever and whenever he can.

We have the wholehearted support of both the British and Maltese Governments for this worthy project. The site—overlooking St. Elmo point—has already been chosen and the impressive monument designed. To date, 167 Members of Parliament have signed early-day motion 366, which relates to the erection of the monument. I can give you a firm assurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that many more will do so in the weeks to come.

Finally, I wish to thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the support given thus far by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We look forward to continuance—perhaps even extension—of such support before building commences.

11.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): At the outset, I wish to express clearly the British Government's strong support for this project. We welcome this initiative by the George Cross Island Association, and are following its progress closely.

As the House will recall, Malta played a vital strategic role in the second world war. I therefore very much share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir Jim Spicer) that it is entirely fitting and appropriate that the many who died in the siege of Malta between 1940 and 1943 should be remembered in this way. My hon. Friend has talked of these dire events. I can confirm that during April 1942 alone more bombs fell on Malta than fell on the whole of this country during the worst month of the Battle of Britain.

As my hon. Friend has said, Malta's heroic struggle and survival during that period, which culminated in the unprecedented award to the island of the George Cross by King George VI in April 1942, has rightly been identified as one of the main turning points of the war. The Malta memorial will remind coming generations of the endurance, steadfastness and heroism of the Maltese people, and of the sacrifices made by so many men and women of the allied forces and civilians during the siege.

I therefore happily applaud the George Cross Island Association's imagination, foresight and initiative in seeking to have the memorial ready for unveiling by the fiftieth anniversary of the George Cross award to Malta in April 1992. We are pleased to hear that the Maltese Government are to provide the site for the memorial and construct the monument. We are also glad to learn that the siege bell is likely to be cast in Britain.

The Government believe that it is right to contribute to this worthwhile cause. Therefore, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office made available the £25,000 to which my hon. Friend referred. The Government are not unsympathetic to the view, expressed tonight by my hon. Friend, that more public funds should be made available for this project. However, in our present financial climate, when Government funds are very hard pressed, it would be quite wrong of me to offer any hope of an increased contribution from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is right that the bulk of the funds required should be raised through public subscription. My hon. Friend referred to the excellent start that was made to the siege bell trust appeal following the inaugural presentation at the Imperial War Museum in December last year. The fund-raising committee deserves our full appreciation for its efforts.

Of course, Maltese heroism during the war is not the sum total of our relationship with the island. Many hon. Members will no doubt be aware that formal ties between our two countries go back as far as 1799, when Maltese patriots invited the British to remove Napoleon's troops from the island. Hon. Members are aware of the current visit to London by the Maltese Prime Minister. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his astute timing.

The Government welcome the present Maltese Government's policies aimed at securing Malta's links with western countries that share the same democratic values and traditions. In this context, we have noted Malta's bid to become a member of the European Community. Equally, we have valued its renewed and vigorous role in such forums as the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the Commonwealth. We shared its disappointment when its bid to be host to this year's Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting was ultimately unsuccessful.

But our relationship is not only a matter of official visits and common interests. Many people in Britain have close links with Malta. Britons go in their thousands to soak up

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

the Maltese sun and enjoy the island's hospitality and unique historical heritage. In 1990 the number of British tourists to Malta was nearly 500,000.

I am, therefore, delighted that from April next year when, as we know, the siege memorial will be dedicated, tourists of all nationalities, but in particular those from Britain and the older Commonwealth countries, will be able to visit a new monument which will combine historical interest and poignant remembrance.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 16 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Community Care

1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities have already produced community care plans and assessment procedures for an individual's needs for community care services.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): All local authorities are required to produce plans for care in the community by April next year and to establish assessment procedures for community care services by April 1993. Many authorities have already moved ahead.

Mr. Arnold: Has my hon. Friend noted that Kent county council was ready to implement its community care arrangements on 1 April this year and has introduced a series of arrangements that will give a far better service to its customers? Can my hon. Friend comment on the considerable increase in resources being put into social services by Kent?

Mrs. Bottomley: Kent has been one of the front runners in the development of care in the community and its care management is a model to many. I visited Kent last year to discuss its work. I can confirm the increase in resources. Its spending on personal social services has risen from £24·4 million in 1978-79 to £99·1 million in 1990-91—a real-terms increase of 61 per cent.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that it is necessary to take into account the views of disabled people if community care is to be effective, yet the Government have acknowledged that they are dropping the advocacy parts of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 and sections 1, 2 and 3? That is damaging to community care and to disabled people.

Mrs. Bottomley: The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act predates the care in the community policies. Local authorities are already hard pressed to maintain the timetable for full implementation, but giving proper attention to the user of the service and the carer is a fundamental principle of care in the community. We have made it clear that we will review the formal implementation of those sections once care in the community is properly established.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Should not we be talking more about quality care packages than community care packages? We are dealing with the most vulnerable groups in our society—the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped and the elderly. Will my hon. Friend look at the developments that are taking place in Macclesfield? I refer particularly to Hollins park, which is a progressive partnership between the health authority and community health services. That is a private organisation dealing with the provision of beds in a nursing home for the elderly mentally infirm. Could not that be translated to many other areas?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend, who has always been a champion of, and a great expert in, these matters. There are many examples throughout Britain of innovative practical schemes offering support to the frail and vulnerable. I was in my hon. Friend's part of the world only recently to see a pioneering scheme combining district nurses and day care workers from the social services to offer a practical alternative to residential care. I shall certainly look more carefully at the details of the scheme that my hon. Friend outlined.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that if the plans are to serve the needs of the individual, they will have to involve the voluntary sector? Is the hon. Lady aware of a recent survey of the voluntary sector in which almost half of the respondents said that they had no involvement or an unsatisfactory level of involvement in the planning of community care services? On what date did she issue a letter or a circular to the local authorities making it clear that if those plans are to work they must involve the voluntary sector?

Mrs. Bottomley: The voluntary sector has pioneered many excellent services that are particularly responsive to the needs of users and carers. Only two weeks ago, we announced funding of £25,000 for the National Council for Voluntary Organisations to help voluntary organisations prepare for the contracting procedures. We have regular meetings with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and many others and we shall certainly be asking whether it has any further concerns at our next meeting, next month. We have made it clear throughout that we in the Conservative party believe in a mixed economy of care using the voluntary and private sectors. We are not committed to the monolithic provision of services by local authorities.

Bradford Hospital Trust

2. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the proposed standards of service envisaged by the hospital trust for Bradford.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The standards of service which national health service providers, including trusts, are expected to meet are defined in their contracts with purchasing health authorities.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister confirm that the sad story of the Bradford trust so far includes a freeze on the recruitment of nurses, which has meant that newly qualified nurses have been sacked and that wards 5 and 6 of Bierley Hall hospital have been closed or will be closed despite a refurbishment of £100,000? That scandalous waste of resources also includes the closure of the baby unit at St. Lukes. Does the Minister recall that during the

Gulf war, the Secretary of State said that as much money as necessary would be made available for the casualties of that war? Why does he not provide money for the casualties of the NHS trusts and ensure that patient care is improved, rather than squandering it on anti-democratic, anti-NHS trusts such as that in Bradford?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman asks for more money and I am pleased to confirm that the Bradford trust has been granted the largest external financing limit of any trust in the NHS. The capital allocation to the Bradford trust will provide for the completion of phase 1(a) at a cost of £23 million in 1993, the completion of phase 1(b) at a cost of £30 million in 1997 and the completion of that entire project, costing a further £11 million, before the end of the decade. In addition, a £44 million redevelopment programme for the Bradford royal infirmary has been planned. All that is equivalent to nearly £110 million capital investment in Bradford's hospitals in this decade. I should have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

Mr. Dickens: Is not it a fact that, since 1 April, 57 hospitals and other units, including those in Bradford, have become NHS trusts? Quality of service and patient care is on the agenda. How can that show that we are in the wrong direction? I am grateful that Oldham and Rochdale have elected for NHS trust status.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right. The trusts present the opportunity for the management and the staff of units to use the resources available to them to the best possible advantage of the patient. The Labour party uses the rhetoric of the opportunity society, but it uses every occasion to deny those seeking such opportunities the means to take advantage of them.

Mr. Madden: Why have all the Government's promises about the benefits of the NHS trust in Bradford gone so sour? The reality is that, this year, there have been cuts of £5 million and swingeing cuts have been planned for the next two years with a deterioration in the quality of patient care. Why are the Government not injecting the necessary funding now to avoid those cuts taking place? Why are they not defending the NHS in Bradford?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman seems unable to welcome the investment of £108 million in the capital provision for health in his constituency in this decade, but perhaps he will find it easier to welcome the fact that waiting lists in his constituency have been cut by 8 per cent. in the latest year for which figures are available and that the total number of people who have been waiting for more than a year has been cut by 37 per cent.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In veiw of the misleading nature of that answer, I reserve the right to raise this matter on the Adjournment.

Northwick Park Hospital

3. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to reduce waiting lists and other administrative delays at Northwick Park hospital.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the main health authorities served by Northwick Park hospital have all placed contracts specifying that those waiting longest should receive priority for treatment.

Mr. Dykes: Although this is obviously a matter for the hospital management and the regional health authority, will my hon. Friend's Department look into this matter and keep an eye on things, because the sombre reality is that, other than those needing acute emergency operations or planned treatment, no one was admitted in the first quarter of the year to Northwick Park hospital? That situation is extremely unsatisfactory. Will my hon. Friend discuss with the hospital and the RHA the possibility of a timed admission system such as that which has already been introduced by the South Western regional health authority?

Mrs. Bottomley: I hope that my hon. Friend will find that the clear priority of tackling long waiting lists throughout the NHS translates into action on behalf of his constituents. Under the new contracting arrangements, it is possible to specify waiting times as one of the quality conditions. I understand that that is precisely what is happening in the hospital to which my hon. Friend referred. North West Thames health authority has made it clear that no patient should have to wait longer than two years for treatment. That will apply to patients who do not have clear clinical priority. My hon. Friend mentioned South Western regional health authority moving to timed admissions instead of waiting lists. We hope that many other local health authorities will follow that example.

General Practitioners

4. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fund-holding general practitioners have not yet completed their contract negotiations in order to implement the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): Fund-holding general practitioners are free to make contracts for the hospital services covered by the fund in the way that they judge best for their patients. The indications are that most fund holders have placed contracts in advance for the greater part of the hospital services necessary for their patients and will arrange other contracts on an individual basis as their patients need them.

Mr. Eastham: But are not some general practitioners in a state of chaos, with hundreds of contracts still not completed? That can be put down to the hospitals that are not in a position to carry out adequate pricing and do not have the necessary additional staff or computer facilities, with consequent further delays for people waiting to go into hospital.

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is no, Sir. In the hon. Gentleman's region, about 90 per cent. of the contracts have been placed in advance. It is sensible to have 10 per cent. to follow patients who cannot be predicted in advance.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in evidence recently given to the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Nichol, the chief executive of the national health service management executive, stated that budget holding, research and the success of the project should not be carried out from the centre but that it should be left to each region to undertake its own analysis? Is not that an absurd way to proceed? Whatever the merits or demerits,

we need an assessment that is objective and will be accepted by all parties. If it is left to each region, it will be useless.

Mr. Waldegrave: No, I think that the regional arms of the NHS are the right people to deal with that. My hon. Friends regularly, and rightly, press me to stop Whitehall's tendency to centralisation. It is those hon. Members with whom I have most sympathy.

Mrs. Mahon: Where contracts have been completed, will the Minister comment on the case of the woman who was referred to Guy's hospital for sterilisation, but then found that her authority would not pay for it although her GP had referred her? Will that be a regular occurrence? Will the Minister say where patient choice comes in, if the GP decides where operations are carried out?

Mr. Waldegrave: That case did not involve GP fund holders, but I am happy to comment on it. The hon. Lady has not followed the story through. It transpired that the district involved had for many years not provided sterilisation of that kind. The present system has brought and will rightly bring that into the open, which enables my hon. Friend the Minister of State to remind the district that in such matters there is a central guideline that that service should be available throughout the kingdom.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Are not GP fund-holding practices a successful and valuable attempt to spread choice and opportunity not only to patients, but to the doctors who administer the services? Does my right hon. Friend see any evidence of a desire to spread choice and opportunity for either patients or doctors in the rehashed Labour policy unveiled by the Labour party this morning?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend. An increasing number, although I think that they are a minority, of the GPs who supported the Opposition now take my hon. Friend's view. For example, Dr. David Thomé, who used to appear in party political broadcasts on behalf of the Labour party, has now become a GP fund holder and strongly supports the scheme. In the rather weasel words of today's policy document—I am happy to say that the Opposition have watered it down a little more—we are told:

"We would expect a progressive withdrawal".

"Expect" is a good word. If expectations are confounded—as they will be—I hope that the Opposition will endorse the scheme as strongly as my hon. Friend does.

Ms. Harman: The Secretary of State said that 10 per cent. should be set aside to make it possible for patients to get treatment outside contracts placed by districts or GPs. Is he aware that no district health authority has set aside 10 per cent., that most have set aside only 2 per cent. to provide for extracontractual referrals and that some have provided only 1 per cent. or even less? How does the right hon. Gentleman propose to guarantee choice for patients through a system under which so much of the money is tied up in contracts and so little set aside for extracontractual referrals?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am afraid that the hon. Lady could not have been listening to our discussions. We were talking about GP fund-holders, in respect of whom the much smaller sum involved probably makes it reasonable—in the view of most GPs—for the proportion to be larger than is necessary at district level. That is the answer to the hon. Lady's question.

Primary Health Care

5. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what future he envisages for primary health care in Britain.

Mr. Waldegrave: Some of the most exciting developments in the national health service are occurring in primary health care. On top of the achievements already being secured through the new contracts for GPs and dentists, there are new opportunities for building on the excellent examples of team-working between GPs, nurses and other health care professionals and to achieve closer working with the hospital services. The aim is to improve the range of high-quality, cost-effective services provided to patients in the primary care setting.

Mr. Davies: Have not the Government's new contracts for GPs in the national health service brought about an unprecedented and dramatic increase in the number of child immunisations and in the amount of cervical screening, mammography and other preventive procedures being delivered in the NHS? Is not it a fact that some of the Opposition Members present in the House opposed the new contract all along and have still not had the grace to admit how wrong they were?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. The contract has produced, and is producing, major benefits for patients and it seems to me uncharacteristically ungracious of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) not to acknowledge that, on this point at least, he was wrong.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Secretary of State accept that, in that part of the national health service and in all others, the assessment of financial performance is increasingly viewed as more important than the successful treatment of patients? Does he also accept that, unless that changes, we shall see the inexorable rise of the accountant, who will be regarded as far more important to the NHS than those in the medically related professions?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly refute that. It is irresponsible to say that it is not part of the duty of those of us charged with spending public funds to ensure that they are spent for the best benefit of patients or others for whose benefit the funds were designated by Parliament. In its extraordinary rehashed document, published today, the Labour party has gone a step further. It does not care for a health care market but wants a medical market, so it is coming along nicely.

NHS Trusts

7. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made with NHS trusts since 1 April.

Mr. Waldegrave: A total of 57 hospitals and other units became fully operational NHS trusts on 1 April. A further 130 hospitals and units have expressed an interest in becoming trusts by April 1992.

Mr. Ground: Does my right hon. Friend agree that threats to the career prospects of national health service managers who recommend trust status for their hospitals represent an unacceptable threat to the independence of those managers and should be condemned whenever they are made? Does my right hon. Friend have an example of such threats in the form of a letter written to the manager of the Walsgrave hospital in Coventry by two Labour Members?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sorry to say that such a letter was written. I am happy to say that, when I drew it to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition, he immediately repudiated the views of the two Coventry Members concerned. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has, however, made similar threats himself. He owes the House an endorsement of the repudiation of the views of the hon. Members concerned and the withdrawal of his own threats, made last year, about the renewal of contracts after an election.

Mr. Nellist: If the Secretary of State wishes to make light of the matter, let me tell him that this is just one example of how deep anger already runs in Coventry among thousands of people who are not prepared to allow the hospital to be taken, over their heads, on the first step towards privatisation and got rid of. It is a publicly funded hospital, to provide whose equipment not a single family in Coventry has not bought a raffle ticket in the past 10 years.

If the concept of dismissal worries the Secretary of State so much, may I make him on offer? I will withdraw that word, and instead suggest to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench that, after the general election, we require everyone who runs a hospital in Britain to stand for election, so that the staff, the patients and the people of Coventry can sack him instead.

Mr. Waldegrave: The idea of elected brain surgeons is engaging.

I do not take the matter at all lightly; nor does the Leader of the Opposition, who, on the same day that I wrote to him, replied:

"I regard all such threats to be as meaningless as they are objectionable."

Let me draw the attention of the hon. Member for Livingston to his own threat, when he warned managers that they should remember that their contracts would not be up for renewal until after the next general election.

Mr. Hayes: Never mind what the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) says, although his threats are bad enough. It is a different matter when the Opposition health spokesman threatens not to renew the contracts of managers who assist the Government's proposals.

Does my right hon. Friend agree with an editorial in the *Health Service Journal*, which is not exactly a hotbed of high Toryism? Let me paraphrase it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must paraphrase it.

Mr. Hayes: I will, Mr. Speaker. I would never quote directly. *[Interruption.]* I am going to paraphrase the article. Hon. Members are not listening.

"This is outrageous interference in NHS management".

Mr. Speaker: Order. That sounds like a quotation to me.

Mr. Waldegrave: The bellowing from below the Gangway represents the only support that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is receiving from his own side; he has been repudiated by his leaders. It is evidence of the weakness of Opposition Members' position. This is a serious matter. To threaten any public servants in such a way is no part of our traditions and should be repudiated by the House.

Mr. Beggs: When a local community is entirely opposed to a health board's proposals to downgrade the status of a local hospital, will that hospital still have the right to seek trust status?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. There is no reason why such a hospital should not make an application for trust status. It would be considered alongside all the other applications, according to the published criteria, but hospitals have a perfect right to seek such status.

Mr. John Greenway: Would not it be helpful if patients in any district hospital could be asked a question about the future of that hospital, free from the political interference by the Labour party and its attempts to dissuade them by perpetrating myths about my right hon. Friend's reforms? No hospital is being asked to opt out of the NHS. What is on the agenda is the prospect of more local control and accountability in the health service for the better delivery of patient care.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. A general practitioner was quoted in *The Guardian*—not usually a supporter of my party—as saying that the current anger of people in the streets was directed at those who had scared them with stories about what the reforms meant, all of which have now turned out to be false.

Mr. Robin Cook: I fully associate myself with the repudiation by the leader of my party of the remarks made in relation to that hospital——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Do not be so nasty to the Coventry Members.

Mr. Cook: There was nothing nasty about the repudiation and I fully associate myself with it. I am also delighted to take this opportunity to reassure all national health service managers that there will be no problem over renewing the contracts of those managers who serve the next Labour Government as loyally as they have served this Government.

However, the Secretary of State's claims about the accountability of these trusts would be more credible had he not stuffed their boards with people who know little about the national health service and who represent no one in the local community. How does he justify the fact that he has appointed a majority of business men to those trusts and that the largest business interest is property development? Although managers will be safe from action by us after the next election, does the Secretary of State accept that we shall replace those people who were appointed as members of trust boards and health authorities with people who live in the area, who use the health service and who are committed to restoring it as a public service?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think I hear the hon. Gentleman repudiating his own words, which it is right that he should do. He threatened managers' contracts. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but he knows that he said that. It was reported at the time—[HON. MEMBERS: "What is wrong with that?"]—His hon. Friends ask what is wrong with that. That is the voice of the true Labour party. The hon. Gentleman also criticises the appointment of people with business experience to hospital management boards. This great public service can well use the experience of managers of other large organisations in order to deploy most effectively the skills of NHS professionals.

South West RHA

8. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has yet received any proposals from the South West regional health authority for amalgamation of any district health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No, Sir. We do not expect regional health authorities to submit formal proposals—*[Interruption.]*—for amalgamation of health authorities unless extensive local consultations—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have a stop to this pointing across the Chamber.

Mrs. Bottomley: No, Sir. We do not expect regional health authorities to submit formal proposals for amalgamation of health authorities unless extensive local consultations have shown that the proposals command broad local support.

Mr. Speller: When my hon. Friend considers the needs of the south-west, particularly those in the county of Devon, will she bear in mind the fact that it has four area health authorities, that by and large people in the county of Devon think of themselves as Devonians and that it may be logical to consider replacing the four authorities with one?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that suggestion. Another advantage would be to have coterminosity with social services departments. That, with the implementation of community care, might make a great deal of sense. Ministers, however, will be influenced by the extent to which such proposals command local support and by the extent to which they are seen as improving health care and services to local residents.

"Look after your Heart" Campaign

9. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of the "Look after your Heart" campaign.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: "Look after your Heart" is a major national programme launched in 1987 to reduce death and illness in England from coronary heart disease. All right hon. and hon. Members with English constituencies have received copies of the programme's strategy for 1990 to 1995.

Mr. Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware of the fact that in England we cut the level of circulatory disease by 24 per cent. between 1980 and 1988, compared with the World Health Organisation's target of 15 per cent. for the year 2000? Has my hon. Friend seen the new World Health Organisation paper on heart disease relating to diet and nutrition and does she believe that its recommendations will be included in the strategy for the next five years?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right to cite the great reduction in coronary heart disease during the 1980s. Ministers are pleased, but are by no means satisfied. My hon. Friend knows that renewal of the "Look after your Heart" campaign envisages a further 25 per cent. reduction in heart disease by the end of the century.

St. Paul's Eye Hospital, Liverpool

10. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from community health councils about the closing of St. Paul's eye hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Dorrell: The Liverpool Central and Southern community health council has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State objecting to the proposal.

Mr. Loyden: Is the Minister aware that the objections made by the community health council reflect the opinion of patients, staff and the wider public in Liverpool and throughout the region about the proposals to close St. Paul's eye hospital? As a patient there for nine years suffering from glaucoma, I suggest that I know more about the hospital than does the Minister or those placed in areas such as Liverpool to carry out Tory policy in the health service. Will the Minister reflect on the Government's attitude that patient care is of prime importance and take into account as soon as possible the views of patients and community health councils on the proposed closure of St. Paul's hospital?

Mr. Dorrell: We certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman that patient care is the principal concern. The hon. Gentleman will know that the proposal is currently with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has not yet taken a decision. Of course, my right hon. Friend will take account of the views of Liverpool Central and Southern CHC. He will also take account of the views of Liverpool Eastern CHC, which has not objected to the proposal. He will also take it into account that the effect of the proposal would be to move the majority of ophthalmic provision in the city of Liverpool out of a small and very old hospital into a modern hospital that was opened in 1978. That factor must be taken into account in assessing the issue which the hon. Gentleman rightly places at the top of the agenda—the quality of patient care.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister accept that it is precisely because St. Paul's is a small hospital which has served the needs of the people of Liverpool for many generations that the people are so hostile to the idea of its being absorbed into a large hospital, the Royal in my constituency? Will he reconsider the reply that he gave on 12 March when he declined to see a delegation from the CHC led by the rector of Liverpool parish? Will he now see that delegation and consider especially the provision of ophthalmic beds for children in the heart of the community?

Mr. Dorrell: Liverpool Eastern CHC took up the question of the provision of ophthalmic beds for children and was satisfied by the assurances that it received from the district health authority. I have already given an

undertaking that we shall, of course, look at all sides of the argument before reaching a decision, but, in assessing the merits of the argument that it is a small hospital, much loved by the local community, we must also remember the clinical benefits that come from a broader base of clinical expertise within the same hospital. Those are balancing arguments and their merits still have to be assessed.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the draft Budget produced by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) there is no provision to increase expenditure on the health service? Does not that suggest that the Opposition's concern over the closure of the hosptial is synthetic indignation which the Labour party is unable to fund?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that, as we consider the provision in Liverpool, Bradford and every other locality in the country, we must test the claims of the Opposition that they would be able to do better against their inability to extract from the dour Scotsman from Glasgow the promise to spend any more money on the health service.

Ward Closures

11. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many wards closed in England each week since 1 February.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not routinely collect this information centrally, since ward and bed numbers are not a good indicator of levels of service in the national health service. However, the hon. Member will be glad to know that since 1979 there has been a 25 per cent. increase in the number of patients treated by the national health service.

Mr. Wray: Will the Minister explain why there are 50,000 people on the waiting list in Wales and 800,000 in other parts of England? Will he also explain under what legislation, since the Tory National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, Medway health authority is trying to enter into a package deal with a centre hopitalière in France? Does the Minister agree with that package deal?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not sure that waiting lists are the strongest line for the hon. Gentleman to pursue, as the numbers on those lists increased by 48 per cent. under Labour, whereas they have declined under the Conservatives. The Medway deal that the hon. Gentleman mentioned has been discussed in the House. If it is within the law—we shall have to check whether it is within the vires of the local health authority—and it is in the best interests of patients, I shall have no reason to interfere with it.

Mr. Rowe: How many wards have been closed as a result of the introduction of non-invasive surgical techniques, day-care operations and the decanting of large numbers of patients into much more satisfactory care in the community? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is in the spirit of the European Community that if Medway health authority can secure a better deal for its patients by using European facilities, it is all to its credit that it should do so?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the latter point, I agree with my hon. Friend, subject to the point that I made earlier. My hon. Friend is perfectly right that in the past 10 years there has been an enormous increase in day surgery, as knowledge of its proper use has increased. In most other advanced countries, such as France and Germany, there has been a similar increase in the number of patients treated, alongside a drop in the total number of beds.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that in Bradford and Leeds some wards and beds are still being held for Gulf crisis casualties? What extra steps will his Department take to ensure that clearance of the backlog of operations resulting from the Gulf crisis is speeded up?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am astonished at what the hon. Gentleman says. It certainly should not be so and I shall have the position investigated urgently. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that in practice the Gulf crisis had almost no impact—indeed, no impact at all—on the national health service. That being the case, there should be no excuses of the kind that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. As I said, I shall have the matter looked into.

Eye Tests

12. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to complete the review of charges for eye tests.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We commissioned NOP, an independent market research company, to carry out a survey on the proportion of adults who had a sight test in the first quarter of 1990. The results indicated that demand for sight tests was returning to normal, following an accepted initial drop after the introduction of charges in April 1989.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that good eyesight is a prerequisite for a proper quality of life in retirement, as well as being essential for safe driving? As there is growing evidence that a number of elderly people have not had their eyes tested since the introduction of charges two years ago, will my hon. Friend consider exempting all pensioners as a essential cost-effective preventive measure?

Mrs. Bottomley: I endorse my hon. Friend's point about the importance of sight tests. Of course, 35 to 40 per cent. of the population—including children, people on low incomes and people with clinical needs—are entitled to free tests. It is important that people should know their welfare entitlements. That is why we recently launched a major initiative to draw attention to the fact that certain groups of people are entitled to free sight tests.

Mr. Robin Cook: Has not the Minister seen the results of the survey carried out last week by *The Economist* which indicated that, in the two years since charges were introduced, 5 million fewer eye tests have been carried out than were carried out before the introduction of charges? Does not she grasp that if only 1 per cent. of those 5 million people go on to develop serious eye disorders, the cost to her Department will be far greater than the amount that is being saved by charging for eye tests? If she is in any real doubt about the figures, why have not she and her colleagues once approached optrometrists with a view to agreeing on how to measure the dramatic drop in the number of eye tests which is a direct result of Government policies?

Mrs. Bottomley: Our consumer survey, like those organised by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Consumers Association, makes it clear that the demand for sight tests has returned to the level that pertained through the 1980s which was established before the announcement of the introduction of charges. It is right that those who can do so should pay the modest charge for a sight test which is about the same as the cost of buying a packet of Polos each week.

Plymouth DHA

13. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will outline the proposed arrangements for the funding of South East Cornwall and other overlap areas administered and funded by Plymouth district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: All district health authorities are now funded to purchase health care for their resident population. Arrangements for the operational management of health care facilities other than NHS trusts are a local matter.

Mr. Hicks: As it has been confirmed that Cornwall will be responsible for funding health care in the overlap area, will my hon. Friend assure me that decisions will be made quickly on the management of cottage hospitals and on the other functions that are currently provided by Plymouth and that that decision will not form part of any deal on the reorganisation of health authorities in Devon?

Mr. Dorrell: I confirm that this matter is completely separate from a possible reorganisation of health authorities in Devon. There is benefit in proceeding reasonably quickly to a conclusion, motivated by the recognition that under the reformed NHS the key is the responsibility that rests on Cornwall health authority to secure the best health care available for the people of Cornwall from the resources spent by the NHS in the county.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 April.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Anthony Durant: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his four-point initiative to deal with the Kurds and Shi'ites, especially the safe haven proposals, which are important? Will he work hard with the agencies to improve aid to the Shi'ites and Kurds and push the United Nations to implement resolutions 678 and 688 so that the Kurds and Shi'ites can return in confidence to their towns and villages and thereby stop this appalling situation?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Hundreds of tonnes of aid have already been delivered, of which 220 tonnes have come from the United Kingdom. In addition to the three C130s already there, nine Chinook helicopters operating from Turkey will be fully operational by the end of the week. The two special representatives of the secretary-general are in Iraq and by the end of the week 150 United Nations personnel will be in Iraq to oversee the relief effort. Urgent and intensive international discussions are continuing on a safe haven plan, which I and others believe is the only way forward. Indeed, I believe that it is rapidly gaining ground. Later today, I shall chair a further meeting of Ministers to take stock of aid needs.

Mr. Kinnock: May I strongly support the Prime Minister in the efforts being made to get aid to the wretched people who are fleeing from Saddam Hussein's forces? As the agonies of the Kurdish people continue, will the right hon. Gentleman tell me whether he shares my view that the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein against the Kurdish people mean that the Iraqi dictator has a case to answer under articles 2 and 3 of the genocide convention of 1948? Will the Prime Minister refer the issue of genocide to the United Nations Security Council as a matter of urgency?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his first words. I have asked for legal advice on the subject of genocide.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: As the strict budgetary controls of agricultural spending were effectively blow sky high last Monday when the Council of Ministers voted by 10 to two to go through the ceiling, will my right hon. Friend say what on earth we can do, or is agriculture entirely out of control? In congratulating him on Britain's being one of the two who voted against, may I ask whether he will tell the consumers and taxpayers of Britain whether we can take any action to hold on to the strict budgetary controls for which we fought so hard?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of keeping strict budgetary control on agriculture and on other items of the European Community budget. We have consistently stuck to that position and we shall continue to argue for it in the Agriculture Council and the other Councils of the Community.

Mr. Ashdown: Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's welcome but long-term plans for Kurdish sanctuary in Iraq, does not our present air superiority provide a means and United Nations resolution 688 provide the authority for action now to prevent continuing genocide against the Kurds in Iraq? Is not the only thing lacking for action the political will and international leadership? Why does he still seem reluctant to provide either?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the only comprehensive international plan before the international community is the one that I announced to the European Community on Monday this week. As I said to the House a few moments ago, urgent and intensive international discussions on the plan are continuing at this moment.

Mr. Churchill: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his safe haven policies. Will he build on them as soon as possible with our colleagues and partners in the Security Council to ensure that, under United Nations auspices, forces are sent to both the north and south of Iraq to establish at the earliest possible opportunity safe havens into which Saddam Hussein's armies will not be permitted to go?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear to our colleagues in the United Nations and elsewhere that, if the relief effort is harassed or frustrated, in my judgment, under Security Council resolution 688, it is clearly the responsibility of the United Nations to protect both helpers and helped. If necessary, the United Nations would have to act on that responsibility and seek from its members whatever assistance, including military assistance, it might need.

Q2. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wray: The Prime Minister will be in no doubt that the question on everybody's lips is about the disgraceful "Panorama" programme which made allegations that the Prime Minister used an accommodation address in Templar street in Lambeth to gain access to the electoral register, a seat on Lambeth council and thus win a seat at Westminster. Will he give an assurance that that accusation is untrue and what action is he about to take?

The Prime Minister: The qualification for standing for Lambeth council was to be resident within the area. "Panorama" was told on more than one occasion by the lady whose address they gave that I was living in the area, directly opposite her house, at the time and that that fully met the qualification requirements. I cannot explain to the hon. Gentleman why "Panorama" chose not to broadcast that fact.

Q3. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of his policies in bringing down inflation, interest rates and mortgage rates shows that the better way for Britain is the Conservative way to opportunity and that it is getting better and better as the months go by? Does he agree that that is why there is such disappointment on the Opposition Benches and such desperate calls for an early election?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. It is precisely because we were prepared to take tough action on inflation that it is now coming down fast and, as I forecast, interest rates are following it down. The economy will continue to improve in the months ahead and we will continue to extend opportunities by spreading wealth, ownership and choice. No other party in the country can offer that to the British people.

Q4. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Is not the Prime Minister concerned about the many thousands of struggling pensioners who get a pension increase and immediately lose income support and other transitional arrangements? Is not it time that he ended the practice of giving with one hand and immediately taking back with the other and started to give all pensioners a fair deal?

The Prime Minister: If that were the policy of the Opposition, any pretence that they might have had of public expenditure control would have gone.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the next decade will be the decade of opportunity for young people, but that one opportunity that the House and the country would rather they did not take is the opportunity to commit crime? Does he agree that in national Crime Prevention Week the one major objective that we should seek is for young people to be deterred from criminal activity?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. He will have noticed in particular the initiative on truancy taken this week.

Q5. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patchett: Does the Prime Minister feel comfortable with his policies, given the criticism from within his party, both inside and outside the House, or is he merely a victim of an enemy within?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will find that there are millions and millions of people outside the House who support our policies and who will vote for them.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend make an important and clear statement today that the British Government's policy in support of the safety and security of Iraqi Kurds in Iraq is not support for Kurdish insurrection against successive Governments of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran to form a separate state and that activity of that kind gives a spurious strength to the present Government of Iraq to take military action of a genocidal kind against Iraqi Kurds in Iraq?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear in the House on previous occasions that our concern in Iraq is to ensure that the Kurds are well treated, safe and protected from repression. That remains our policy.

Cyprus

Q6. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister, what discussions he has held with the Government of Turkey concerning their occupation of part of Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: I met the Turkish Prime Minister yesterday and the President of Cyprus last week. My discussion yesterday with the Turkish Prime Minister concentrated on the plight of the Kurds. I urged him to help the international efforts to get the Kurds down from the mountains into areas of Turkey and Iraq where they can receive food and medicine. The Turkish Prime Minister and I spoke briefly about Cyprus later in the day.

Mr. Corbyn: Perhaps the Prime Minister can tell us what discussions he had with the Prime Minister of Turkey. He must be aware that the British Government are a guarantor of Cypriot independence and that the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey was condemned by the United Nations. Does not he think that the aim should be the withdrawal of foreign troops from Cyprus and the reunification of the island, with guarantees from all

communities to end the terrible time suffered by so many people through the division of the island by military intervention?

The Prime Minister: I made it entirely clear to the Turkish Prime Minister that we supported the efforts being made by the secretary-general and we hoped that he would make progress speedily towards a satisfactory solution.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will the Prime Minister confirm that Cyprus, a democratic member of the Commonwealth, is the only European country at present forcibly occupied by a foreign power? Does he agree that positive action is necessary to persuade Turkey that it is in its interest and in the interest of the regional stability of the eastern Mediterranean that the reunification of Cyprus as a stable and democratic country is implemented as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend and the Turkish Government are aware that that is our policy.

Engagements

Q7. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 16 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Prime Minister aware that the answer that he gave to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon will have appalled the whole nation? If a Prime Minister, above anyone, has not yet taken legal advice about the genocide convention, when Kurds are being murdered and tortured every day, it is a disgrace. Indeed, it is a sin that this matter has been allowed to go as far as it has. Will the Prime Minister take action today to instruct our representatives at the United Nations to raise the matter of genocide so that action—even military action—is taken against the butcher of Baghdad?

The Prime Minister: I note the hon. Gentleman's remarks with care. It is wise to seek and await proper legal advice on such measures. If the matter is so self-evident, why did not the Leader of the Opposition raise it until yesterday and where has the shadow Foreign Secretary been for the past fortnight?

NEW MEMBER

The following Member made the Affirmation required by law:

Peter Gerald Hain Esq., for Neath.

School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill

3.33 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given notice to you and to the Secretary of State for Education and Science. It relates to the Government's conduct regarding the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill.

The Second Reading of the Bill took place on 27 November. It went into Standing Committee before Christmas and came out on 5 February—two and a half months ago. On Second Reading, the Secretary of State for Education and Science told the House:

"The Bill contains the agreed policy of this Government".—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 743.]

He said that two of the candidates for the Conservative leadership, including the successful candidate who is now the Prime Minister, were committed to the Bill. In Committee, Ministers pressed for an early conclusion of the Committee stage, telling us repeatedly that they had to have the Bill enacted and on the statute book by Easter. Since the Committee stage, however, instead of coming to the House for its Report stage, the Bill has disappeared into the black hole of indecision that now passes for Cabinet government amidst repeated press leaks that, despite the fact that the Bill was referred to as containing the agreed position of the Government and the personal commitment of the Prime Minister, the Government's policy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Straw: I shall come to it in a moment, Mr. Speaker.

I raise the point of order to complain about the conduct of Ministers in explaining away the considerable delay of the Bill. The reason is that the Government do not know whether to follow or to change the policy of the Bill. I realise that that is not a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. The matter for you is whether Ministers have been truthfull in the explanations that they have offered to the House on the reasons for the delay.

It is well known that the Government are so short of business that we had an extra week's holiday at Christmas and a further week at Easter. Despite that, the Leader of the House has three times blamed a shortage of parliamentary time for the delay in bringing the Bill to the House, as has the Secretary of State in a letter to me—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may not like this, but it is clear that Ministers, including the Leader of the House, have made statements on the reasons for the Bill's delay that are palpably untrue.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a reflection upon Ministers and must be withdrawn.

Mr. Straw: I took advice from the Clerks——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not a Clerk. Will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw his remark?

Mr. Straw: I withdraw it.

I want to ask you, Mr. Speaker—and I also took advice on this from the Clerks—whether it is open to Ministers to make statements to the House that palpably do not fit with the facts. It is known to hon. Members that there is no shortage of parliamentary time, but that is the only explanation that has been offered to the House. In those circumstances, hon. Members may well feel themselves to have been heavily misled by Ministers, and so may you, Mr. Speaker. Do you, Mr. Speaker, regard that conduct by Ministers as acceptable?

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

I think that the whole House enjoyed an extra week's holiday. I do not know why it was given or whether or not there was business to discuss. All that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has said has nothing to do with me; it is a matter of dispute that he has with the Government. It is not an issue of order in the Chamber.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have not your predecessors and you, Mr. Speaker, consistently condemned abuse, whether by Back Benchers or Front Benchers, of the point of order procedure of the House to make purely political points that can properly be made in a censure motion or on a Supply day? Such points of order ought never to be countenanced by a Speaker, whether they come from a Front Bencher or a Back Bencher.

Mr. Speaker: Things of that sort are frequently said in the Chamber. In order to know whether a point of order is bogus or not, I have to hear it. I have already announced that I did not think that the subject was a matter for me.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Whether or not it was a point of order is clearly for you, Mr. Speaker, to decide, but it may be for the convenience of the House if I say that there will be a statement on the matter tomorrow.

BILLS PRESENTED

Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Amendment)

Mr. Peter Viggers presented a Bill to amend section 13 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 so as to exclude members of the armed forces from relief for students in respect of the community charge: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 May and to be printed. [Bill 132.]

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Conal Gregory, supported by Mr. Stuart Bell, Mr. Alistair Burt, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Douglas French, Dame Janet Fookes, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Ian McCartney and Mr. Patrick Thompson, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to the fitting of smoke detectors in new dwellings: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 19 April and to be printed [Bill 131.]

Forestry Commission

3.37 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the Forestry Commission from transferring any land without guaranteeing continuing public access to that land.

The Bill will guarantee the continuation of public accessibility to the land that is sold by the Forestry Commission.

Of the more than 2 million hectares of woodlands and forests in Britain, nearly half are owned by the Forestry Commission. It is my belief that the majority of the public wants the land owned by the nation and managed by the Forestry Commission on behalf of the nation to remain accessible so that this generation and future generations can enjoy all the environmental benefits that forests, woodlands and moorlands can offer.

Regrettably, in 1981, the Conservative Government instructed the Forestry Commission to sell off large areas of its woodlands, forests and open lands to the private sector. That was a stupid and irresponsible policy, as the Forestry Commission land belongs to the nation and not to the private sector.

By March 1989, a total of 140,000 hectares had been sold off—an area bigger than the whole of Berkshire or of Fife. In June 1989, the Government announced a continuation of their policy and the commission was instructed to sell off another 100,000 hectares by the year 2000. Yet it was quite clear by 1989 that the warning given by the Ramblers Association about the problems resulting from selling the land was justified and the problems had arrived.

When the Forestry Commission sells land to the private buyer, it does nothing to ensure that the access hitherto enjoyed by the public is protected. By and large, private woodland owners are not keen to give the public the same freedom of access in their woods as the Forestry Commission. There no rational reason for that.

At no time has the commission said that public access is incompatible with efficient management of its woods and forest and the private woodland owners' association, the Timber Growers United Kingdom, appears to agree with that as it said recently:

"One of the principal advantages of forestry is that it is a land use where access and recreation can be combined, often with little loss of timber production."

In one respect—fire prevention—the Commission has said that it is a positive benefit to have people walking in its forests, because when there is an outbreak of fire, it is more likely to be spotted, reported and extinguished before any really extensive damage occurs than it would be if it happened in a forest where walking is not allowed.

Nevertheless, private woodland owners are generally not access-friendly. As a result, access to land sold by the Forestry Commission has often been lost. Examples were given in a BBC "Country File" television programme on 10 March 1991 and others were quoted in the *Observer*.

In June 1989, the Secretary of State for Scotland stated that the Government were concerned and that careful consideration would be given to the problem so that the public could continue to enjoy access. That careful consideration was not speedy. A further statement was not made until 17 months later, in November 1990. The Secretary of State for Scotland stated that the Forestry Commission would offer to enter into legal agreements with local authorities to provide for continuing public access to woodlands after sale. However, those legal agreements are to be subject to guidelines that have yet to be drawn up, and until they appear no agreements safeguarding access can be entered into.

It is noteworthy and depressing that a Forestry Commission spokesman was quoted in the *Observer* as saying that consultation on access agreement guidelines was likely to continue for several months. Meanwhile, land continues to be sold and public access continues to be lost.

To make matters even worse, the Forestry Commission is no longer supplying the Ornance Survey with information about its land. That decision, unannounced previously and taken without any consultation with organisations representing map users, was set out in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) from the director general of the Ornance Survey. Its effect is that members of the public will be deprived of an important source of information about where they can freely walk in the countryside.

The Government should follow the example set by the United States of America, Denmark and other countries. However, I fear that they will not.

There are two solutions to the problem. First, the sale of forests, woodlands and open land should stop immediately, or the Government should instruct the Forestry Commission to include a clause in the sales agreement that guarantees the right of accessibility to the general public. Secondly, the Government should support this Bill and ensure that parliamentary time is allocated for it to become part of our legislation, thereby giving the public what they desire.

Therefore, I challenge the Government to get off their backsides and to do one or the other—to do nothing is criminal.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Michael Welsh, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Tom Cox, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. George J. Buckley.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Martin Redmond accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the Forestry Commission from transferring any land without guaranteeing continuing public access to that land; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 April and to be printed. [Bill 133.]

Orders of the Day

British Technology Group Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

'In preparing the Articles of Association of the successor company, the Secretary of State shall make such arrangements as he deems necessary to preserve the nature of those business activities being undertaken by the Board and Corporation immediately prior to the appointment of the successor company.'—*[Sir Gerard Vaughan.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.45 pm

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss:

New clause 5—*Independence of the successor company*—

'It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the successor company shall take such steps as are necessary to preserve the independence of the British Technology Group to enable it to maintain and extend its services in the field of technology transfer.'.

Amendment No. 5, in clause 1, page 1, line 11, after 'section 2', insert 'and subsection (1A) below'.

Amendment No. 6, in clause 1, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) The Secretary of State shall not be empowered to vest the property, rights and liabilities as set out in subsection (1) above unless he publishes plans showing how the independence, impartiality and integrity of the successor company will be guaranteed.'.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am disappointed to note that new clause 3 and amendment No. 4 have not been selected, given that they are the official Opposition's principal amendments to the Bill. I understand that that is because of a technicality in the drafting. May I have an assurance from you, Mr. Speaker, that in view of the reasonably wide-ranging nature of the new clauses and amendments that have been selected, we shall be able to cover in that debate the matters of principle that we had intended to cover in our new clause and amendment?

Mr. Speaker: I went carefully into the question of the selection of the amendments. I cannot select defective amendments. Matters of principle, but not the new clause and amendment to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, may be debated with the group.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I could not hear clearly, but am I right in thinking that matters of principle may be raised? I understand that the selection of new clauses and amendments is entirely a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, but would it be in order for me to speak to new clause 2 although it has not been selected? I wish to deal with a matter of detail, not simply a matter of principle.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot give reasons for my decisions, but perhaps I could hint to him that that matter was fully debated in Committee.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: I believe that the purpose of new clause 1 is absolutely clear. We wish to safeguard the future in this country of a very special organisation. We wish to ensure that the British Technology Group becomes an independent corporate body with the vitality and freedom to carry out an extremely important role in academic research, inventiveness and commercial activity. Despite all the Minister's excellent work on the Bill to date, we do not think that he has so far given adequate safeguards to ensure that.

I am sure that we would all agree that the new BTG should be able to draw sufficient sums of money—at times quite large sums of money—to enable it to carry out its future role. At the same time, it must not be put at risk of being taken over by a huge industrial corporation or concern, which would almost certainly be from overseas, and which would have the sole object of taking over the 8,000 patents and future patents that BTG holds and of using them for its own commercial advantage. We must be sure that BTG could not be asset-stripped.

We are particularly concerned to protect the intellectual property and inventiveness of the universities. We want to see inventions marketed adequately, but we want them to be safeguarded. The intellectual property of the universities belongs in the first instance, of course, to the universities themselves. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that the only way to secure such safeguards is to form a consortium in which the universities have a proper stake. The universities should also play a role on the management board of any future company.

I also suggest that the Government should hold a stake in any future organisation for at least the first few years to ensure that some undesirable organisation does not take advantage of it. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) will seek to say something about the university aspect.

I hope that the Minister will tell us that his first priority will be, not to extract as much money as possible on behalf of the Treasury, but to ensure that the future British Technology Group operates in the way that we have suggested. I am sure that the Minister's intentions are good, but statements of good intention are not really sufficient in this matter. He should not try to keep all his options open but should tell us clearly what he has in mind.

The wording of our new clause may not be perfect—the wording of amendments tabled by Back-Bench Members is rarely perfect—but if there are small faults in it I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept the good intentions behind it and will undertake to table an amendment with improved wording, if he thinks it necessary to do so, when the Bill goes to another place.

We regard the Bill as extremely important for the future of our scientific and technological progress in Britain. The British Technology Group has played an important role already as a public body. We believe that it will gain enormously from being in the private sector, but it will do so only if there are proper safeguards for its future.

Mr. Rees: I and some of my colleagues on both sides of the House tabled an amendment which refers to articles of association. You, Mr. Speaker, were right in saying that we have already dealt with one aspect of the matter in Committee, but in Committee we were referring to members of the board of directors of the new company. I declare an interest as a member of the courts of London

university and of the London School of Economics. Some of us felt that if we failed in the matter of individual members of the board the Government should have regard to the interests of the university in drawing up the articles of association of the successor company.

We do not argue that directors should necessarily be appointed to the companies in the way that we suggested in Committee, but the interests of the universities should be taken into account. While I accept your decision, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that we shall not be able to vote on our amendment, I should like to deal with the interests of the universities.

This is not simply another privatisation Bill. It is privatisation of a particular form of the British Technology Group which, from the day it was set up under a different name in 1947-48, was a concept different from other nationalisation measures of the time.

It is important for the House to take into account the nature of articles of association which lay down the objectives of a company. I have looked at the articles of association of my college, the London School of Economics, and of others, and the objectives of the company should take into account the interests of the universities, not those of the individuals who are appointed to the company.

All the briefing that we have had, which I shall not repeat because it was dealt with in Committee, shows that the BTG's intellectual property emanated from the universities and the research councils, as is mentioned in new clause 2, which says:

"The Secretary of State shall . . . have regard to the interests of the universities and the Research Councils . . . and shall consult with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Research Councils".

That is vital.

The Secretary of State must take into account the fact that the universities account for the largest single source of the BTG's intellectual property—about 60 per cent. if one takes into account the teaching hospitals. The research council institutes and the research associations account for 25 per cent. and the rest comes largely from Government laboratories. The BTG depends for its success on the high quality research and inventiveness of our universities. Therefore, the interests of those institutions should be taken into account when drawing up the articles of association. That argument has been made in a different context many times, so I shall not argue the case again.

The Minister met representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals yesterday in a different context. He knows the worth of the arguments that are put forward by people in that group, the nature of the BTG, and that it is important that the intellectual property should be safeguarded so that it can be used properly in future by the successor company. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will give us an assurance about the nature of the articles of association and that he will safeguard the intellectual property of the universities.

We know about the problems that have long faced universities about the nature of fundamental research and applied research and as a result of a shortage of money. Earning money through the BTG has enabled them to have more students, particularly in the natural sciences, and so on.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: The right hon. Gentleman talks about safeguarding the interests of universities. Does he agree that they should have an active role in any future body? It is not enough simply to have people who think the way that they do; the universities should play a part in the management of a future body.

Mr. Rees: I was trying to observe Mr. Speaker's ruling and not put forward a more detailed argument. The short answer is that I agree fully. What matters is that the interests of the universities and research councils should be taken into account. It is up to the Government to determine the appropriate way of doing so.

We argued this case twice in Committee. At the end of the day I think that all members on both sides of the Committee understood that the privatisation of the BTG is different from other privatisations and that wherever the successor company gets its capital from, whatever the problems about pensions and asset stripping, it is vital that our universities, which lead the world in so many ways, should still be able to work in the new successor company for their own ends and for those of the country. That can be done only if the articles of association are drawn up in such a way that the interests of the universities are taken into account; and there are various means by which that could be done.

Although the new clause that I tabled has not been selected for consideration, I hope that the Minister will take it into account.

4 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I support the new clause. It is important to take into account the assets that are at risk. The BTG represents a core team of specialists in technological transfer and patent protection. Some 8,200 patents have been granted and 500 licensing agreements reached. These bring in royalties—the bulk of the BTG income—of £29·5 million.

Although it is important to take into account the relationship between the BTG and the universities, it is also important to consider what the BTG represents. It has a staff of 188 and it employs six solicitors, 18 patent agents with trainees, 15 financial managers, plus six on the venture capital side and 60 specialists in technology transfer who work in the operating division. I would challenge anyone to say that there is any other group in the United Kingdom with such a team of experts as that in the BTG, which has operated for so many years. It would be disgraceful if those people were abandoned in the future, particularly if that were as a result of asset stripping.

The BTG has agreements with 50 universities, 17 polytechnics and eight medical schools. The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) has already mentioned that the universities are by far the biggest source of the BTG's intellectual property—they account for more than 50 per cent. of it, if the contribution from the teaching hospitals is included. Another 25 per cent. of that intellectual property comes from the research councils. Given that contribution, it is only right that the House should hold out for special consideration for the universities, polytechnics and medical schools. My hon. Friend the Minister has a tricky course to follow, but I hope that he will take into account that special consideration and protect it.

I have outlined the assets that are at stake, but it is important to consider it from a different angle—the risk to which those assets will be exposed. My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) has already mentioned asset stripping, but the elimination of our

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

competitive technologies would be equally disastrous. Some 70 per cent. of the licensed income of the BTG comes from abroad and it will be especially vulnerable to foreign takeover. Given that 40 per cent. of its income comes from the United States, and knowing how grasping that country is and how covetous it is of the BTG since the American equivalent is much smaller, I dare say that the United States will want to take it over at the first opportunity. We must do something to protect the BTG from that.

We must also prevent sector domination by a limited number of shareholders. Shares can be allocated to any one shareholder, but they must be strictly limited by number.

It is important to appreciate the earnings to BTG from its various intellectual property. Antibiotics provide £150 million for the BTG, magnetic resonance imaging £18 million and cholesterol measurement equipment another £6 million—a sizeable proportion of the total income of the BTG. One can imagine that a pharmaceutical company would say, "It is ripe for takeover and if we had it, we could strip out any of the assets that we didn't require and put them into the relevant side of the company".

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Does my hon. Friend agree that what we want is not a friendly assessment of our case from the Minister, but an undertaking that when the Bill leaves Parliament it will contain provisions to protect the company? Is not that what my hon. Friend is saying that the Minister should do today?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have not yet heard what the Minister has to say, but I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. This is the Report stage and the Bill will soon be passed. I want the Bill to contain a clause to ensure that there is a reference to the articles of association, which will enable the Minister to say that there will be a ruling on anyone who sets up an independent company hereafter so that we shall have some control over it.

I espouse my hon. Friend's arguments, but I go further. The pharmaceutical industry—Du Pont, Bayer in Germany, Smithkline Beecham, perhaps, in the United Kingdom, Glaxo and others would like to take over the company. The BTG has 8,000 patents in 1,500 different sectors of technology, and they would all be extremely useful. Therefore, we must examine the issue carefully.

I do not want to detain the House for too long, but I wish to make one further important point about similar organisations and technology transfers. I mentioned the American Research Corporation. In the United Kingdom, we have 3i Research Exploitation Limited, which is smaller than the BTG but which is important because its parent company is a substantial size. It is possible that, in the future, that little organisation, backed up by a powerful parent company, may wish to take over the BTG. I am for competition, so I would not like to see the company taken over. Therfore, I suggest that we should be very cautious.

The BTG's chief executive, Ian Harvey, said:

"BTG's royalty revenues are greater than the total royalties earned by the entire US university and government research systems combined."

The BTG is a plum to be picked unless we do something to safeguard it.

I know that the Minister is listening intently. He must say that he will safeguard the company once it is released from his control. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said on Second Reading that he could give safeguards through the golden share for two or three years, but a provision should be written into the articles of association to give further coverage in future and to ensure that the technology in which the United Kingdom has secured an advanced position is safeguarded for the next decade.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I wish to speak especially to the new clause and the amendments tabled in my name, but I should like first to comment on new clause 1 and on the contributions made by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and the hon. Members for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet).

I support the proposition that there should be as much effort, thought and consideration as possible before a decision is made on principle by the Government to include academic and university interests in the future structure, as they have requested and as they are keen to ensure. I have read the contributions made by the Minister in Committee. Although I was not a member of that Committee, I have followed the Bill with considerable interest and, so far, the Minister has kept his cards close to his chest—not a single card has been revealed.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Perhaps he does not have any.

Mr. Hughes: It is not for me to say whether he has any, but he will certainly have to play some cards if he wants to get the Bill through the House. He will have to open the Bill up to amendment either here or in the other place because eminent Members on both sides of both Houses will join in voicing substantial and significant concern.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North described the BTG as a plum ripe for the picking. The BTG is our scientific and technological family silver, albeit recently acquired family silver—a collection built up over the past 40 years and, in particular, the past 10 years. The Minister knows that in the past six years the BTG has been pre-eminently successful. As the hon. Member of Parliament in whose constituency the BTG's headquarters are located, I feel somewhat defensive. I am concerned that we should not, as a result of our negligence, allow the assets to be pinched. There can be no excuse for that because we have all been alerted to the importance of the assets that we have in our possession.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like most of us, would not mind selling an asset—even the family silver—if, in doing so, he could turn the result into an appreciating asset. I imagine that the BTG feels exactly the same.

Mr. Hughes: There is all the difference in the world between changing the management structure of the BTG for a good management reason and protecting rightful interests, and incorporating it, without individual justification, in the Government's general privatisation programme without affording it the protection that all hon. Members seek for it. I have talked to the chief executive of the BTG and have no doubt that the management are impressive in terms of both expertise and vision. I do not share the view that we want a BTG

protected from any foreign interest. The chief executive confirmed what the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North said about foreign interest and revenue-earning—particularly from the United States and, increasingly, from Japan and so on. I know, too, that that source of funding will be increasingly important in future. But there is all the difference in the world between accepting that and allowing the BTG to be successful in the world market, and taking up the anchor and allowing the BTG to be bought out by whoever comes along, thus ensuring that a potentially great asset for British technology is no longer available to us or in any way under our control. The Minister must come clean about that this afternoon.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Let us forget technology for one moment. The company is attractive from another angle. Its gross profits rose from £3·5 million in 1987 to £9·5 million in 1990. Its income rose from £17 million in 1987 to £29·5 million in 1990. The company is a catch by any standards, quite apart from its technological importance.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The BTG is not only important as a scientific and technological resource and because it is so valuable—as the hon. Gentleman said, its earnings last year were more than £29 million—but because it is one of the mechanisms by which Britain will succeed. It is a reserve of academic and scientific skill, expertise and cross-fertilisation between subjects which will allow us to do well in the world. It is a service mechanism for British inventions and allows us to convert those inventions into the best-developed and most saleable products while safeguarding the interests of our continuing public scientific and technological base. To get rid of the BTG or not to protect its future would be to allow all Britain's intellectual and academic experts to do their job with no guarantee that any of their work would be used in the interests of their national economy and scientific base. That would be folly indeed. I cannot think of anything more foolish, given how dependent we will be on such expertise in the future for our international economic success. If we throw away something that we do so well, we shall throw away a potential cornerstone of our achievement in the next century.

4.15 pm

As the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North rightly reminded us, we are discussing a thriving, successful and visionary business in which several hundred committed people representing several disciplines are working together to ensure that its future is secure. That is one of its unique aspects, as is the support that it has been given by the academic community, to which it represents a bridge between pure, "blue sky" research and the commercial world. It has been a flagship for our inventors and their inventions—and if flagships are sunk on a regular basis, not much of a navy will be left.

The BTG has pulled itself out of the doldrums. It has done very well over recent years and it deserves support. I ask the Government to respond to our concern and to accept that they should not be given a blank cheque and told to do what they will with it. I shall press the Minister especially hard on new clause 5, which—along with new clause 1—he will probably find easier to accept than amendment No. 6.

New clause 5 seeks to impose on the Secretary of State the duty of ensuring

> "that the successor company shall take such steps as are necessary to preserve the independence of the British Technology Group to enable it to maintain and extend its services in the field of technology transfer."

The wording of amendment No. 6 follows the "three i's" definition given by the chairman of BTG, which has been quoted extensively both on Second Reading and in Committee—"independence, impartiality and integrity". It calls for the Secretary of State not to be able to pass on BTG through this enabling Bill without setting out how he will guarantee those qualities in the future. Those conditions will secure BTG's safety.

It is, I think, accepted that even BTG's current management do not consider the existing assurances and guarantees go sufficiently far. I do not believe that I am betraying any secrets in saying that new clause 1 was tabled with the support of the management. It is they who have argued over the years that BTG should change its status and have come out in favour of its transfer from what can be broadly defined as the public sector to the private sector; but they, too, want assurances. If they—the people who have been pushing hardest for the change—are not happy, others can reasonably be assumed to be even less happy.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: It is no use our country's having inventions if they cannot then be marketed to its benefit. It would be a tragedy if inventors lost confidence in the new body and did not make their inventions available to it.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. Some of the company's employees—who include constituents of mine—fear that the wrong sort of sale, without guarantees, would have two effects. First, it would not protect the public interest; and, secondly, it would not gain the confidence of the universities, which at present take their ideas to the company in the hope that they will be developed confidentially and intelligently so that they can be exploited to best effect. They will not go there if they believe that BTG will be bought. I am not against the idea of an international interest in it. A 10 per cent. American, Japanese or European Community shareholding might be entirely appropriate. Let us, however, consider a Japanese takeover of BTG. It is highly unlikely that many of those who currently confide the development of their invention to BTG and who come from a British academic background would continue to want to do so. They would understand that their invention would not be used, as it is now, for development at home of things that they want to develop at home. That is a practical concern. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman was right. That concern is shared profoundly by employees who are troubled by the proposals. We need to take account of their troubles and concerns.

Amendment No. 6 adopts the chairman's language. I ask the Minister to be much clearer than he was in Committee, where he said:

> "Anxieties about the effect of privatisation on the 3i are important. The BTG chairman, Sir Colin Barker, stressed the importance of retaining 3i und several Opposition Members expressed similar anxieties. They want the Bill to include measures to safeguard the 3i after privatisation. The Government will take those anxieties into account when deciding the form of privatisation and whether safeguards are necessary in the articles or the agreement of sale."

That was the point made by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). The Minister continued:

[Mr. Hughes]

"Other factors will be taken into account in determining the best route for privatisation."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 7 March 1991; c. 150.]

However, the Minister refused to say specifically that he would give any guarantees or undertakings. To take those anxieties into account does not reveal the Government's hand. Independence has not been guaranteed.

The Minister was also asked to deal with whether it would be possible for a single purchaser to take over BTG lock, stock and barrel. However, he did not adequately do so. That question was put simply by the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing):

"I was objecting to the idea of one company buying out the BTG and using its resources solely for its own interest. The Minister said that that was a possibility."

The Minister replied:

"It is a possibility."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 28 February 1991; c. 97.]

That should not be. Those who were not members of the Committee or who have not read the reports of the debates may not be aware that the Government accept that a wholesale acquisition is a possibility. That is unacceptable not just to those who were the progenitors of BTG and brought it into being in the 1940s, or to those who kept it in being during the 1980s, but to all those who are interested in BTG. Such an unconditional possibility is unacceptable to them.

If such a sell-out is possible, the conclusion must be that impartiality will be impossible. If a large or a monopoly shareholder decided not to accept or develop products if the new inventions threatened their market share in goods that they already produce, there would be no independence. If BTG were to be sold in an uncontrolled manner, without any limits on the size of shareholdings, or on the level of overseas shareholdings, the management's motivation would be affected. It would be much more likely to be motivated by the need to meet shareholders' demands for profits, not excellence.

The danger is that patents will be sold off to the highest bidder. That may be in our short-term commercial interests, but it would do no good to our long-term commercial interests. Shareholders could cream off the profits instead of making sure that we develop patents.

In conclusion, I ask the Minister the following questions. Will he tell the House unequivocally that he has no intention of selling BTG to the highest bidder? Can he assure us that that will not be possible? Will he tell us unequivocally that there will not be an overseas monopoly of shares in BTG? Will he tell us unequivocally that he intends to ensure, through the articles of association, that BTG will have a duty to consider all patents brought to it in an impartial manner, uninfluenced by the business interests of the shareholders? Will he tell us unequivocally that, in the articles of association, BTG will not have as a business objective the selling of patents for short-term profits rather than preserving the long-term interests of current and future patent holders and licensees? Lastly, will he tell us unequivocally that BTG will be required, if and when it is privatised, rigorously to defend the patents and licences that it has built up as part of its portfolio over the years of its success? We need some assurances and if they are not forthcoming we shall have to register our dissatisfaction.

I have spoken in a non-partisan way as someone who has been aware of the benefit of BTG for all the years that I have been Member of Parliament for Southwark and Bermondsey, not just because it is based in my constituency but because it is a key scientific resource. I hope that the message is clear across the House.

If the Minister can help us today, he will get far less of a rough ride from the other place. If he does not help us today, he must not underestimate that the other place may give him a very hard time. I have no wish to make the Minister's summer difficult or unpleasant, but I do not want him to be dogmatic about the BTG. There are ways of protecting its interests. If that is achieved none of us will be dogmatic about it, but if that does not happen we will have to stand firm and say that the Government are not being honest or straightforward and that they are not looking after the nation's interests as they should.

Dr. Hampson: It is worth recording officially that today is remarkable in one essential respect. This is the first privatisation that the Government have undertaken that the Labour party has not opposed. The amendments do not object to the privatisation. Their purpose is merely to ensure that the end product satisfies a common purpose.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I hate to disabuse the hon. Gentleman, but we voted against the Second Reading and, subject to what the Minister has to say, no doubt we shall vote against the Third Reading. We have steadily expressed our opposition to the Bill throughout. Certainly within the framework of Government policy we seek to improve the Bill as far as it can be improved.

Dr. Hampson: That just goes to show what a lot of charlatans the Opposition are. Anyone who has read what BTG has stated and particularly what the chief executive wrote in the *Observer* in March would have no argument against the Bill. When one talks to Opposition Members, they accept its validity. I thought that the Labour party had basically accepted five or six central points.

Dr. Moonie: Does the hon. Gentleman genuinely believe that the chief executive of the British Technology Group has only the good interests of the company at heart and not his own?

Dr. Hampson: That is one of the great giveaways of all time. I always thought that the Labour party was advocating that management should look after the interests of the company and its work force. Here we are saying that the man who is closest to the coal face, if one can use a Labour phrase, does not know what is in the best interests of the company. Since when did the Government know what are the best interests of the company?

One of the problems in this country has been that we have had no effective means of technology transfer between the originators in the academic world and delivery in business. We have been edging forward out of the grotesque bureaucratic apparatus which the Labour party supported and, from what we have just heard, seems still to support, into a much more flexible instrument. It is an instrument that is very successful in generating returns for the universities—£13 million a year. It is seen by the universities as one of the most effective means of promoting their inventions. As the universities themselves are not against this privatisation, it is extraordinary that the Labour party opposes it. But Labour has managed to get itself ideologically cocooned; it is simply against privatisation in principle, no matter what the context.

Dr. Moonie: I hoped that the hon. Gentleman, who is one of the more intelligent Members on the Government Back Benches, would be able to recognise the difference between making the best of a bad job and supporting a principle.

4.30 pm

Dr. Hampson: Now the hon. Gentleman is changing his tune. It is significant that there are hardly more than four Labour Members in the Chamber to take part in the great defence of their principle. The Opposition recognise that the future of this operation depends on its being in the private sector. The company itself says so. If it is to remain the world's leading technology transfer company, it will, they say, have to be "given the freedom and the stimulus of the private sector". If it is to succeed, it cannot be parochial. It must not be restricted within the bounds of an island off the greater part of the continent, and isolated from the rest of the world. This must be a global operation. It is vital that it has the critical mass which will give it the investment potential that is necessary if it is to draw on innovative capacity around the world, for the benefit of this country.

Governments will set limits on its operations, and have to approve board members and executives. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the organisation should have to exist in a critical and competitive world with one hand tied behind its back? Is he saying that it should be kept in a financial straitjacket?

The Opposition do not seem to realise what has been happening in recent years. Today, the Treasury is more short term in its thinking than is any organisation in the City. The hon. Gentleman should take the trouble to read some of the remarks of the chief executive of BTG. Two years ago, on the orders of the Treasury, it had to pay dividends amounting to £8·6 million, despite the fact that its after-tax profit was £5·2 million. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman, instead of trying to intervene ideologically, should listen. How does he justify the fact that a company that he wants to succeed had to pay dividends amounting to £8·6 million, although its after-tax profit was £5·2 million? That is a means of preventing this organisation from backing British innovation and from succeeding in technology transfer.

Dr. Moonie: The hon. Gentleman has referred to a Treasury straitjacket. But Treasury straitjackets are not immutable; they can be changed. The hon. Gentleman says that the company has one hand tied behind its back. But this is the world's most successful technology transfer organisation. No organisation in any other country comes anywhere near it. It seems to have done rather well in the straitjacket that the Treasury has provided for it. On the question of management, surely the hon. Gentleman is aware that a survey of the views of all the employees of BTG showed that an overwhelming majority were opposed to the principle and practice of privatisation.

Dr. Hampson: The hon. Gentleman has just given the game away totally. Only five minutes ago he was condemning the management; now he is praising it for having done a brilliant job in the straitjacket of the Treasury. He knows that the company will prosper without that straitjacket.

This debate is really about protecting intellectual property and the people who create it—the innovators. Every one of the amendments that we are debating is, in a sense, flawed. We have all fallen into the trap of talking about the articles of the successor company. The successor company will be a Government company run by civil servants, and it may last a long or short time. The amendments' aim is to probe the Government's intention for the private operation, not the successor company, which is a technical term for the interim period before the company is sold.

I hope that we are seeking not blanket condemnation of the principle of privatisation but firm guarantees from my hon. Friend the Minister on the structure of the private company that will emerge. If he can give those guarantees, new clause 1 and new clause 5 become redundant. We shall have to wait and see whether my hon. Friend can go beyond what he said in Committee.

Dr. Bray: New clause 1 is not as defective as the hon. Gentleman suggests because clause 15 defines the successor company as

"the company nominated for the purposes of section 1";

and under clause 1 the successor company is the company that

"the Secretary of State may by order appoint all the property, rights and liabilities to".

Only the sale of shares in the successor company constitutes the act of privatisation. The successor company, surely, continues, so new clause 5 is in order.

Dr. Hampson: There is a nice legal dispute about what the amendment means, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to clarify that. We are trying to ensure that the final structure of the company meets valid objectives, the critical one being that the British Technology Group is our primary instrument for transferring bright ideas and breakthroughs to the private sector. It must therefore remain independent and in no circumstances must it fall into foreign ownership.

I might as well jump my own gun and say that the most important point that my hon. Friend the Minister must clarify concerns the prospect of a golden share held by the Government. The model was water privatisation, where we established a five-year golden share, which must be a minimum period to prevent asset stripping, especially foreign asset stripping.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Dr. Hampson: I shall give way again to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), but my brief intervention is becoming a summing up. I have replied to about six interventions. The Labour party is so sensitive on this issue that it cannot do other than constantly defend its position.

Dr. Bray: The hon. Gentleman is making a useful speech. He said that he would like to see a golden share. Will he support amendment No. 2, which creates such a golden share for the precise period that he specified?

Dr. Hampson: I shall wait to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister says. I am always hesitant to support amendments tabled by the Labour party; I am sure that its amendment is as inadequately drafted as amendments that I have tabled. I have long said that a golden share is the only sensible guarantee of avoiding asset stripping.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Dr. Hampson: I shall give way, but it must be for the last time as this is a short debate.

Mr. Hughes: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the logic of his general principle—that we must protect this important mechanism—will not be sustained by the mechanism that he proposes? A golden share kept for, say, five years places as much uncertainty in the mind of the prospective inventor who wants to use BTG, because after five years there may be no golden share. We need a mechanism and guarantees that the structure will be circumscribed in certain respects. It will be in the private sector, but in these respects we shall have control over it. Five years is short term, with the risk that it all gets lost in five years' time. That will not provide the confidence that is one of the prerequisites for the operation's necessary success.

Dr. Hampson: I was coming to that point because I agree that short termism is a problem, and I have commented on that in one context already. It also applies in the sense that five years means that it will come, probably, in the political cycle. A body that earns perhaps 70 per cent. of its income abroad and has to deal with private companies and private enterprise in, say, Japan will have problems if we are not careful, with a Labour Government potentially always hovering around threatening to turn it into some nasty bureaucratic stranglehold operation. No national enterprise will ever be able to draw on the property rights of other, private companies. We have seen a couple of major examples already with BTG.

A golden share is essential in the transitional period and as the major protection against asset stripping, which may be by a British company; and may not be foreign. But I fear that the major Japanese conglomerates, with their huge banking resources and industrial strength, would thrive on the innovative power that BTG generates. So there has to be a ceiling, and this is the third point that I want to ask my hon. Friend to clarify. I want him to go beyond what he said in Committee and to say that there will be a ceiling on the equity holding of any foreign operation.

I endorse entirely what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) in moving the new clause. We are primarily interested in the independance of this operation. The consortium idea is a very attractive one because I believe that the universities are a critical force that has to be recognised. It is almost irrelevant whether they have one, two or more members on the board. It is the blocking stake in the operation overall that is important. I hope that they can generate the resources. We have to look quite inventively, as some operations in the United States have done, at how private industrial business capital can go through the university world to lock the universities into a major participating element of this company—a 20 per cent. stake—a blocking stake of some kind, to keep the universities as a central player in the operation.

Above all, I hope that what will emerge from what my hon. Friend says today is the recognition that a Major society, if I can coin a phrase, if it is to be an innovative society, must ensure that this form of partnership between the academic, innovating world and the private capitalist world, which is the dynamo of the world economy, thrives and succeeds. I believe that what we are doing today is the right way forward.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): It was stated on Second Reading and on a number of occasions in Committee that there is no need for the privatisation of the British Technology Group. I do not intend to go over that ground again, but one point that should be mentioned is that, if and when the BTG is privatised, the United Kingdom will be the only major industrial nation that will not provide backing for technology transfer. I believe that we should learn a lesson from some of our industrial competitors, such as the United States, France and Japan, all of which have industrial records that are considerably better than ours and all of which have state owned and controlled technology transfer companies which perform effectively.

I find it strange that the Minister and his colleagues have found little good to say on behalf of BTG and the job it is doing. We know that it is profitable and effective and that it is regarded highly by universities, research institutions, and so forth. Yet the Government are determined to force it into the private sector irrespective, apparently, of the effect that that will have on its effectiveness.

4.45 pm

Some comments of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) about BTG were rather patronising. He talked of the Opposition's approach to BTG and referred to the so-called straitjacket within which he believed it was currently operating. There is little evidence of that, despite comments which the senior staff of BTG have made and which were repeated in Committee. It seems clear that the body is effective and ought to be allowed to continue in that way. However, we must be realistic and assume that the Bill will eventually become law and that BTG will be privatised. On that assumption, the question of safeguards, which is referred to particularly in new clause 1, is important.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) raised the question of assets. He talked of the prime assets of the company as being the staff. I would not disagree, but I thought that he was a bit restrictive. He talked of senior staff and of investment, knowledge, research, expertise, and so forth. There are 188 staff at the British Technology Group, and I think it is wrong to say that we should be absolutely certain that some of those staff stay with the group when it is privatised while others are of less importance. There is a contribution of expertise from the staff on a wider scale that should be valued and recognised.

Although staff are clearly prime assets of any organisation, I am also concerned—and this is not the first time that I have said so during the stages of this Bill—about the question of patents owned by BTG and what will happen to them subsequent to privatisation. I spoke on Second Reading on 12 February and made similar comments, which drew an intervention from the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North, who said that he saw no problem with regard to patents. I raised the question again in Committee, addressing my remarks to the Under-Secretary, and said that I had had no assurances from him in his summing up on Second Reading and hoped that I would have some assurances on that later occasion.

The Under-Secretary said that the question of patents was one of the important points which the Government wished to draw out from the debate—I use his words. But it was never successfully drawn out from the debate in

Committee and there is no evidence as yet that the hon. Gentleman or any of his colleagues is likely to give it any emphasis at this stage of the Bill.

It is very important that the question of patents is addressed and that assurances are given to universities and other research bodies. Many individuals who work within unversities need assurances about what will happen under the new ownership of the group. I hope that the Under-Secretary is listening when I ask again for such assurances. I see that he is not listening, but perhaps the message will eventually get through to him that the people responsible for inventions need assurances about patents.

One reason why we need such assurances concerns how patents might be defended following the sale of BTG. The fact that BTG pursued the Pentagon recently in a case that lasted for a considerable time and resulted in payments of some £6 million being made to BTG and the owners of the patents concerned has rightly received a lot of publicity. That is not a typical example, but BTG has been vigorous in defending the patents within its control and we need assurances that that will continue. Legal action is, of necessity, costly, particularly lengthy cases, often against powerful predators—multinational corporations perhaps—and these may not be attractive to the new owners of BTG.

I am particularly concerned about comments made by Dr. Ian Young, the manager of research on nuclear magnetic resonance, which has been a major earner for the British Technology Group. He said that he was concerned about overseas patent infringers. What would happen if the new owners of the group were faced with a similar situation in terms of one of the existing patents, or indeed a patent which came along subsequent to privatisation, and the estimation was made by the new owners that the cost of litigation in defending that patent could not be justified for any number of reasons, the least of which might be financial?

Some safeguard has to be written into the Bill. There is no safeguard whatsoever, and I am particularly concerned that this matter is addressed and that the Under-Secretary gives us the Government's views about how this problem may be dealt with after privatisation.

The last point that I want to mention was covered by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), for whom I have great respect. He is the Member who represents me through my London residence; therefore, I want to keep in his good books. I also have great respect for his knowledge of education matters and for his ability to extend his comments over a long period. On occasion that has been of benefit both in Committee and in the House. The hon. Gentleman is not here at the moment, but I should like him to know that I mean those comments kindly; no doubt his colleague the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) will pass them on.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey talked about who might take over BTG when it goes up for sale. He expressed the view, which I wholeheartedly echo, that the highest bidder should not necessarily be successful. That is of great importance.

It is also important that consideration is given to expertise. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West said towards the end of his contribution that universities might have a role to play in bidding for the British Technology Group. I hope that that possibility comes to fruition.

Dr. Hampson: I should like to correct the hon. Gentleman. I did not say that the universities should bid for BTG because that would be a gross waste of their resources; I do not even know how they would do it. However, I think that they have a part to play in a consortium arrangement in which they would have a blocking element, if for no other reason than that I do not want the ownership of BTG to be vested in an industrial corporation which would use the intellectual property rights generated in this country to block universities from commercial activity just because they were in competition with things that the company was already doing. I think that the universities have to be built into the system to look after the interests of the innovators, but I do not want the universities to own the company.

Mr. Watson: I value that qualification of the hon. Gentleman's remarks; I had misinterpreted what he said. The argument as to whether the universities and research councils should have representation on the board of the new company, by whomsoever it is owned, was addressed in Committee. Such suggestions came from the Opposition and were rejected by the Government. I share the concern of the Member for Leeds, North-West and hope that something will come of it.

I was addressing my remarks to the possibility that some universities may form a consortium with research organisations and foundations, possibly involving British Technology Group managers and employees, to bid for the company. That would not mean that it would be owned by the universities, but they would have an input financially and in expertise. It would not necessarily cost the universities a great deal to divert funds which might be used for other purposes at a time when they are being squeezed, but it would mean that there would be a direct input from universities, which would be much more desirable than commercial considerations being brought to bear on BTG which has shown over the years that it can conduct technology transfer in a way which, while being profitable, is not driven by profit as the main motive. It is important to stress that profit need not and should not be the main motive.

There is a great deal of expertise, particularly in universities and research councils, that must be used to ensure that the British Technology Group post-privatisation maintains its role of being effective in technology transfer. If it is run simply as a business proposition, it will have a short life. No hon. Member wants that. If the Government are prepared to take note of the comments of hon. Members on both sides of the House, I think that we will achieve some assurances of university and research council involvement. That is very important for the future development of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Alex Carlile: At one point during the debate we started to descend into the political arena as to whether the British Technology Group should be privatised because privatisation is a good thing or not privatised because it is perceived to be a bad thing. That was a little caricature of a sensitive and mature debate about the nature of the business activities carried out by BTG.

Everyone who has spoken in the debate shares the same sense of purpose that there should be at least a body, whether it is called the British Technology Group or something else, to which British invention can go with

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

confidence, knowing that it will be supported not only in the short term but in the long term, that its intellectual property will be nurtured and that it may be nurtured in the national interest, which seems to be not an unreasonable end for which to aim.

The function of the British Technology Group includes securing, where the public interest so requires, the development or exploitation of inventions resulting from public research. That is entirely laudable. Neither on Second Reading nor in the Committee proceedings which I have studied have the Government been able to give satisfactory assurances that the strategic aims of the British Technology Group will continue. It seems possible that in a very short time the assets of the group will be sold to the highest bidder, who may not have our national interest at heart.

Hon. Members have mentioned selling the family silver. In one respect at least there is a danger of giving away rather than selling the family silver. I put to the Minister a point which I hope he will deal with in due course. It relates to the intellectual property of research carried out by or on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It has come to my attention that in February 1987 a confidential internal paper was circulated in the Ministry. It was written by Dr. C. E. Fisher and was entitled:

"Policy and Organisation Study of Exploitation of Intellectual Property in MAFF."

Following the circulation of that paper and discussion on it, there was apparently an agreement that the British Technology Group would handle the exploitation and the export, where appropriate, of the intellectual property of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That agreement was marked by a MAFF press release dated 4 January 1990. It was not one of the most howling successes of MAFF's energetic publicity machine as all that it rated was a small piece in one, albeit distinguished, farming journal.

In the light of that, can the Minister tell us whether the British Technology Group will give up that agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food before privatisation, or will it give away in the privatisation all the intellectual property of which it has the advantage arising from the Ministry's activities? If the intellectual property of the Ministry of Agriculture is simply to be given away to whomsoever purchases the group, that will be truly giving away the family silver.

A connected complication arises in relation to the royal botanic gardens at Kew. Since 1984 they have been funded by a grant in aid from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. As I understand the position, any intellectual property that has arisen from research at Kew is part of the agreement to which I referred earlier. That means that the British Technology Group, under that agreement, owns the intellectual property—or at least holds the rights to it—arising from the world-renowned efforts of the researchers at the royal botanical gardens. For example, the gardens have the largest collection of wild plant seeds in the world, a major resource not only for third world development but for agricultural, horticultural and botanical development throughout the world.

Will the British Technology Group give away those potentially hugely valuable intellectual assets when it is privatised? Will that important piece of public property simply be handed over to a private purchaser? Will the Minister answer those questions when he replies to the debate?

5 pm

Dr. Hampson: The British Technology Group will not be giving away those assets if they are properly developed and exploited and become commercially successful. It all comes back to the nature of the company. We are not giving away public sector assets but trying to develop them. I do not mind if public sector inventions are developed by private companies. Does the hon. Gentleman mind?

Mr. Carlile: I have divulged to the House that, as a result of its public service position, the British Technology Group was given valuable assets which it would not have acquired had it not been in such a position. That has not been revealed to the House before and is a well-concealed fact. It should be part of the consideration when the House decides how to vote on the Bill. I suspect that when the matter is debated in another place, it will be an energetic debate led by some university chancellors and others from academic backgrounds, and those considerations will be important when they decide whether the Government have come clean about what is happening.

Is British public service inventiveness being protected? We must bear in mind what has happened in various privatisations. I do not suggest that there has been bad faith in the setting of prices for privatisation deals, although others might do so. It is clear with hindsight, at least in market terms, that the private sector has had some extremely good bargains as a result of privatisations. We must therefore have a full understanding of what is being sold. For example, when we are dealing with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food intellectual property, which is very much part of the public service, should not the public service gain from exploiting that intellectual property? The public service and the Government are entitled to the profits of that exploitation.

Research is still being carried out, albeit in diminished terms, on behalf of or by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. What will happen to the intellectual property in that research or research carried out by any other Department? Have the Government thought that through or will they hawk whatever intellectual property exists around the market to see who is the keenest taker? Do they really believe that companies will be prepared to take the long-term view that the British Technology Group has been prepared to take? The issue seems to be clarified by the words in the first new clause,

"to preserve the nature of those business activities".

Will the Minister assure us that the type of business activities to which I referred will be preserved as public assets?

Dr. Bray: This useful group of amendments has attracted hon. Members who have a contribution to make to the subject of the Bill. Some of them spoke on Second Reading but were, unfortunately, excluded from the Committee, no doubt by the machinations of Committee selection procedure and the Whips, not to mention the Minister. Had they been members of the Committee, the Bill would have been in rather better shape now, and the future of the British Technology Group would be clearer. The Minister's mind would also be clearer. I doubt

whether he will be able to shed much light on the Government's plans for the future of BTG, even this evening.

The hon. Members for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) have, for a long time, taken great interest in science and technology, research and its application to universities, and the integration of universities' output into industry. Had the Government listened more carefully to their views, not only on the Bill but on other matters over the past 10 years, the economy would be in a better shape today.

The amendments cover a wide range of issues and tackle the problem of BTG's future from a number of different directions. New clause 1 uses the instrument of articles of association, which is a useful but fragile method because articles of association can be amended by a decision of a majority of shareholders and therefore constitute no permanent guarantee of what will happen to the company. The new clause leaves the arrangements to preserve the nature of those business activities to the Minister's judgment and to the action that he deems necessary. New clause 5, in the name of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), requires that

"such steps as are necessary to preserve the independence of the British Technology Group"

be taken. That is a somewhat stronger requirement than new clause 1 and does not leave it simply to the Minister's judgment. It is a distinct approach.

Everyone is concerned about continuing to preserve the nature of the business activities of the British Technology Group. That nature is a strategic role in the technology transfer processes of this country.

The Government introduced the Bill without a clear idea of what they wanted to do with BTG or even what its role is, or has been, in the economy and the processes of technology transfer. They introduced it partly out of a desire to remove it from the public sector. If anyone has been doctrinaire on that issue, it has been the Government.

Furthermore, the manner in which the Government have behaved toward BTG in the past 10 years has been disgraceful. They stifled a great deal of management initiative, which led to frustration on the council. Although that led the council to accept the idea of privatisation, it wanted privatisation with sufficient safeguards of the independence, integrity and impartiality of the successor organisation.

Dr. Hampson: About eight years ago, everyone was condemning BTG as being bureaucratic and unsuccessful. We transformed it and it has been more flexible and successful under the present format. The Government stopped it taking part in Alvey and Link only because it is a nationalised body. If the hon. Gentleman had his way, the organisation would be constricted and constrained for ever in that way.

Dr. Bray: The hon. Gentleman claims too much by saying "we" transformed BTG, if he refers to Conservative Members or even the Government. The staff and management of BTG transformed its operations and tightened up consideration of the intellectual property from universities and research councils. The greater concern of pursuing and promoting applications and so on was not the result of Government initiatives but the proper response of BTG. I would not minimise the importance of the removal of the monopoly in stimulating BTG. We would not seek to reverse important development. We think that universities and research councils should be free to make whatever arrangements they consider appropriate for the application of the results of their research.

A number of influences have been at work. We certainly welcome the success that BTG has had in transforming itself into an operation that should—given reasonable luck because it remains risky—continue to be successful commercially. However, as hon. Members have repeatedly said in the debate, the Bill leaves the distinct possibility of the dismemberment, diversion or subversion of BTG. There are no safeguards for BTG's future, and the Government have given no assurances to provide adequate safeguards. BTG's assets could simply be stripped. If one were closing down the operation, the value of the office and the secure income revenue from the existing stock patents would certainly be sufficient to remunerate a substantial bid for BTG. However, the income that is in prospect and the assets in the building and bank deposits are there to facilitate the continuation of BTG in its present business. If that business were abandoned, assets would be available to an asset stripper and there is no safeguard against that under the Bill's provisions or in the sort of commitments that the Minister gave in Committee. We shall listen carefully to the Minister, but he is unlikely to give any more reassuring commitments tonight, so it may prove necessary to press a number of amendments to a Division.

It is not simply a matter of asset stripping. The sort of price that might be bid for BTG is small beer in relation to the value of single pieces of intellectual property. Were BTG fortunate enough to have the patents on Zantac, it would increase BTG's capital value one hundredfold. If there were reason to believe that a particular drug that BTG had patented on behalf of a client would lead to a large revenue, a drug company seeking to gain control of that patent could almost write off the purchase cost of BTG in its petty cash. In the high risk business about which we are talking, bidding for a company the size of BTG would not be a major consideration. The business is high risk and any such contingency is necessarily speculative, but that is the nature of the game in which we are engaged. It is because it is so speculative that the Opposition believe that BTG would, most sensibly, continue within the public sector where it can afford to take risks of the size incurred in such a game.

A further possibility is that, apart from the single, large, dramatic piece of intellectual property, some interests—most obviously, one or more Japanese companies—could seek to gain privileged access to a wide stream of intellectual know-how from British universities and research institutes. I was interested to find that the rate of investment by Japanese companies in new research facilities in this country was being closely followed, not only by people in this country, but by our partners in the European Community who, on a lesser scale than us, have had the same experience. I am told that there are a dozen Japanese research institutes, for example, in the Cambridge and Surrey university science parks, and near to Oxford, strategically placed to tap into the general stream of the British scientific tradition. In one sense, I say, "good luck to them", but if one adds to that factor the sort of facilities and lines of communication, and the continuing role in the transition that BTG offers, the Government's naivety is rampantly stupid. Nothing that

[Dr. Bray]

the Government have said has dismissed such a possibility. There are ways to safeguard against such a threat, and the amendments would prevent such a development, but the Government have steadily resisted such proposals.

A further consideration is that BTG management, particularly the chairman, has rightly stressed the necessity for the continuation of BTG's business and the need to maintain its independence, impartiality and integrity. Independence is necessary in that an industrial enterprise might seek to gain control of BTG for specific purposes relating to a particular sphere of business. Impartiality is necessary in that BTG must plainly properly represent the interests of the inventor, developer, applyer and exploiter. Integrity is necessary in that, in the sort of negotiations that take place when concluding a contract on intellectual property, it is necessary to go into much detail, not only on the technical and scientific aspects, but on the economic, business, market and financial aspects of the deal. That is a matter on which, at present, parties negotiating with BTG can rely on its total integrity to safeguard the confidentiality of their interests.

5.15 pm

No formal undertaking has been given to the House, nor was such an assurance given by Ministers in Committee. Furthermore, no formal undertakings have been given by the Minister to BTG's council in reply to the representations that it has made in that respect. The Government have shown an extraordinarily wooden attitude. They must have some reason for failing to give comfort and reassurance, but what is it? I suspect that it has two parts. First, the Government totally fail to understand BTG's role and, secondly, they simply want to maximise BTG's selling price, perhaps under pressure from the Treasury, which plainly has a duty to urge the importance of getting a decent price.

The Government's failure to understand BTG's strategic role was amply evidenced on Second Reading when Ministers compared the size of BTG's investment in research and development with total United Kingdom research and development and Government expenditure on research and development. However, that is not BTG's business. It is not primarily a financier of research and development, basic, applied or industrial, but primarily a technological transfer organisation operating at the stage of patenting and licensing, and when research immediately surrounding the protection of the intellectual property of new inventions is developed and applied. That is necessarily a small part of overall expenditure by Government or industry, but it is a strategic part, and it is that strategic role that the Government have failed to grasp.

We must ask where we are in relation to that background. Hon. Members have talked about the need, indeed the possibility, of securing the participation of universities and research councils in BTG's future functioning and control. Only yesterday, the Minister met representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and he has not yet replied to a letter from the British Technology Group seeking his agreement to its putting together a consortium bid. It should be remembered that, since Second Reading, we have been stressing the importance of putting together an arrangement for the future management and control of the company that would secure its future.

Yesterday, the universities, through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, demonstrated their willingness to take part in a consortium. They have an important role to play in the future of BTG as, along with research councils, they are the principal source of the intellectual property rights whose exploitation it is BTG's business to manage. Therefore, whoever runs BTG in the future will gain substantially from the participation and goodwill not merely of the universities and research councils but of the scientific community, and the formal presence of universities in the control of BTG would bring that participation about.

It is worth spending a little time studying the structure of the consortium that might emerge. It is my understanding that none of the parties—BTG, the Department of Trade and Industry and the universities—have started talking about numbers. Perhaps hon. Members, who are not engaged in the negotiations, can make a useful contribution by talking about numbers and the structure of control that would emerge.

The different parties that might be involved are trusts and foundations that are interested in research and have, and will continue to play, a valuable part in financing research and its industrial applications. They include the Nuffield Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation. Another group of institutions that offered a suitable element in the structure, given the financial record of BTG, and which would certainly be willing participants in an appropriate consortium, consists of a number of financial institutions whose present investment schemes are so large that BTG would be a relatively small but important part of their overall investment strategy, as it would open up, and give them familiarity with, a wide range of high technology venture capital developments.

I understand that the results of soundings of financial institutions have shown no lack of willingness. If the Government were ready just to consider open bids, there would be no difficulty in getting a bid that would financially exploit the assets of BTG in the ways that we were talking about earlier. Obviously, the number of financial institutions that would be prepared to participate in the continuation of BTG in its present business would be smaller, but there would be some, and they would be wise institutions at that.

The third element would certainly be some employee participation—for example, through employee share ownership plans or management buy-outs—so that the staff of BTG would have a continuing interest in the operation and success of the company.

The final partners will be the universities themselves. In such an arrangement, it is quite possible to ensure that no party has more than 20 per cent. of the controlling shares of BTG and that a majority of the shareholders would be parties interested in the continuation and development of BTG's present line of business. Therefore, within the financial control of BTG, one could secure the guarantee that BTG would continue as a technology transfer organisation operating in the United Kingdom to support and exploit the results of British academic and research council research.

The question is whether that is too narrow a range and whether it would cramp too much BTG's style in relation to foreign Governments, foreign universities and foreign

industrial companies. I do not think that it would, but nor do I have any great objection in principle to one 20 per cent. or two 10 per cents. coming from some overseas financial institutions. However, it would be downright wrong if overseas institutions that would not have been acceptable had they been United Kingdom institutions were to invest in BTG. An example of this is an industrial bank with controlling interests over a wide range of activities in Germany or Japan, which might not be an industrial company but which has such strong industrial interests that it is interchangeable with the concept of an industrial company in this country.

If such a partner were willing to invest in BTG, there would be no difficulty in the trusts and foundations or the financial institutions finding ready money to put up. The usual arrangements would apply in the case of employee share ownership plans or a management buy-out. However, the universities are plainly in a difficult position because they are strapped for cash—they ain't got any. The educational investments that some of the wealthier Oxbridge colleges have made, and are making, are desperately needed for the support of education, given the financial straits to which the Government have reduced the universities. Therefore, it may well be necessary to look for some arrangement whereby the universities gain a proper share in the financial control of BTG without having to put ready money up front when the deal is made. For example, there could be an arrangement whereby the university interests could be financed by a loan from the Government, which could be repaid by earnings on that slice of BTG equity over a period. The universities would gain no immediate financial benefit from their share ownership, but would have financial control. The Government would not get quite as much cash initially, but would secure a viable arrangement for the future of BTG.

That is one of many possible formulae that could be mooted in negotiations. I would not expect the Minister either to endorse any formula in particular, or to rule out of hand the possibility of meeting the requirement, set out in some of the amendments, for the Government to make some such arrangement. These are practical arrangements and they are being considered by the separate parties. Negotiations have not yet begun on them and the Government could commit themselves, in principle, to some arrangement that would meet the misgivings that have been expressed so well by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

If that were to happen, and if BTG were to continue in its present business, that would by no means exhaust possibilities for its future development. We have talked about the role that we would envisage BTG continuing to play in the private sector—in the future development of research and its applications and in technology transfer in the United Kingdom. I shall give two examples of that. At present, BTG provides a modest amount of project finance for individual projects, for sums up to, at most, £1 million or so. That is in the nature of launch aid for new technology development. The principle of launch aid originated and still operates in the aircraft industry, where it involves hundreds of millions of pounds. There is a huge gap between the level of launch aid that BTG and venture capital organisations can tackle and the level of such assistance for which the Government have to take responsibility in the aircraft industry. It seems fairly unlikely that private financial institutions will bridge that gap, although they may hope to move up the scale. Arrangements could be introduced to encourage them to do so, and we have suggested some.

5.30 pm

However, it would be valuable if a public sector organisation could help to fill that gap. BTG could usefully play that role in the future. It has the management capability, the technical knowledge and the experience of the marketplace to enable it to operate on a very much bigger scale of project finance than hitherto. A developed BTG might also improve and extend the arrangements that are made between the universities, the research councils and industry in the exploitation of new areas of research, such as the Link programme. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said that decisions on the exclusion of BTG from the Alvey programme had set it on the right path. I totally disagree because if BTG had participated in Alvey and Esprit, we might well have achieved much more effective results.

Dr. Hampson: My point was that because BTG is a Government body or, one might say, a nationalised industry, it is thus debarred from programmes in which private sector companies participate. It has been prevented from doing deals in France and Spain because it has been seen as a Government or a public body. The world would be BTG's oyster if it were free from Government shackles which, to my surprise, the hon. Gentleman wants to maintain.

Dr. Bray: The nationalised industries were not generally excluded from participation in, for example, the European Community research programmes. Several such organisations have taken part in those programmes, but BTG was not allowed to do so simply because of a doctrinaire act on the part of the Government——

Dr. Hampson: There was no state involvement in Alvey.

Dr. Bray: The programmes in which British Steel has been engaged in the European Community would have been entirely open to nationalised industries, and were, indeed, used by them. It would have been possible for BTG to do so but for its arbitrary exclusion by the Department of Trade and Industry.

If we are looking for a more effective and balanced way to build a bridge between university research and industrial application, let us consider the work of the science and engineering research council, which spends £200 million each year on new engineering research. That must be the biggest single engineering research programme in the country. If there were appropriate partners, it would be reasonable to say to those grant applicants, "If your programme is successful, what lines of exploitation are open to you? Have you thought about this? Have you talked to potential partners about how they would take over, carry through, support and learn from your research? Do you have an industrial partner?"

Sometimes, the reply would be, "No, our research is into an enabling technology that would serve a wide range of people but we do not have a specific partner." To that, one would say, "Fair enough." Others would say, "No, we do not have an industrial partner because no British firm is engaged in this sector. Developing and applying our research would require a new British enterprise." Others

[Dr. Bray]

would say, "No, we do not have an industrial partner because British industry is too dim to understand or apply the research on which we want to work."

At present, there is no way in which the science and engineering research council can say, "Come off it. If you cannot establish those lines of communication, perhaps we can help you or perhaps BTG or someone else could help you." We would need to set up a number of options by which the research community could shop around to discover the most appropriate industrial partners. In the end, however, it might be appropriate for a research council to say, "If, despite all these possible channels of support, there is absolutely no possibility of industrial application of your applied research, should we really be carrying out such research in Britain, given that our comparative advantage from its exploitation is so low?"

For all their talk about efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of research, the Government have dodged such tough decisions on science policy. If one is to be really efficient, one needs a degree and range of interventionist instruments to ensure that those bridges are built.

We should have liked to see BTG develop in that direction in the public sector, while continuing and extending its present activities. We should have liked it to expand into the work on technology transfer and industrial research and development and their application that, at present, it cannot undertake. We have said that if BTG is privatised, we would constitute a successor company to carry out the range of functions and operations that we regard as necessary for this country's industrial development. Whether and how that is carried out will obviously depend upon the nature of the BTG that emerges not only from this Bill but from the way in which it is implemented by the Government in any time that is left to them in this Parliament.

Our amendments are important, not only in terms of whatever negotiations follow in the next few weeks, but in terms of the spirit of the new BTG and the direction in which it moves and is allowed to move by the Government in the years to come. It is a die which, once cast, cannot be taken back. Therefore, I urge hon. Members and Ministers carefully to consider all the points that have been raised so powerfully by hon. Members of all parties in support of this group of amendments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): I am grateful to my hon Friends the Members for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), and to the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) for their contributions to this long and interesting debate on what is clearly the key part of the Bill. I understand the concerns that are uppermost in the minds of those hon. Members, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East, and the Government recognise that the amendments are an expression of that concern.

We note hon. Members' anxiety that BTG's activities in technology transfer should continue after privatisation. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would not want me to become involved in a debate on the merits or demerits of privatisation, although I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West for his stout defence of privatisation and its merits. I hope that we shall have time for a Third Reading debate, which would be the appropriate point for me to outline why I think that BTG should be privatised. However, that is not the central argument of the current debate.

Hon. Members of all parties want to ensure the continuation of BTG's activities. There is an ideological divide about whether that is best ensured in the private or the public sector, but we are united in wanting to ensure its continuation. I shall have to choose my words carefully, of course, but I hope that what I say this evening will reassure my hon. Friends.

I recognise the deep seriousness with which my hon. Friends and Opposition Members approach this subject. Let me say to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East that I agree with the general sentiment underlying the new clause. However, it is not necessary to enshrine it in the Bill, for reasons which I shall make clear in my speech.

Hon. Members may wish to know that these matters were discussed at some length in Committee. I know that some of my hon. Friends were not able to be members of that Committee. In Committee I sought, during some lengthy debates, to give reassurances on the very subject dealt with in the new clause. I shall give similar reassurances today, but I hope that I shall give them in language which, while carefully chosen, reassures my hon. Friends even more than they have been reassured hitherto. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends who served on the Committee were reassured by what I said, and I hope now to reassure other hon. Friends on Report.

I made it clear in Committee, and I repeat now, that the Government wish to see the British Technology Group privatised in a way that leaves a good prospect that BTG's current technology transfer activities will continue. That has always been part of the Government's publicly stated objective for the privatisation. We take that objective seriously. The House can rest assured that it will be uppermost in our minds in determining the exact form of the sale.

New clauses 1 and 5 are not dissimilar in their general intention. To put it in a nutshell, new clause 1 asks us to respond to the anxieties that have been expressed by enshrining in the Bill an assurance that BTG's current business activities will continue after privatisation. New clause 5 would require the Secretary of State to take steps to preserve BTG's independence and enable it to maintain and extend its technology transfer services.

First, I repeat what I said in Committee, although I shall not rest on it. I said:

> "The Government will take those anxieties into account when deciding the form of privatisation and whether safeguards are necessary in the articles or the agreement of sale".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 7 March 1991; c. 150.]

Since then matters have not stood still. We have actively considered what form of conditions of sale might be appropriate. Further to what I said in Committee, we have moved a stage further. We are actively considering the conditions of sale which will be necessary to meet the anxieties of my hon. Friends and those which will be appropriate to meet the Government's objectives which, as I have said, are good prospects that BTG's activities will continue.

We have now decided whom to appoint as legal advisers on the sale and shall shortly request them to consider the terms and possible conditions of, for example, the articles of association. So we have now moved to the process of appointing legal advisers. They will advise us on how we can frame the articles of association to meet the anxieties that have been expressed in the debate.

5.45 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister said that he would be careful in what he said and we have been listening carefully. First, will he make clear that there is no semantic point in the difference between "very good" and "best" prospects? There is a great difference in practice. Secondly, have the Minister's thoughts—which he says have progressed since Committee—included or ruled out the possibility of the Government enshrining in legislation some of the conditions which the House has expressed a wish to see in legislation?

Mr. Leigh: On the second point, I shall have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. I shall go into the matter in more detail later in my speech, but we do not think it appropriate—and it has not been done before—to enshrine in an enabling Bill such as this the type of conditions in which the hon. Gentleman is interested.

I had to use the words "a good prospect" of the continuation of BTG's activities——

Sir Trevor Skeet: It is nothing.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend says that it is nothing. I do not think that it is nothing. Neither I nor any other Minister could go further than the words "a good prospect". I could not possibly give an absolute undertaking now that BTG's activities will continue in exactly the same way as at present.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend will realise that 8,200 patents rest in BTG and that if there is a sale they will all be assigned to the new buyer. It will be up to the new buyer to decide what to do with them. It could be very much a breach of confidentiality that they should be assigned and, of course, it could be against the interests of the inventors. I appreciate that the inventors have passed on their rights to BTG, but does my hon. Friend realise that not to include anything in the substantive legislation could prejudice their interests in the field?

Mr. Leigh: I realise precisely the point that my hon. Friend makes. He reiterates a point which is uppermost in my mind—the integrity, as well as the independence, of BTG when it is privatised. There are ways in which the integrity, independence and critical mass of BTG can be ensured. If my hon. Friend will give me time to develop my thoughts——

Sir Trevor Skeet: Plenty of time.

Mr. Leigh: Indeed, we have plenty of time. I hope that by the time that I sit down I shall have reassured my hon. Friend that, while it is not appropriate and has never been enshrined in legislation, we intend to privatise the organisation in such a way that its integrity and independence are preserved.

Dr. Hampson: We are touching on some important matters. I have argued the need for a Government golden share. In the past such a provision has been enshrined in legislation. Is my hon. Friend the Minister saying that the legal advice that he is commissioning and the framework of the conditions of sale will cover the possibility of golden shares without the need for legislation?

Mr. Leigh: I shall deal with the question of a golden share later. A golden share may, indeed, be necessary and it may have to be mentioned in legislation. I cannot predict that at this stage. But in previous privatisations the issue of a golden share has arisen later in the proceedings. I do not rule it out at this stage.

Mr. Steen: I hope that this comment will be helpful. My hon. Friend can have the best legal advice in the country. As a Minister he has access to the best lawyers that he can choose. Why does not he have that advice on Report? Why is the advice still being obtained? Why cannot it be put before the House so that we know what will happen?

Mr. Leigh: This is a fundamental philosophical point. Should we enshrine these matters in legislation or, knowing what shape we want BTG to have and that we wish it to continue its activities, and as we want to put together a sale which will ensure that those activities continue, should we not wait until we know the nature of the buyers of the organisation? I emphasise the word "buyers", to which we might return in a moment. When we know the nature of the buyers will be the moment to frame the articles of association with the advice of our lawyers and, if necessary, to consider a golden share to ensure that our wishes are carried out.

Dr. Bray: It depends on who "we" are. If "we" are the Government, they can decide to do that at any stage that they choose. But today "we" are the House of Commons. This is the last occasion on which the House will be able to include the requirement which Members on both sides of the House urge upon the Government.

Mr. Leigh: I do not know whether it is in order to mention another place. Hon. Members would not want me to say that we are simply waiting until the Bill goes to another place to give more details. I am not saying that for a moment.

If hon. Members will allow me to proceed, they will see that I have a form of words which I hope will reassure them that we intend to take their anxieties into account. It may be appropriate later to talk of articles of association and a golden share. Let me proceed to utter those words. Before I finish, I want to talk in some detail about the interesting meeting that I had yesterday with the university vice-chancellors because that meeting and what arose from it is pertinent and I have not yet had an opportunity to acquaint the House with those details.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I want to press the Minister once more about the objective and why it is not possible for him, as the Minister in charge of the Bill, to say that the Government's objective is the "best" prospect of keeping the present activities of BTG as opposed to "very good". That is an important difference.

Mr. Leigh: Clearly we have a duty to the general public which was outlined in the words that I used repeatedly in Committee and which I repeat now with Treasury advice. We are clearly under a duty to maximise returns to the taxpayer and I would be failing in my duty to the general public if I did not mention that. But we have always said

[Mr. Leigh]

that that must be consistent with the good prospect of the continuation of the BTG's activities. I have said that many times, and I do not think that I can add anything further.

Let me give the sort of conditions that we are considering which I hope will be of interest to hon. Members and which I do not think I dealt with in detail in Committee. They include measures to prevent a purchaser from asset stripping, whether through selling the assets or through collecting the revenue from existing patents without further investment—the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central referred to patents—and from ceasing to carry on the technology transfer activities of the BTG. One way in which we could do so might be through articles of association or, alternatively, through the sale contract with the buyer. We are also looking carefully at whether it would be appropriate and effective for the Government to retain a special share for a limited period so as to ensure that changes are not made to the fundamental business without the Government's consent. That would be an entirely reasonable way of proceeding.

We are also aware that some believe that the sale of BTG to a commercial or manufacturing concern might deter other customers in the same technology sectors from using the BTG. That was a point of particular concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North. That is also a point which we will take into account in deciding the form of the sale and any other possible safeguards. As I said in Committee:

"The detailed wording of such articles is best left until we are clearer about the form of sale and the prospective purchaser."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 7 March 1991; c. 153.]

To do otherwise and decide now what restrictions to put in place could prejudice the prospect of a sale and the potential proceeds. We will first want to see who the prospective purchasers are and what their plans are for the BTG may itself be the most effective guarantee for the group's future.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The Minister says that the identity of the purchasers will be a guarantee of the group's future, but what about those who purchase from the purchasers and those who purchase from them? He cannot guarantee the group's future if the purchasers decide, as a private organisation, to sell their business.

Mr. Leigh: I cannot give an undertaking now about what will happen in five, 10, or 15 years' time. I cannot commit the Government or this Parliament to what might happen in future. But I can say that if the kind of sale that some people have mentioned is put together that might be extremely unlikely. If the hon. and learned Gentleman is patient, he may see some light descending on that.

I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have already met to discuss this and other issues with the BTG's chairman, with representatives of BTG's employees, with inventors and with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. Contrary to what the Opposition may assert, we are listening to the views of interested parties. The House may also wish to know that I had a constructive meeting with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals at which they voiced their interest in seeing the BTG continue as a strong commercial entity. We hope to take forward in further discussions the universities' interest in the future of the privatised BTG. That is the constructive way to take forward concerns about the role of the privatised BTG—in practical discussions on the form of the sale rather than heavy-handed amendments to the enabling Bill.

New clause 1 suggests that it will be necessary to insert special conditions in the articles to achieve a satisfactory outcome. However, a misunderstanding over the timing of the successor company may have led to the new clause being tabled. It is the Government's intention to have a short interval between the appointment of the successor company and the date it is sold. That makes the clause unnecessary, and for that reason it would not be appropriate to include the new clause in the Bill. I had an opportunity to discuss the matter with my hon. Friends this morning and I am grateful to them for tabling the new clause because it gives me the opportunity to clarify the Government's position. The new clause may be technically flawed, but it has performed a useful purpose.

New clause 5 takes a similar approach, but it is also based on misunderstanding. It would, in effect, put a duty on the Secretary of State to oblige the successor company and its new private sector owners to take steps to preserve its independence and, for good measure, tell the successor company how to go about its business. How can such a statutory imposition, which has no time limit, practically be applied to an independent private sector organisation? The Bill's fundamental purpose is to free the BTG from statutory and Government control. It will be for the new owners to decide exactly how to go about running the business and what areas to expand into.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister's latter comments increase my concern. It is suggested that there would be no continuing condition upon any prospective purchaser or purchasers. As I said to the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), it is the fact that it is a time-expired guarantee that worries some of us. There is no on-going guarantee. I hope that the Minister will think again about his answer to the new clause.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman probably was not listening to what I said about conditions of sale and the articles of association, and mention has been made today of the golden share.

Mr. Rees: I am interested to hear about the role of the legal adviser. The Government will tell the legal adviser what they want, but how he translates it in practice is a different matter. At what stage in the process would the articles of association be drawn up and published?

Mr. Leigh: If the Bill meets with the approval of the House and the other place, we will initially be talking of a vesting day. This is an enabling Bill. A successor company will be formed which will be entirely publicly owned, presumably in the hands of named civil servants. At that stage, the Secretary of State will decide how it should be privatised. Discussions have already started and will continue and it may well be appropriate to talk in terms of articles of association not now but far closer to that date, which may not be until the autumn.

Mr. Rees: Will the articles of association come before the House at any time in some appropriate fashion?

Mr. Leigh: No, I do not think that they will. As I have tried to explain, the appropriate time for drawing up the articles of association is when the Government have a clear

idea of who the purchasers are and what is necessary to retain the critical mass, independence and integrity of the BTG—an aim in which we are all interested.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am trying to follow the Minister's argument. What he seems to be saying is that we should identify the buyers and then determine what conditions are appropriate, by which time the Bill will have gone well beyond this House and the other place. We are being asked to sign a blank prospectus.

Mr. Leigh: I do not think that it is a blank prospectus. If my hon. Friend had listened to what I said, he would know that I tried to explain in some detail the Government's intention in privatising the company. Our intention is to ensure a good prospect of continuing the BTG's activities. For the moment, he has to take my word for it. It would be unique at this stage in an enabling Bill to enshrine articles of association. Given the nature of the BTG that we want to exist in the private sector and the fact that we want its activities to continue in the future, it clearly makes sense to ensure a form of sale that guarantees that. At that stage the articles of association can be framed. I do not see how I would assist that process if I suggested to the House that we should lay down rigid articles of association now. That would not be helpful and it would not achieve what is desired by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North.

6 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: All the lawyers in this House and the many hon. Members who are involved with companies will be aware that in virtually every instance the articles of association are prepared on the instructions of the promoters of the company. Can the Minister name a single instance in which the articles of association have been prepared in consultation with, or as a result of knowing the identity of, the purchasers of the company? That is an extraordinary new doctrine. Where does the Minister get it from?

Mr. Leigh: There is nothing extraordinary about it. Nothing that I have suggested today is unusual. We are proceeding in exactly the way in which we have privatised other businesses. I have already outlined when it would be appropriate to frame the articles of association.

Mr. Steen: I am sure that my hon. Friends understand that, although my hon. Friend is advocating a type of blank prospectus, the Government are extremely competent: they will get it right. My hon. Friend is asking us to have complete confidence in him as the Minister to put the articles of association in place once he knows who the buyer will be. I believe that my hon. Friend's message to the House is that it must have confidence in the Government. Is that correct?

Mr. Leigh: Yes. I am not asking for a blank cheque. When my hon. Friend reads *Hansard*, he will be reassured by what I said. He will appreciate that I have given certain undertakings and commitments. I hope that he will be prepared to accept them and the serious manner in which I have approached them.

It will be clear to the House why we do not wish to see a duty of the kind envisaged in amendment Nos. 5 and 6, which would require the Secretary of State to report on his plans for guaranteeing the BTG's future independence, impartiality and integrity. The Secretary of State would be prevented from vesting the property, rights and liabilities in a successor company—which is the first step towards privatisation—until he had published those plans. Clearly such a duty to report immediately in advance of the Bill taking effect would tie our hands before we knew what was really necessary. We do not want to place unnecessary burdens on the new company. It is meant to be a private sector company, free to operate without onerous constraints.

The Opposition have consistently tried to suggest that we have not consulted the universities on the proposed privatisation. In fact, we did consult the universities through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in 1988. Only a small minority of the respondents—less than 20 per cent.—favoured the Opposition's option, which is that the BTG should remain as it is. About 20 per cent. of the universities responding favoured a sale to a commercial or financial institution, while 10 per cent. favoured a sale to the BTG's existing management and 50 per cent. wanted to see the BTG established as a private foundation or trust with objectives linked to university research.

Hon. Members may also be interested to know that I met with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals yesterday to hear its views on the privatisation of the BTG. It was a helpful, constructive, and, from the viewpoint of both parties, highly satisfactory meeting.

The collective concern of the committee was that BTG should be a lively, commercial business in the private sector. Those are not my views but the committee's—and I hope that my hon. Friends will heed that as it is crucial. The committee wants the BTG to continue to exploit the fruits of academic research, which is entirely consistent with the Government's objective in the proposed sale.

The committee also argued for a "small, not negligible" stake in the privatised company. The Government recognise the substantial and valuable input of universities to other progress and prosperity of BTG over the years. BTG in turn has been, and I hope will continue to be, an important outlet for universities research in technology. We wish to see this partnership continue after privatisation. That is why I gave the committee an unconditional assurance that its views and proposals will be carefully considered and will be taken on board when we finally decide how the BTG will be privatised.

My hon. Friends may wish to know that, when the committee came to see me yesterday, far from opposing the privatisation of the BTG, it showed its interests in acquiring a "small, not negligible" stake in it. In the light of that attitude, I should be interested to know where that leaves the Opposition. We had a lengthy speech from the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, and I do not want to put words in his mouth, but he seemed to suggest that if the BTG was to be privatised the Opposition's favoured option would be for the universities to have a stake in the new organisation. That is certainly what the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) has said on a previous occasion.

If a consortium was formed that consisted of a stake held by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, a stake held by a management buy-out and one held by financial institutions—assuming there was a limit on foreign ownership—we may well——

Mr. Steen: That sounds good.

Mr. Leigh: I cannot predict the final outcome, but my hon. Friends will have heard what I said. They appear to like it.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East) *rose——*

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman has just come into the Chamber, and, if he will forgive me, I shall not give way.

I hope that I have given the reassurances that my hon. Friends need, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East will withdraw the new clause.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: My hon. Friends and I accept my hon. Friend's assurances and therefore I beg to ask leave to withdraw the clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I ask for a vote on new clause 5, which appears in the same group of amendments?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman is perfectly in order in seeking a vote if he moves the new clause formally.

New Clause 5

INDEPENDENCE OF THE SUCCESSOR COMPANY

'It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the successor company shall take such steps as are necessary to preserve the independence of the British Technology Group to enable it to maintain and extend its services in the field of technology transfer.'.—*[Mr. Simon Hughes.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes 260.

Division No. 111] **[8.07 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joseph
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Alex Carlile and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert

Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 6

TARGET INVESTMENT LIMIT FOR GOVERNMENT SHAREHOLDING

Dr. Bray: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 4, line 16, at end insert:—

'(4A) The Secretary of State shall not set a target investment limit of less than 50·01 per cent. of the total voting rights until a period of at least five years has elapsed from the appointed day.'.

The amendment seeks to provide, by means of a golden share, a mechanism by which the assurances and words of comfort that the Minister offered could be enforced. He gave a long list of considerations that might—or might not—be embodied in the conditions for sale of BTG. Those related to matters raised on Second Reading, in Committee or earlier this afternoon, and covered most aspects of the types of safeguard that have been suggested. Nevertheless, the Minister could not give a firm assurance that he would provide a legislative guarantee so that the Government could ensure that such conditions were observed in the successor company.

The golden share is one mechanism by which such conditions could be secured. It was advocated by some Conservative Members, and we shall press it in the amendment. The Minister's long list of conditions for sale was rather like the prayer of St. Augustine—"Lord, make me good, but not yet." We seek the Minister's salvation, so we shall press the amendment to a vote.

We welcome yesterday's discussions between representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and

[Dr. Bray]

Principals and the Minister, but the use that the hon. Gentleman made of the meeting was a little unfair. The representatives of the CVCP were working within the framework of Government policy and the provisions of the Bill. They were trying to secure a settlement by making within that framework a constructive proposal for securing important objectives with regard to BTG's future role in relation to technology transfer and the universities' and research councils' own research. The discussion related not only to the small but significant shareholding that the universities sought, but to the whole nature of the consortium which they advocated and which the Minister adumbrated as something that might emerge from the forthcoming discussions and consideration. We hope that those discussions will be successful, but we believe that a long-stop is needed. An amendment providing for a golden share would be a firm way of securing that end, at least in the important early years.

I have no wish to delay our proceedings, so I shall be happy to proceed to a Division on the amendment at the convenience of the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 253.

Division No. 112] **[6.25 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joseph
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul

Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Schedule 1

Provisions Supplementary to s. 1

Dr. Moonie: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 10, line 37, at end insert:—

'(3A) On the appointed day the successor company shall provide for each of the employees of the Board or the Corporation and any body representing those employees a statement providing for the continuation of their employment and pension rights as previously enjoyed.'.

Most of the debate, both in Committee and on the Floor of the House, has concentrated—rightly—on the principle of how the company will operate in the private sector and, indeed, on the principle of whether it should be privatised at all. We have touched briefly on the rights of employees in the company.

Although it is not a large company, BTG is a reasonably prosperous one. It has a substantial pension fund whose value is actuarily in excess of the pension requirements of its current employees. In view of the lack of safeguards from Ministers about the future, and the vagueness of the promises that have been made, we are not satisfied that employees' interests will be protected properly under the Bill in its present form. We know of instances in the private sector of pension funds being raided, by means of one subterfuge or another, to dilute their value and to use the surplus for other purposes, and we consider that unacceptable.

In Committee, the Minister said that he was not prepared to allow such raids in any form. He may now wish to say something about the company's articles of association, or to throw further light on the position to reassure us about the principle. In view of the relatively light discussion that took place in Committee, however, we thought that it would be worth while to table the amendment on Report, so that the Minister could confirm the impression that we had been given that employees' rights and guarantees would be enshrined in the Bill during the sale of the company.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I support the amendment, but, like many hon. Members, I am disturbed by the actions of other privatised companies. Assurances were given during the passage of other Bills, but

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

unfortunately the results often damaged the interests of pensioners and future pensioners of those privatised companies.

The pensions business has gone through a period of great turbulence. In the 1980s, pension funds in Britain rose in value from about £50 billion to £220 billion. During the first year of this decade they dropped in value by nearly 10 per cent.—a greater drop in value than occurred after the stock exchange crash of 1987.

What has happened to the vast surpluses that have been amassed by the pension companies? A survey by the National Association of Pension Funds showed that in 48 per cent. of schemes surpluses were applied to provide contribution holidays for the companies and that in only 22 per cent. of schemes did employees enjoy a reduction in their contributions. To a large extent, those surpluses have been used to help shareholders rather than pensioners.

In Committee the Minister gave a number of assurances that sounded very convincing. He referred to the fact that surplus pension scheme funds are now regulated by regulations made by the Secretary of State for Social Security under the Occupational Pension Schemes (Modification) Regulations 1990, which formed part of the Social Security Act 1990. He also said that under the 1988 Act a surplus was permitted to be dealt with in four ways: by making payments to the employer; by suspending or reducing for up to five years the contributions of the employer or employees; by improving existing benefits or providing new benefits; or in such other ways as prescribed by the Inland Revenue.

The legislation is in place. Sadly, however, the experience of similar privatised companies shows that a mockery has been made of the legal framework. The worst example is British Telecom. An early-day motion was tabled deploring what was said to be the unlawful action of British Telecom in reducing its contribution to the British Telecommunications staff superannuation scheme from the August 1989 payment without any actuarial certificate of disposable surplus. It had a contribution holiday without that certificate having been provided. A worse allegation is that British Telecom had no serious talks with its staff before that was done. The early-day motion asked for meaningful improvements to the benefits of members of the scheme, if any real surplus accrues.

A scandal involving a much larger group of people than those employed by BTG is the British Steel scheme, which covers 100,000 pensioners and deferred pensioners. It may be said that only 188 employees are involved in the BTG scheme. However, the actuarial surplus amounts to at least £3·8 million and may be as large as £13 million. I do not intend to repeat the Committee discussion. However, that is a very large sum when one takes into account the small number of BTG employees.

After the British Steel Bill was passed, the corporation discovered that it had a surplus of £600 million. British Steel disposed of that surplus in a way that greatly angered its 100,000 existing and deferred pensioners. British Steel has set aside half this surplus for the benefit of future pensioners—their present employees—and widows. As for the remainder, I have a letter from the director of British Steel who says that half of the original surplus has gone towards reducing the ongoing costs to the company. That money is not being applied for the benefit of future pensioners; instead, it is being used in the same way as British Telecom used its surplus—to reduce its part of the cost of the pension scheme. That is wholly against the spirit of the legislation that privatised those companies.

If the amendment is not accepted, a similar mistake will be made. This surplus of £3·8 million, or possibly £13 million, may be regarded as an inducement to a future owner to take over BTG and use it in a way that damages the financial interests of the employees.

6.45 pm

Mr. Leigh: Although I understand and share the Opposition's concern for BTG's employees, I assure them that amendment No. 3 is unnecessary, as these matters are already provided for by the Bill as drafted. Paragraphs 2 and 4 of schedule 1 to the Bill, notably paragraph 4(1)(b), make it palpably clear that vesting under clause 1 will not affect any of the corporation's or the board's existing agreements, transactions or anything else, and this includes employment contracts, pensions and redundancy arrangements, whether or not they are in writing. The only effect of the Bill in this respect will be to substitute the successor company as the employer.

Dr. Moonie: In view of the Minister's clarification of the point, for which I am grateful, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Leigh.]*

6.46 pm

Dr. Moonie: We have had several long and interesting debates on the Bill, starting with Second Reading, then in Committee and earlier today. I pay tribute to all right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who have expressed their concern about the future security of the British Technology Group in the marketplace and its future independence, integrity and impartiality.

In an intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) I referred to the attitude of the BTG management to privatisation and their support for it. Having considered what I said then, I should not like it to be thought for a moment that I intended to impugn the integrity of the BTG management, or its chief executive. I was attempting to demonstrate that no one who is involved in an organisation can be completely impartial when a decision is being taken over its future.

When we wound up the debate on the new clauses the Under-Secretary of State appeared to shift his ground. He said that he was not prepared to give the best assurances over BTG's future, but initially he was prepared to give very good assurances. I was a little concerned when the very good assurances became only good assurances later in his speech. I listened with growing apprehension in case the good assurances became only reasonable assurances and then, perhaps, fair assurances, since he gradually wriggled out of his original fairly generous commitment. I am sure that that was just the form of words that the Minister was using and that he is genuinely concerned about the future of BTG after privatisation.

In Committee we made much play of the length of time it took for messages to get from the Government's brain to any of their effector organs. Clearly, the long Easter recess

has allowed that message slowly to percolate through and now we have at least some assurance from the Minister that the Government will be looking carefully at the articles of association.

I must look back at our debates in Committee as I am sure that at one stage the Under-Secretary of State was scathing about writing safeguards into the articles of association for the company since future managements could change those articles of association without our having any say. Therefore, I shall look with interest at the proposals that the Minister brings forward after vesting date to see what safeguards he intends to institute to ensure that the articles of association are so constructed as to give BTG maximum protection, consistent with operating in the climate that the Government intend for it, particularly when that climate involves the British market which is dogged by short-term concerns about profit instead of being strengthened by long-term visions of growth.

Our fears about the future of the privatised BTG are shared by many individuals outside the House. The chief executive of BTG, Ian Harvey, in an article in the *Observer* on 10 March 1991 on the future of the British Technology Group, argued—I respect his view, although I disagree with it—that

"the privatisation of BTG is welcome, but a trade sale could destroy the business".

He wrote:

"We, the council and management of BTG, welcome privatisation. But that support is contingent upon preserving the independence and critical mass on which our business depends, and on preventing 'asset-stripping' by a future owner.

BTG's business is finding global markets for clever ideas and protecting researchers when the rights to their inventions are infringed. We do that through patenting and licensing."

Of course that is well known. He mentioned that eight years ago BTG had been criticised by the Government and universities for being a slow and bureaucratic organisation. There is no doubt that the organisation now operates much more effectively under its present management. That is not necessarily due to any action or inaction by the Government. I suspect that it has happened quite independently. If any Conservative Member wishes to challenge what I am saying he is welcome to do so, but he might be unpopular with his colleagues in the Whips' Office.

The chief executive of BTG makes much of the fact that the Government have had a negative effect. We should not forget that we are talking about an organisation which everyone in the world recognises as the best in its field. What would it be like if it were not restrained by the dead hand of the Government, be it through a dismal succession of Secretaries of State at the Department of Trade and Industry or through an even more dismal procession of Chancellors and the malign effect on a successful organisation of the attitude taken by the Treasury? What could BTG have managed in the public sector over the past 10 years had it not suffered under those constraints? It is small wonder that the BTG management now feels that it is better to risk the most short-term and blinkered market in the western world rather than to continue to operate under the guiding hand of such as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and his colleagues in the Bruges group—the last bastion of Brugesism in the Government, fighting a desperate rearguard action to preserve the true faith and keep the candle burning for the leader over the water.

I hope that you will agree that this is germane to the Third Reading, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we are discussing the principles dividing the views of the Opposition from those of the Government and the reasons why we shall divide the House on Third Reading.

Let me continue outlining our objections. Ian Harvey wrote that his

"position is clear—the private sector offers BTG the best chance for future expansion and success, and the best opportunity for Britain to retain its leadership position in world-wide technology flow."

I take issue with him on that, because we believe passionately that BTG's mission is to promote technology transfer from the universities and institutions in Britain and that that role is paramount and much more important than a successful role in trading worldwide. I would not attempt for a moment to say that its successful role in trading worldwide is not essential, but it must be subservient to BTG's other role in promoting research and development from British organisations. Anyone entering the debate with an open mind would agree with that.

Concerns have also been voiced by other external observers. I would not say that they were dispassionate observers because, like most of us, they have an interest in the Government's proposals. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has made its position clear. The Minister made much of the fact that it appeared to support privatisation. That is not necessarily the case. He has inferred that from the questions that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals was asked, and he is entitled to do so. Anyone listening to his first speech this afternoon would be clear that, when quoting, he stressed those syllables that he wished to emphasise and destressed those to which he wished to pay less attention. That is a natural thing for a Minister to do. He is seeking any port in a storm and welcomes any support for the privatisation of BTG outside the dwindling ranks of his own right-wing colleagues in the Conservative party. If he can suggest to gullible minds that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals supports him, so much the better for him.

In the briefing dated today, Tuesday 16 April 1991, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said that it

"continues to be concerned about the form which the privatisation of BTG might take and how the intellectual property entrusted to the new company will be safeguarded and effectively exploited to the continuing benefit of the originators of the intellectual property."

It continues:

"The universities are by far the biggest single source of BTG's intellectual property—well over 50 per cent. if the contribution from teaching hospitals is included. Another 25 per cent. comes from Research Council Institutes and Research Associations. The rest comes largely from Government Laboratories."

In other words, the biggest source of BTG's intellectual property—almost the only source—is provided from public money. The briefing continues:

"The total income from the academic sector from the BTG for development projects and from sharing of royalties from licensing of patents is at present some £30 million per annum."

That is a very welcome income which is much larger than that which accrues to American universities from the organisations acting on their behalf, and demonstrates just how successful BTG has been while acting in the public

[Dr. Moonie]

sector in comparison with similar organisations in the private sector. Such organisations are united merely in their lack of success in the commercial markets.

The vice-chancellors and principals go on to say:

"Universities are being exhorted by the Government to maximise the commercial exploitation of their inventions, discoveries and other intellectual property and to raise more money from sources other than Government. They are also meeting demand from increasing numbers of students at lower cost."

The vice-chancellors and principals make the point that the £13 million that the universities make from BTG is very worth while and should not be put at risk.

It being Seven o'clock, and there being private business set down by direction of The CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS, *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking private business), further proceedings stood postponed.*

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill [Lords]

7 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to refer to a letter which, contrary to all the conventions of the House, was sent by the Secretary of State for Wales to his Cabinet colleagues on 31 March. The third paragraph of that letter, which is relevant, says:

"Because of the conventions on private Bills, LG Committee has concluded that it would be inappropriate formally to Whip the payroll on this occasion. But given the importance of this Bill"—

the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill—

"to the South Wales area, and the Government's consistent support for it hitherto, I am extremely anxious to prevent the spoiling tactics succeeding. I therefore very much hope that you, your junior Ministers and all your PPSs will do your best to be available to support the Bill, through the night if necessary."

That letter is signed "Yours ever, David".

I take that to be an admission that whipping of the payroll on private business is contrary to "Erskine May", to the conventions of the House and to the rights of people objecting to private Bills. Having admitted that it is a thoroughly wrong thing to do, the letter from which I have just quoted actually whips the payroll. On behalf of my constituents and of other objectors, I must ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to rule that the letter be referred to the Committee of Privileges. It is clearly in breach of the conventions of the House.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should like to draw to your attention a letter of which I have been given a copy. It is addressed to all members of the Cabinet and is headed "Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill".

Mr. Morgan: The date?

Mr. Jones: I understand that the letter was sent in February 1991. It says:

"Do you really want to spend £150 million of taxpayers' money to obliterate this view for ever?"

It is signed "Rhodri Morgan, MP for Cardiff, West".

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend, Madam Deputy Speaker. This House has a procedure for dealing with private Bills. An essential part of that procedure allows individual Members of Parliament to come to their own considered judgment on whether legislation should be supported or opposed. There is a tradition, in pursuance of that objective, that neither the Government nor the Opposition take an official view, and that the Whips are not brought into play. The Select Committee that dealt with this Bill decided that, in view of the conflicting nature of the evidence, it would not be appropriate to come to a firm decision. Instead, it required the promoters to carry out a further investigation and to report to the Secretary of State for Wales 12 months after the Committee had finished. It then charged the Secretary of State to act in a quasi-judicial capacity—to weigh the evidence before him and come to a decision.

Clearly, the Secretary of State for Wales has prejudged the matter. He has decided, regardless of the evidence, to support the Bill and the building of the barrage. The Committee, which sat for a very long time and deliberated very closely, put its faith in the objectivity of the Secretary

of State. Now that its decision has been abrogated by the unilateral action of the Secretary of State, should not the Committee, before we proceed further, be offered an opportunity to review its decision?

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Before ruling, perhaps you will conside the fact that most hon. Members—in particular, Welsh Members—have received from numerous sources, especially on the Opposition side of the House, circular letters expressing strong objection to the proposed legislation. As Chairman of the New Building Sub-Committee, I should like to point out that recently a private Bill concerning the London Underground was debated at some length. The Committee contacted all Members with a view to making them aware of what was happening. Letters urging all Members to participate in the debates on private Bills have become more common.

I have received from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) a letter requesting my presence at the debate on this Bill. In all probability, my Friend sent a similar request to other Members. The Secretary of State for Wales is a member of the Government, but, as a Member of Parliament, he should have the opportunity—one is afforded to every other Member—to ask others to support or object to certain measures. I am not speaking as a Whip, and I am not here to whip my colleagues in respect of the Bill. I speak in my private capacity as a Member from the valleys, who supports the Bill. Every hon. Member must be at liberty to make observations in support of or against the Bill. I have no doubt that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the basis of what has been said, will be able to come to a considered judgment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I must listen to points of order that are genuine, and I shall do so. Indeed, these are serious matters. However, the House has already agreed that the Bill should come before us for further consideration on Report. In fact, the Bill is not yet before the House, and I intend to ask the Clerk to read——

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am on my feet, and I am trying to be helpful. I know that, among some hon. Members, this is a contentious issue. Let us get the Bill before the House, and then I shall take points of order relating to it.

As amended, further considered.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In view of the comments made a moment ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), may I point out that there is only one difference between the letter circulated by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and the one circulated by the Member for an English constituency who happens to be the Secretary of State for Wales: my hon. Friend sent out his letter on paper that carried his private address, whereas the Secretary of State sent his out on official Welsh Office notepaper. In other words, the Secretary of State was sending an official communication to his Cabinet colleagues. That communication states:

"Because of the conventions on private Bills"—

so the Secretary of State accepts that there is a convention, but why has he been breaking it?—

"it would be inappropriate formally to Whip the payroll on this occasion. But . . . I am extremely anxious to prevent the spoiling tactics succeeding. I therefore very much hope that you, your junior Ministers and all your PPSs will do your best to be available to support the Bill, through the night if necessary."

If my hon. Friend does not recognise that as an official communication from the Secretary of State for Wales, I am very sorry. There is a world of difference between what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has done legitimately on behalf of his constituents and the action of the Secretary of State, who, seemingly, has followed the actions of his predecessor in supporting Associated British Ports for the purpose of developing the Cardiff bay area.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Fortunately, I have a copy of the letter from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from which it is clear that the LG Committee considered the Bill. That means that it was considered by Ministers. Page 896 of "Erskine May", headed "Ministerial reports", says:

"All reports made by a Minister of the Crown on a private Bill stand referred to the committee on the bill . . . The Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure 1954-55 recommended that Ministers' reports should as a rule be made available to all interested parties not less than fourteen days before the committee of the first House sits on the bill. When by agreement of the parties the committee sits less than 14 days after the second reading of a bill, the report should be issued as soon as possible after second reading. This recommendation was accepted by the Government."

Ministers have ignored the Bill publicly and have not produced a report—or if they have, not at the appropriate stage—but have further considered the Bill and ignored the rules that require those reports to be considered by a Committee of the House. The only way in which this underhand, shabby business can be properly scrutinised is for proceedings to be delayed so that the Committee that considered the Bill can be reconvened to consider the Minister's report.

The letter makes it clear that Ministers have been considering the Bill behind closed doors in Whitehall. The Secretary of State for Wales is answerable to the House and should have provided the Committee's report to the Private Bill Committee, but he has failed to fulfil his duties. We have had 10 years of the Government trampling over the rights of Parliament, but it would be helpful if we could have an adjournment so that this matter could be examined carefully and the Minister's report submitted to the reconvened Committee.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House has ordered that the Bill be considered. Many important amendments must be debated. I must hear points of order, but I hope that they are pertinent and that they can be dealt with by the Chair.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have raised a serious issue on the function and role of the Secretary of State for Wales. The report of the Private Bill Committee says:

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

"The Committee requires an undertaking on behalf of the promoters that they will proceed with the Bill only after the consent of the Secretary of State has been given, and the Secretary of State should give his consent only when he has before him the Hydro technical report, the promoters' conclusion and all other representations made to him during the three-month consultation period to which the Committee had referred. The Secretary of State should be satisfied that all the relevant economic, technical and safety criteria can be met by the Bill. If he is not satisfied, no public funds should be put towards the construction of the barrage."

The Committee charged the Secretary of State with a specific objective role—to judge and assess—but he has written letters to Cabinet colleagues supporting the Bill and asking them to vote for it. He was asked to fulfil an important——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The points that are being made are arguments for Third Reading. As I said, the House has determined that the Bill be now considered. Hon. Members should proceed to consider the amendments that have been selected.

Mr. Morgan: Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), who referred to my circulating in February a photograph of Cardiff bay at low tide to members of the Cabinet asking them to consider whether they could not think of better ways of spending £150 million than destroying——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. With respect, that is not a point of order for the Chair. There is nothing untoward in hon. Members encouraging other hon. Members to attend a debate. I shall listen to points of order, but I ask that they be genuine points with which the Chair can deal rather than matters for debate.

7.15 pm

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understand your difficulties and I am sure that all Labour Members appreciate the kindness and courtesy with which you are trying to deal with these difficult points of order. We do not wish to make your life difficult or embarrassing. However, these important matters must be dealt with. I listened carefully to your ruling that the House has resolved to consider the Bill. We do not dispute that, but the matter in issue is that when the House decided to consider the Bill it was not aware that the Secretary of State for Wales was about to involve himself, in a direct ministerial capacity, in trying to influence the passage of the Bill. *[Interruption.]* I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) was trying to intervene, but he was not.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I cannot intervene on a point of order.

Mr. Davies: I would not put it past my hon. Friend, not that I would oblige him by giving way.

The Opposed Private Bill Committee gave the Secretary of State precise responsibility, in a quasi-judicial capacity, to reach a judgment on behalf of the House. It can no longer have confidence in the Secretary of State making that judgment. I appreciate that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, cannot give a ruling on that, but will you draw it to the attention of Mr. Speaker and your colleagues to see whether the Select Committee on Procedure should consider it and decide whether, in the light of the decision of the Opposed Private Bill Committee, further guidelines should be issued to Committees that consider private legislation so that they can decide whether they should repeat the confidence that the Opposed Private Bill Committee showed?

In his letter, the Secretary of State makes it clear that he regards any further debate on the Bill as spoiling tactics. I resent that because my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I and other hon. Friends have spent much time preparing amendments which we believe will improve the Bill. For example, we have sought to——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is abusing my good will. The first new clause appears in his name and I hope that he will allow the House to get on with it.

Mr. Davies: The amendments that we have tabled would improve the Bill. The Secretary of State regards any further attempt to amend the Bill as a spoiling tactic. Would not it be appropriate for the right hon. Gentleman to say from the Dispatch Box whether he is prepared to accept one of the 300 amendments? That would offer the House further guidance——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We shall hear what the Secretary of State has to say when we proceed with the amendments.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the procedures for private Bills. The letter from the Secretary of State shows that he has breached the principle of neutrality on a private Bill. As you will be aware, this is not the first time that concern has been expressed about the way in which the private Bill procedure works. This seems to be another sham in terms of genuine neutrality when the Government are organising behind the scenes. In those circumstances, should not this Bill be regarded as a hybrid Government Bill? Should not the Secretary of State come to the Dispatch Box and make it clear what the position is, rather than go behind the scenes with private letters whipping up clandestine support?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. These are matters which the hon. Gentleman can rightly bring out in debate. This is the last point of order.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order—a quite separate point—Madam Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, business that comes before the House should be judged by Members without fear or favour. While I was walking over here from Norman Shaw building I was talking to a Conservative Member. He asked how long the business would go on and I said that it would probably be at least two days. I asked him what he was doing about it and he said that he was rather committed because last August or September he had an invitation to Cardiff and stayed overnight as a guest of the promoters——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: This is a very pertinent point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be glad if the hon. Gentleman would come to a point with which I might be able to deal with.

Mr. Rogers: He said that last August or September he had stayed in Cardiff overnight as a guest of the promoters of the Bill. We know—it is in parliamentary records and we also have copies of the correspondence—that there was an invitation, a corrupt invitation in my view, from the promoters of the Bill to influence Members by offering them and their wives free accommodation and meals in Cardiff, as a measure for promoting the Bill. I would not have raised this except that a Conservative Member told me that he was influenced by this. I would not betray a private conversation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name him!"] I would not betray a private conversation by naming the hon. Member, who at least is honest about his views, but I would certainly provide his name in confidence to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you so desired. In view of the action of the promoters of the Bill in corruptly trying to influence Members of the House, will you ask our hon. Clerk to investigate the matter urgently so that you can rule on it before tonight's business is proceeded with?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not a matter for the Chair at this stage.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention in connection with private business to Standing Order No. 144? I have referred to and quoted from "Erskine May", which pointed out that reports from the Minister had to be made at the Committee stage. The reason is that the Committee has the duty and obligation to examine, and to allow the Government Department to examine and make representations on, any report which the Minister makes. I am suggesting to you that the letter from the Secretary of State, which falls absolutely within the terms of Standing Order No. 144, as it is from a Minister of the Crown, which means the holder of an office in Her Majesty's Government, and includes the Treasury, should be treated as a report by a Minister for the purpose of Standing Order No. 144. If that is the position, we are in a mess over this Bill, because the report cannot be considered by the Committee, the Committee stage having been completed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Standing Order refers only to reports submitted to the House; it does not relate in any way to letters that might be sent by a Minister to any of his colleagues.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it a genuine point of order?

Mr. Hughes: It is, and I will be very brief. I was not aware that there would be this preliminary argument and I want to ask about something on which I have not heard you rule and which is of general interest. Is it or is it not in order for Government Members to whip Back-Benchers on private business?

Madam Deputy Speaker: A Whip encourages Members to be present during a debate and to divide and vote at the end of a debate on a private Bill as they wish. But any individual Member, including a Minister, can encourage his colleagues to be present for a debate and then determine for himself how he votes at the end of that debate. There can be no further point of order on that one.

Mr. Hughes: I understand that. I do not have a copy of the letter that colleagues clearly have, but, as I understand from what was read out, it did not just advise them to attend; it advised them to attend and made a very clear recommendation as to which way they should vote. That appears to offend against what I always understood was the convention and is the rule governing the conduct of private business. If that is the case, even if it is by a Secretary of State, surely it is out of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have not seen the letter, but, as I understand it, it does not instruct Members to divide or to vote one way or the other; it invites them to support the Bill.

I think that we should get on with the Bill now. There have been sufficient points of order.

New Clause 1

SAVING FOR TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

'.—(1) The works authorised by this Act shall not be treated for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 (or any general order superseding that order made under section 59 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any corresponding provision of an act repealing that section), to be—

(a) development authorised by an Act which designates specifically both the nature of the development and the land upon which it may be carried out; or

(b) development by dock, pier, harbour, water transport, canal or inland navigation undertakings.

(2) For the avoidance of doubt the works described in sections 17, 19 and 20 of this Act are development within the meaning of section 55 of the Act of 1990 (which defines "development").

(3) Nothing in this Act shall constitute an approval, in outline, in principle or otherwise, for the purposes of the Act of 1990, and any application for planning permission for the carrying out of the works shall be determined entirely on its own merits.

(4) For the purposes of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 any works authorised by this Act which lie seaward of the mean low water level of spring tides shall be within the county and the city of the borough (as the case may be) from the date of the passing of this Act until the relevant date.

(5) In this section—

"the relevant date" means in the case of works authorised under—

(a) sections 17 (power to execute works) and 19 (subsidiary works) of this Act, the tenth anniversary of the passing of this Act; or

(b) section 20 (works for accommodation of vessels) of this Act, the date when the barrage is removed;

"the Act of 1990" means the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.'.—[*Mr. Hood.*]

Brought up, and read the First time

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 45, in page 10, line 6, at end insert—

'(9) If any of the works authorised by this section have not been commenced before the expiry of seven years from the passing of this Act, then on expiration of that period the powers of this section in relation to that work shall cease.'.

No. 79, in page 74, line 31, leave out clause 97.

No. 80, in page 74, line 37, leave out from 'within' to the end of line 44 and insert—

'7 years after the passing of this Act.

(2) The works authorised by this Act shall not be treated as development permitted by Article 3 of and Class B in Part 17 of Schedule 2 the said order of 1988 (which permit development by dock, pier, harbour, water transport, canal or inland navigation undertakings).'.

Mr. Hood: The purpose of the new clause and the amendments is to apply all the provisions of the town and country planning legislation to all the developments enabled by the Bill, including the barrage itself, associated works and harbour works in the inland bay.

I sat on the Select Committee that considered this Bill and I do not believe that the Bill should proceed from the Committee stage. It is flawed. The powers that it would introduce are totally unacceptable in the democratic process.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend tell us clearly why he feels that the Bill was fundamentally flawed?

Mr. Hood: I will certainly try to do that. The main flaws, those concerning the Secretary of State, were set out in the earlier points of order, and there are a number of others.

By giving the Secretary of State the power to enact a Bill, the Select Committee took powers away from Parliament itself. It is the duty of Parliament, not the Secretary of State, to enact Bills. I can say with hindsight that, had we known—I do not see my three colleagues on the Committee in their places—that what has happened since would happen, I genuinely doubt whether the three-to-one majority would have favoured the Bill.

There were other points. The ground water model that was accepted by all the members of the Committee was wrong, as was the assessed impact of ground water. This will cause serious trouble.

Mr. Rogers: It is important that, initially, my hon. Friend set out the fact that the new clause relates to the general planning considerations that ought to apply within the area. Will he also accept that one of the reasons why people promote private Bills is that they want to circumvent planning restrictions? They do not pursue the matter at the local level because they know there will be opposition to it. I am sure that my hon. Friend, who I know is a sponsored member of the National Union of Mineworkers, will remember the passage of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway (No. 2) Bill. The company that wanted to develop a private dock in that area was quite happy to provide meals and even, during an all-night sitting——

Mr. Ron Davies: Champagne.

Mr. Hood: Champagne suppers, as I remember it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are dealing with new clause 1 and some amendments. This bears no relationship to them. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would deal with the new clause.

Mr. Hood: I am aware of the example that my hon. Friend gives. I was invited to the champagne fiasco, as we called it then. There is a democratic deficit when such conduct is permitted. We go all over the world telling people proudly about the Mother of Parliaments. I hope that the new democracies that are springing up all over Europe will not emulate some of the antics involved in our private Bill procedure.

Mr. Michael: I agree with my hon. Friend about the unsatisfactory nature of the private Bill procedure, but may I suggest that it has stood in the way of those of us who wish the Bill to proceed? Will he accept that there is the greatest possible contrast between the practices that were pursued in the case mentioned by my hon. Friend the member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) in his intervention and the clear and clean way in which matters have proceeded on this Bill?

7.30 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I would be much obliged if the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), rather than going down that road, dealt with the amendments which are before the House.

Mr. Hood: I shall respect your judgment, as usual, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have often sat in the House, as we all have, including your good self, Madam Deputy Speaker, and listened to objection after objection to the private Bill procedure. I am persuaded by my experience in the House and on private Bill Committees that all private Bills should not be given the benefit of the doubt, as is stated in "Erskine May". I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has "Erskine May" beside him, as he always does. No doubt he could tell me which part advises Parliament that, when judging private Bills, the benefit of the doubt must always be given to objectors and petitioners against the Bill. That means, of course, that the promoters must prove their case beyond all reasonable doubt. It was the unanimous view of the Select Committee that the promoters of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill have not proved their case beyond all reasonable doubt. Because of that and that alone, the Bill should have fallen. Unfortunately it did not, and we are now discussing it further.

It is incumbent on me to mention that, in not supporting the Bill, I wrote a minority report. I should give an account of my reasons——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Interesting as his reasons may be, the hon. Gentleman is moving a new clause that deals with town and country planning. Perhaps he would relate his comments to that.

Mr. Hood: I shall do my best, but I thought that a preamble about how I had reached my conclusions would be helpful to the House. As has been pointed out, many hon. Members who will have to decide on the Bill and the amendments have not heard much of the evidence.

In my experience, there is usually acrimony and dissent in Committees dealing with private Bills. No one denies that the Bill under consideration is controversial, but fortunately there was no acrimony or resentment among Committee members. We were considering the Bill for so long that we got to know each other better and we understood each other's points of view. There are strong feelings for and against the Bill among my hon. Friends, but I have been treated with courtesy, as one would expect, by my Welsh and Celtic comrades.

Mr. Rogers: I assure my hon. Friend that there is no acrimony on the Bill. I have always said that I would be happy to change my mind about how I voted if it could be demonstrated to me that the industrial development of the dockland area of Cardiff relied entirely upon the development of a barrage. Manifestly, over the last year or so, the industrial development has proceeded without the barrage, so there is no need for huge expenditure of public money. Indeed, it might well have a detrimental effect upon the people of Cardiff in that it will drive up land and house prices and make it more difficult for people on

ordinary incomes to live in the dockland area. I accept that initially they would have subsidised housing but when the houses are sold, there will be a free market. That is why my hon. Friend's new clause about planning might be helpful. Any benefits of housing subsidy would apply only to the first cycle of ownership. Immediately afterwards, there would be a substantial effect on housing prices, to the disadvantage of people on low incomes in the Cardiff area.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. These matters are totally irrelevant. They relate not at all to the group of amendments under discussion. The hon. Member for Clydesdale will oblige me and the House by speaking pertinently to the new clause and the related amendments.

Mr. Hood: I almost pre-empted you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I was about to advise my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that the points he was raising would come up later, when we will be able to exchange experiences and views.

My grandmother used to say that confession was good for the soul. Why should we not confess among friends and colleagues? When the Committee proceedings began, I thought that any project involving such massive public expenditure must be good. I put myself in the position of an hon. Member whose constituency was being offered public expenditure of £150 million to £200 million and thought that I would not like a colleague telling me that my constituency could not have the benefit of that public expenditure. Therefore, I started from the position that I would have to be convinced very strongly not to support the Bill. I may have been wrong not to be more objective, but that was human nature. After listening to the evidence and visiting Cardiff, I was persuaded to change my mind for various reasons, which I will deal with on many other amendments during the night or, indeed, tomorrow morning.

Clause 97 modifies the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 by omitting the development involved in the construction of the barrage from the normal planning process. There is an EEC directive on the planning and development of such projects, which I understand that the Government intend to implement next year. It may not be the present Government who implement it, but its effect will be that all such projects should go through the planning process. There should be no disagreement that that is right and proper, and I look forward to the implementation of that directive.

Clause 97 would prevent that process and supersede existing law. It would be a dangerous precedent to allow the enactment of such an enabling clause, which would deny local people who are threatened by such huge developments the right to be included in the detailed planning consideration, as would be the case under the planning law.

I referred to "Erskine May" giving the benefit of the doubt to objectors. If anybody should be given the benefit of the doubt under the Bill, it should be the 11,000-plus people who are threatened by ground water. That was one of the issues that persuaded me not to support the Bill. It is wrong to tell local people affected by it that they have no right to be consulted, to have their views considered under the planning process and to object as they are entitled to under normal planning law.

Why do the promoters want to supersede the planning legislation?

Mr. Rogers: May I help my hon. Friend by giving him the answer? I have with me an extract from the *Investors' Chronicle* which says that Associated British Ports, one of the major landowners in the area, wants to enhance the value of its properties. I can give my hon. Friend a copy of the extract. It implies that by getting round the planning laws, Associated British Ports will make huge sums of money. Of course, it is significant that one of the directors of Associated British Ports is the former Secretary of State for Wales, Lord Crickhowell, who gave permission for the development.

Mr. Hood: I understand my hon. Friend's point. Why do the promoters of the Bill want clause 97, which will take away the rights of the community and of individuals living in it? That is democratic deficit and the House should not allow it to happen.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend thought that, as a Committee member, he had discharged his duty to the residents of Cardiff who are threatened by flooding by agreeing to the Secretary of State's proposition and, after further investigation into ground water, making a quasi-judicial judgment. As a member of that Committee, how does my hon. Friend feel about debating amendments when, having arranged to subvert the proceedings tonight, Welsh Office Ministers do not even have the courtesy to be present? Does my hon. Friend feel betrayed by that Committee decision?

Mr. Hood: I am not surprised that Ministers betray me and others. However, I shall give the Minister the benefit of the doubt and hope that he has scuttled off to bring the Secretary of State for Wales into the Chamber to listen to the debate. If he does not return within a reasonable time, I shall feel betrayed.

Mr. Morgan: I assure my hon. Friend that the Secretary of State must be in the precincts of the House because, five minutes ago, I received a letter from him apologising that a letter was sent to me urgently yesterday and affixed to the notice board, addressed to Rhodri Jones, MP. Let us hope that he returns from being a presence in the precincts to being a presence in the Chamber.

Mr. Hood: I am sure that the Secretary of State will pop in to say hello. He will have to come because he is lobbying quite a few of his colleagues to come along. He cannot do that and not turn up himself. Whether he will take part in the debate is another matter.

I shall compare like with like regarding the enabling part of the Bill. It is important to take account of the explanatory memorandum of the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill, which states:

> "The Bill contains powers to enable BP Petroleum Development Limited to construct an artificial island in the Hook Sands area of Poole Bay, for the purpose of winning and getting petroleum which lies beneath the waters of the Bay.
>
> Because the Island would be in navigable waters it is necessary for the construction of the Island and works connected with it to have the authority of Parliament."

That is relevant because the promoters of this Bill respected and wanted that. The explanatory memorandum continues:

> "However the Bill provides that the works will be subject to Local Authority Planning Controls."

The promoters of that Bill have taken account of the community and local people who wish to be consulted and taken into consideration.

Mr. Morgan: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is good enough for BP should be good enough for ABP?

Mr. Hood: I was trying to make that point. The preamble to that Bill states:

> "It is expedient that, subject to planning permission being granted . . .
>
> It is expedient to apply the Town and Country Planning Act 1990:
>
> It is expedient that the Company should be empowered, subject to planning permission."

That Bill would not circumvent Parliament's rights.

If Parliament passes the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill tonight—it could be early or even late tomorrow morning—we shall forfeit Parliament's right to enact legislation.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend makes an important point. Is he not trying to say that, whether we are in favour of, or against, the Cardiff bay barrage, we should not favour a Bill that supersedes the normal law of the land—the town and country planning legislation? Therefore, everyone should support the amendment, regardless of whether they support the principle of the Bill.

7.45 pm

Mr. Hood: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Government often talk about individuals' rights and looking after individuals' affairs, but the Bill does not consider individuals' rights. The Government do not give two hoots for individuals but are more concerned with big business, big bucks and big profits—to hell with the 11,000 people whose homes could be flooded. They are concerned only with money, money, money. What the Bill would do in the name of Parliament falls foul of the rhetoric of Ministers, and their hon. Friends, about the rights of individuals.

The new clause and supporting amendments will retain the rights of individuals under the town and country planning legislation. If Parliament decides to give away its powers, that is up to it. I hope that it will not give away individuals' rights to object to the Government or to big business, in whoever's name it stands.

Mr. Morgan: If my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) will return my notes, I shall begin my speech which will amplify some of the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood).

It is obvious from private Bills that have been introduced more recently that most people in the private Bill business, even including the promoters' agents whose names will be well known to the House, when they have promoted subsequent Bills, such as the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill on behalf of BP, will appreciate the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale about the traditional exemption from the town and country planning legislation. That first happened in the Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill a couple of years ago and is now happening on the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill, which was introduced about a month ago and which was drafted by the promoters of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. It includes exemptions from the sweeping powers that Parliament has traditionally given to promoters of private Bills if they are successful in getting them through the House. It has the same sweeping powers as public legislation: it sweeps everything else aside—and there is no local control over what happens. It is very old fashioned and Stalinist—one sweeping blow of the bear's fist in the House of Commons and nobody else gets a look in. That may have been all right in the 19th century when private Bill legislation was at its peak, it was acceptable in the railway age, but is it acceptable now? Some promoters have recognised that and have used the same agents as those who are presenting the Bill or are acting for the promoters of the Bill tonight to draft the same new clause as we are presenting to the House tonight.

If it is good enough for the residents of Penzance and Poole, and the promoters' agents on the Bill, it is good enough for us in Cardiff. There is absolutely no reason why the promoters could not now take advice from those self-same agents who drafted exactly the same sort of clause as we lifted wholesale from the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill and put it into the Bill at this late stage.

I do not know whether there is any way of seeing what the promoters plan to say to us before we complete the debate on the new clause so that we may see whether they downgrade the citizens of Cardiff, believing that they are not as politically mature as the citizens of Poole and Penzance. As a representative of part of the capital of Wales, obviously I do not take that view. I believe that if it is good enough for the denizens of Poole and Penzance, it should apply to the citizens of Cardiff as well. Although the Bill was originally introduced a couple of years ago, it does not mean that it remains as a fixed factor that cannot be amended or represents some dreadful, embarrassing climbdown. There is nothing difficult about accepting an amendment that we are completely confident will become standard before long. The old Stalinist, private Bill procedure is going to die—we are sure of that.

Mr. Rogers: Before my hon. Friend becomes too depressed—I do not want him to feel too solemn at this stage of the proceedings—may I say that the general downgrading of the issues often seems to be the case in relation to Associated British Ports. Its annual report last year spoke of 160 acres in the Cardiff bay district where there was to be massive development that would circumvent the planning considerations included in new clause 1. Later reports do not mention Cardiff at all, although there is reference to developments in Florida, America, and other parts of the United Kingdom. It seems as though Cardiff has been written out, possibly because it is a political hot potato or it is felt that ABP already has it, so why should it worry?

Mr. Morgan: That is right. There is some evidence for what my hon. Friend has said, which he will no doubt develop further in his speech. The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and Associated British Ports, through the umbilical cord of Lord Crickhowell's role—I put it no higher than that—work in concert. One might be said to be a front organisation for the other. It would concern everyone if ABP thought that Cardiff was a back number and it was far more exciting to develop further abroad.

However, one could well understand how such a state might arise because almost everyone in the Cardiff district who has been connected with the legislation has been on a trip to Baltimore. I do not think that that is true of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). If one lives in Cardiff, is involved in politics and has not been on a trip to Baltimore, one has not lived. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South

and Penarth can resist such blandishments, but everyone else has been to Baltimore, so such an opinion is understandable.

Mr. Rogers: Whether or not people go to Baltimore is entirely up to them. I went to Aberaeron for my holidays and there is, supposedly, to be a new marina development at Cei Bach. I do not think that those developments are to receive £150 million or will circumvent the planning laws —the basis of the new clause. The developers at Cei Bach are going about the matter in the proper way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sure that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will not be tempted to go on a Cook's tour but will address the new clause and the associated amendments.

Mr. Morgan: I shall merely respond to the correct invervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), which, I am sure, was in order, otherwise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would have ruled it out of order.

I go to Baltimore every year, but I go to the original one, the tiny fishing harbour in county Kerry, where there has been no development of any kind—long may it remain so and long may the price of Guinness remain reasonable.

I shall return to the exemption or non-exemption of developments from town and country planning legislation in the Bill, and our attempt to modernise the Bill by introducing a clause that subjects the Bill to town and country planning legislation in a way that more recent private Bills—even those on which advice has been taken from the same promoters' parliamentary agents as those for the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill—did not. We drafted the clause that we want the promoters of this Bill to accept.

We believe that the new clause would have the beneficial effect of subjecting the Bill to the normal planning controls to overcome the democratic deficit problem to which my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale has referred. The new clause reserves the normal powers of the city council as the local planning authority and maintains some strategic duties that still pertain to county councils, although their role in town and country planning is much reduced. They still have a residual role relating to transportation planning. The local authority would then be able to stand up to the steamroller. There is a danger of steamroller powers being introduced in private Bills. There always has been, and it is now generally recognised that it is dangerous and out of kilter with the 1990s. We shall be trying to find out whether that fact is recognised by the Bill's promoters. The development corporation should have nothing to be ashamed of. It should be confident of its powers to apply for planning permission in the same way that normal, large development companies would do, and not have to play to an olympian set of rules whereby it takes its own decisions.

The same factors apply to the process of modernising planning regulations to bring them into line with the general spirit of the 1990s and the need for environmental assessment. If the city council still had planning powers, it would easily be able to insist on such assessments.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend was talking about the county councils' functions in terms of strategic planning. Many of us are Members of Parliament from Mid Glamorgan, which adjoins South Glamorgan—the promoting authority—and if the Bill is passed in its present form it will have a considerable impact on the economy and, therefore, the planning of Mid Glamorgan. One of the advantages of amendment No. 45, particularly the aspect of subjecting the Bill to the democratic, local planning process, is that it would require South Glamorgan at least to consult with Mid Glamorgan and make some assessment of the Bill's impact on our communities in Mid Glamorgan. That seems to be one of the compelling advantages of amendment No. 45.

Mr. Morgan: That is right. The amendment pertains to the strategic planning duties that county councils still have, even though their role has been much reduced.

There has been a broad drift in the priorities of this country's planning legislation. We are trying to empower people and local authorities to take planning decisions in a responsible way. It is totally contrary to that broad drift to allow unelected development corporations to overcome planning decisions, subject to Parliament's views—which as we know from the Secretary of State's letter really means "subject to the views of the payroll vote". We should stand up for the rights of the ordinary Back Bencher tonight by bringing to the attention of the House and the nation the way in which the Secretary of State abuses the payroll Whip. That follows on from the leaked letter from the Government Chief Whip, who took the same action when the Bill was last considered in February.

There is a danger of a steamroller procedure by which the payroll Whip whips the Bill through Parliament, which then empowers the local unelected development corporation and its members, chosen by the Secretary of State, to ride roughshod over local objections to not only the Bill's principle but the actual works and detailed plans, and the minor aspects that would undoubtedly unfold over the 20 years of the development corporation's envisaged existence. That is a form of power that is totally outdated and anachronistic in 1991.

8 pm

Mr. Rogers: I am afraid that new clause 1 rather loses me because of its legalistic form. As the new clause is tabled in his name, perhaps before he sits down my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) can explain to us what it will mean as regards the environmental impact assessment. My hon. Friend was the European Commission representative for Wales for many years and he may know that environmental impact assessments will be mandatory for planning authorities when granting planning permission.

If the planning authorities are circumvented by this Bill, will the new clause bring us in line with proposed European legislation? Will my hon. Friend answer that specific question before he sits down because one of the problems that might develop is the control of waste management in the area—the costs and problems of recycling, pollution control and so forth—and how waste will be disposed of. Will Cardiff be filled with lorries travelling through it to dispose of waste? Will there be a waste disposal facility within the dockland area? Will the waste be driven through Cardiff to areas outside? Normally those matters would be subject to planning control. The new clause would bring this matter back into the ambit of local people, who would like to control their own waste.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In responding to that intervention, I am sure that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will recollect that the next group of new clauses deals specifically with pollution control. We would have a tidy debate if we were to concentrate upon the town and country planning aspects during discussion on this new clause and dealt with pollution when we debate the next group of amendments.

Mr. Morgan: I think that your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was mainly intended to apply to the second part of the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda. I think that you would accept that the first part of his remarks—regarding the compulsory environmental impact assessment procedure to comply with an EC directive on such assessments—is relevant to this debate. I want to expand my remarks upon that aspect because I happen to have here a copy of the document relating environmental assessment to private Bills. This Bill does not have to comply with that directive because the procedure applying such assessments to private Bills has not yet been introduced.

I have a letter dated 26 February 1991, called "Environmental Assessment and Private Bill Procedures", from a member of the planning and development control division of the Department of the Environment. It sets out the proposed provisions which will require environmental assessments for all private Bills. We have to introduce that procedure to make our private Bills comply with the European Community directive on environmental impact assessments.

If the promoters of the Bill were to accept new clause 1, there would be no problem because then it would be up to Cardiff city council to decide that a proper environmental impact assessment ought to be carried out. The council would have that power and it would retrospectively modernise the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, which has been proceeding through this House and the other place for four years and has therefore missed out on the EC directive.

By exercising our democratic rights tonight we will be able to bring the Bill, restrospectively, within the ambit of the directive by empowering Cardiff city council to decide that an independent validation of the environmental impact of the proposed works is required. Such an assessment would be necessary if the Bill were being introduced for the first time in the next Session of Parliament rather than in 1987 when it commenced its laborious procedure through the two Houses.

The letter from the Department of the Environment invites comment on details of the consultation paper. As all hon. Members are aware, the Department of the Environment is fond of consultation papers at the moment. It is part of the Government's new style of management not to blitz and blast its way through the nation and its various opinions but to assume that that variation is there and to ask people what they think. Perhaps that is what the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment want to do. I know that there are other interpretations—they are dithering or being Mr. Nice Guy. However, as regards the new clause, if we believe that the introduction of compulsory environmental assessments is a good thing—we have thought so because we are incorporating assessments into all new private Bills introduced in the 1991-92 Session, after November—it is simply a matter of deciding how to do it. That is why this consultation paper is being sent out.

Mr. Rogers: I would not want my hon. Friend to be unfair to the Cardiff Bay development corporation. Before he sits down, he ought to say that he is in agreement with the corporation's overall objectives, in that it wants to reunite Cardiff city centre with its waterfront and to promote development which will provide a "superb environment" in which people will want to "live, work and play", and so forth—matters that we will be discussing later.

For many of us, the only objection is the construction of the barrage, which will provide no extra building land for Cardiff. When my hon. Friend talks about Cardiff Bay development corporation getting in ahead of enlightened European legislation that we will now be the beneficiaries of, he ought to recognise that we support the vast majority of its aims. We object only to the construction of the barrage and blocking up the river mouth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It seems to me that the new clause is tied, fairly specifically, to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. I am sure that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West will relate his remarks to that and to the new clause.

Mr. Morgan: The reason that I have touched upon the question whether environmental impact assessments would be compulsory and its relationship to new clause 1 is that Cardiff city council would be empowered to order an environmental impact assessment retrospectively on the Cardiff Bay barrage if we reserve the powers under the town and country planning legislation to do so. At the moment we cannot do so within the private Bill procedure that we have inherited.

The EC directive on environmental assessments came into being in July 1988 and we are incorporating that for the first time next November so that it will apply to all private Bills. The only way that we can apply that directive now is to incorporate new clause 1 and the two amendments in the Bill. That would enable Cardiff city council to order an assessment.

We are not saying that there has not been an environmental impact assessment, as there has, but it was not independent. Cardiff Bay development corporation were conscious of the problem and commissioned the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in Liverpool university to carry out an impact assessment but it was an in-house assessment.

Mr. Ron Davies: That is precisely the matter that I wanted to ask my hon. Friend to clarify. I understood that the corporation requested that the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology carry out such a study. The problem is that when it got the results of that study it chose to ignore the findings. Surely that is the problem.

Mr. Morgan: Without new clause 1 there is nothing to stop promoters saying that they have met all the environmental objectives set out by the EC, that they have hired consultants to do a report. But if they do not like the report they ignore it. What is more likely, because of customer-client relationships—and I do not blame the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in Liverpool because it has to live in the commercial world—is that if there are aspects of the draft reports that the client does not like it can say

that it wants that paragraph left out or a word amended because it is far too strong and would be misused when the report was published. What starts off as a strong report becomes extremely sanitised by the time that the fourth and final draft is packaged ready to be sent through the post. That is due to the customer-contractor relationship and because it was not an independent, validated environmental impact assessment of the sort that we would be empowering Cardiff city council to carry out and to insist upon as an independent body. One needs that independence. If it all takes place within the development corporation, and if the corporation's money is paying for the consultant's services, the project will be tailor-made to meet the political requirements of the development corporation as it seeks to satisfy what it believes are the requirements of this House. This House should respond to that by saying that we shall empower an independent body, such as Cardiff city council, to exercise conventional planning powers in an attempt to avoid money talking in that way. After all, he who pays the piper calls the tune.

What I have described is what usually happens when consultants are working directly for a client and not for a body which is one step removed from the client and which can exercise monitoring powers. The Government are trying to introduce that principle in legislation by stating that the monitoring body should not be the operating body. That is happening in waste regulation at the moment. City councils will be able only to monitor waste disposal arrangements, not to operate them, because, according to the Government, it is naughty for the same body to operate the procedures and to monitor itself. The Government are saying that if an organisation has regulatory powers, it cannot also be the operator.

We are intending to apply exactly such principles in new clause 1 by restoring town and country planning powers to Cardiff city council and, to a lesser extent, to the county council. The new clause and the amendments seek to separate the regulatory body, which is properly the local authority, from the proprietors of the land, the owners of the money, who can bring in the bulldozers, knock things down or build them up or do exactly what they want with their money. Those people should not be the masters of their house because, if they are, there will be no control over the development.

That is why we have sought to strengthen the democratic powers that have been normal throughout the country since the enactment of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. Private Bills should not exempt development corporations from having to submit to some form of independent control. We often hear the phrase "the democratic deficit" in relation to development corporations, control over them, and the appointment of their staff by Secretaries of State without any control being exercised by an elected body. We are not happy that the corporations can then call on Government money, on the payroll vote, and can whip their legislation through the House, with the result that their powers are sweeping. That is not acceptable in 1991. Indeed, that opinion is increasingly being accepted by promoters and agents, and by the Officers of the House who are concerned with the private Bill procedure.

The Bill, however, was introduced before that concern was recognised in the legislation that is currently coming into force. It should, therefore, be fairly simple for the promoters to accept new clause 1. Accepting it cannot be too cumbersome, onerous or obstructive a duty or the same parliamentary agents would not have included such provisions in two Bills, one of which has completed half its passage through Parliament and the other, the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill, has only just started on its way. Obviously, BP is not a soft organisation that believes in handing over goodies to the local authorities. If it could get away with what is happening here, I am sure that BP would think about doing it. However, it accepts that one cannot get away with such things in 1991. Such sweeping powers are no longer acceptable, so even companies such as BP, with the fiduciary duty to their shareholders to maximise profits, are willing to accept such limitations in the Bills that they promote, using the same parliamentary agents. Such provisions should now be retrospectively incorporated into this Bill. That should not be difficult.

We hope to receive some sign tonight that the promoters are willing to accept new clause 1. After all, we have uprooted its provisions directly from the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill and seek only to incorporate them in this Bill.

Mr. Michael: It might help the House if I explain that new clause 1 is based on a number of misapprehensions. When I have explained the situation, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will recognise that some of his colourful language was not appropriate.

I shall comment first, however, on the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), who expressed respect for opponents of the Bill. It is right that the Bill's opponents should be respected, but I hope that he will agree that it is also right that the Bill's supporters should be respected. I refer especially to members of both local authorities, people living in the affected areas, and the leaders of the local councils, especially the late Councillor John Reynolds, whose passion for and vision of our city of Cardiff is unsurpassed, and who was a great supporter of the project.

Mr. Rogers: We all wish to pay tribute to the late Councillor John Reynolds, who was greatly admired by many of us who knew him for many years, dating back to the old days of Glamorgan county council and Cardiff city council. I should like to join the tribute to him.

8.15 pm

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and know that those sentiments are shared by all hon. Members from south Wales, irrespective of whether they support or oppose the Bill. It is right that mutual respect should exist even where we disagree strongly, as is the case over the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale also said that the Bill is fatally flawed, but that is an erroneous and extravagant claim, especially on the planning matters relating to the new clause. There is no disagreement between us about the fact that our procedures should be improved. The present system needs to be radically and speedily changed so that we can get rid of the present private Bill procedures. As I have said on a number of occasions, the current system is unfair both to the promoters and supporters of the Bill, and to those who oppose it. I am sure that we can all agree that, to put it at its mildest, there are some unsatisfactory elements in the current system.

Mr. Hood: I have said this before, but it is worth repeating now. The Clerks advised the Committee not to

[Mr. Hood]

support the Bill, which was the Committee's decision, because it gives powers to the Secretary of State, but takes them away from Parliament. The Committee chose not to take the Clerks' advice. My hon. Friend may say that what I have said is erroneous, but we were advised against the Bill.

Mr. Michael: I shall not be drawn into discussing that matter because it is not relevant to the new clause. However, although I respect his view, I disagree with my hon. Friend.

The Bill gives planning permission only for those matters that are specifically covered in the Bill and that have been dealt with through the processes of the House. It does not remove power from local authorities. In effect, the provisions relate only to decisions on the actual works.

The planning permission that is, in effect, given in the Bill is a matter on which people have had plenty of opportunity to petition. Many people, groups and other bodies exercised that right. The three local authorities involved also had an opportunity to comment and to petition.

The simple point is that the Bill does not remove planning powers from Cardiff city council, Vale of Glamorgan council or South Glamorgan county council. Hon. Members have referred to the Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill. As I understand it, the island in Poole harbour is currently outside planning jurisdiction because it is below the low water mark. That Bill therefore contains a clause to bring the area within the planning legislation. The situation is very different from that relating to the Cardiff bay barrage. The clause is not necessary here, whereas it is necessary in the other Bill. That is the difference.

The planning powers of local authorities have been mentioned during this discussion. Planning powers are not affected or reduced by the Bill. I have a special interest in the planning powers of local authorities and of Cardiff city council in particular. I was chairman of its planning and development committee and a member of the committee for many years. I have taken an interest in planning matters in the city of Cardiff for over 25 years. For that reason, hon. Members will understand that I was one of the first to regret the changes in law and practice which have occurred under this Government. However, those changes have nothing to do with the Bill or the new clause and amendments.

As the entire area of the development corporation is in my constituency, I assure the House that I should be the first to object to any weakening of the planning powers of the local authorities in the Cardiff bay area. Here I come to the nub of why the new clause is wrong. The Bill has been promoted on the basis that it would confer the specific planning permission to which I referred. Many of the matters referred to in Committee were planning issues. To subject the undertakers now to a requirement to seek planning permission would require them to argue issues already thoroughly examined three or four times in earlier debates on the principle of the Bill and in detail in Committees of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Morgan: Like me, my hon. Friend has been involved in planning matters in Cardiff for many years. He has been involved more directly than I have, but my involvement goes back longer than his. I was an officer of the old Cardiff county borough planning department back in 1965 and 1966. I have a long-standing interest going back over 26 years.

I ask for my hon. Friend's comments on the following point. I am sure that he will be aware that since the Cardiff Bay development corporation was set up it has had to apply for planning permission for matters other than the works involved in the Bill, such as alteration of footpaths and other matters. Every time that the corporation has applied for planning permission, it has threatened that if permission was not given it would appeal to the Secretary of State, who would give permission.

There has been an entirely unorthodox new world of town and country planning in the area covered by the Bill in the past three to four years. The threat was dangled before the Cardiff city planning department and its planning committee on every single occasion that the development corporation sought powers. Everything has been done by direct negotiation. The planning committee could not sit back and consider whether to refuse or agree to the application, as planning committees normally do. The old steamroller was used every time. The development corporation said, "If you do not agree, we shall go to see the Secretary of State for Wales, so you had better meet us at least 80 per cent. of the way and go to sleep for the rest of the time." In my view, the planning process in Cardiff has been corrupted in that way ever since the Cardiff Bay development corporation was set up.

Mr. Michael: I understand that that is my hon. Friend's view, but he is completely wrong. Councillor Sue Essex, the chair of the planning and development committee, and the members of that committee would have every right to feel grossly insulted by my hon. Friend's remarks. It is, of course, the members of planning committees who take decisions, not the employees of planning departments. I underline once more to my hon. Friend that no change in the planning arrangements is being made other than the effective granting of permission on the matters specifically covered by the Bill, which have been dealt with in Committee and during the procedures of the House.

Whatever the merits of the proposals of the Select Committee on Private Bill Procedure for reform, the promoters of the Bill must use the present procedure. They have devoted considerable effort and resources to providing the planning case for the scheme. They have done so to the satisfaction of the House of Lords and the Bill has passed through the procedures of both the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

It is significant that neither of the local planning authorities in the development corporation area—Cardiff city council and Vale of Glamorgan borough council—petitioned against the Bill or raised the matter dealt with by new clause 1 with the promoters. That is for one good and simple reason. Cardiff Bay development corporation is not an appointed body that can ride roughshod through the planning system, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West seems to believe. Hon. Members appear to be unaware that the corporation, uniquely among the urban development corporations, does not control planning powers. Its only planning power is to require that a planning application be referred to the Secretary of State if it disagrees with the way in which the local authority proposes to deal with the application. It has a right of

appeal if a planning application is turned down, as does any other applicant. Hon. Members do not seem to have understood that.

Not once in the four years during which the Cardiff Bay development corporation has existed has it had recourse to the appeal procedure. That is because the role of the local authorities must be understood and respected by the development corporation.

There are three specific amendments. Amendment No. 45 is an unnecessary further restriction and amendments Nos. 79 and 80 are both equally unacceptable in their effect. They are also contradictory because amendment No. 79 deletes clause 97 and amendment No. 80 amends the clause. The core of my argument is that the new clause and amendments are not needed. We have a system that is satisfactory to the local authorities and everyone else involved in these processes.

Mr. Rowlands: I support the new clause. We should be pushing at an open door here. I am surprised at the negative view taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on new clause 1. What we seek is encapsulated in subsection (3) of the new clause, which says:

"Nothing in this Act shall constitute an approval, in outline, in principle or otherwise, for the purposes of the Act of 1990, and any application for planning permission for the carrying out of the works shall be determined entirely on its own merits."

For some considerable time hon. Members on both sides of the House and Ministers have been worried about the balance between the use of the private Bill procedure and of statutory planning procedures, which are subject to local public inquiries. The careful balance struck between the two procedures has taxed and interested the House, its Committees and, indeed, the Government.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) to the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure of July 1988. He made no mention of it, but that is fair enough. The report described vividly and at some length the interesting balance that needs to be struck between using the private Bill procedure and allowing statutory planning procedures to operate. I draw the attention of my hon. Friend and every other hon. Member present to the anxieties expressed by the Committee in July 1988.

I understand my hon. Friend when he says that there has been agreement between the local authorities and the Cardiff Bay development corporation. However, they are not the people whom we should consider. We should consider the genuine individual objectors and petitioners such as citizens who are opposed to an authority, whether a development corporation or a democratically elected county or city council. The wishes, feelings and rights of individual householders, groups of residents and others affected by proposals should be taken into account through proper procedures. That is what should concern us most and what is at the heart of our new clause.

Mr. Pike: Is not it important to recognise that many ordinary members of the public, such as those to whom my hon. Friend refers, consider it far more difficult to petition against a private Bill than to object to a normal planning application?

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. That was the very point that I was about to make and which the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure came across when it took evidence. Paragraph 37 of that report is relevant to our new clause and makes the point which my hon. Friend has just made. It says:

"The advocates of non-parliamentary procedures was mostly petitioners, who said that they were better treated in local public inquiries. They complained that in private bill procedure the initiative, and control of the timetable, lie with the promoter. In their opinion, public inquiries generally involve better prior consultation and seem to give a better chance of stopping the development altogether."

My hon. Friend rightly says that the planning authorities and the Cardiff Bay development corporation would prefer to proceed by private Bill procedure rather than through statutory planning inquiries. If is often the petitioners who feel that this is a strange world far removed from their usual experience. Turning up at a local planning inquiry is part and parcel of the community's experience. That is the first and most important point. New clause 1 simply seeks to offer individual citizens, householders and residents the right to have their case properly heard before an independent inspector at a local planning inquiry. Irrespective of where one stands on the merits of the proposal, we should be concerned about the rights of individuals to object.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am interested to hear what my hon. Friend says, but am I right that, although the local authority might have agreed with the development company, the planning committee of a local authority acts in a quasi-judicial capacity and must not be confused with the local authority? I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that that is essentially the difference.

8.30 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is the second intervention that I have accepted. It again illustrates vividly the case for new clause 1—that the planning process familiar to so many people in our community should be available to them.

Mr. Michael: For the record, does my hon. Friend accept that the consideration of the Bill and its implications for planning and other processes have been through the local authorities, including consideration by the planning committees which, as my hon. Friend rightly says, have semi-judicial responsibilities?

Mr. Rowlands: Yes, I am sure that a number of consultations of one kind or another have taken place. What we are saying is that the most important and familiar procedure which allows householders and groups of householders to exercise their rights at a local public inquiry and to raise their objections before an independent inspector has not been available to large numbers of residents in the communities concerned and that the private Bill procedure prevents them from exercising that right—unless my hon. Friend is willing to waive his opposition and hostility to the new clause and accept that some sort of planning inquiry procedure should prevail.

Mr. Rogers: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for having been absent during part of his speech. He might have dealt with this point, but, if not, can my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) deal with it now? If, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, there is no real change in planning procedures as a result of the Bill, why is it necessary to have clause 97 relating to the

[Mr. Rogers]

modification of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971? If we are simply seeking to delete it, as in amendment No. 79, or to replace it with a new clause, why cannot that be accepted? If everybody wants planning procedures to carry on as normal, why have a derogation within the Bill?

Mr. Rowlands: I do not have the mental agility to leap to clause 97 and I am sure that my hon. Friend will make his point if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I appreciate what my hon. Friend is saying. The point is that the people in the community will not have the right to a local planning inquiry unless new clause 1 is accepted.

Those are not my views; those are views culled by the Joint Committee which, when it investigated the private Bill procedure in 1988, came to the conclusion which I started to read and which I will now complete. It went on to say:

"They"—

the petitioners—

"see public inquiries as less intimidating, more local and less adversarial, running to a more reliable timetable, with less arbitrary proceedings, more facilities for objectors and more generous rules of locus."

That is a pretty powerful case to make—that a process of such profound concern as developments of the kind incorporated in the Bill should be subjected to that type of planning inquiry alongside whatever action we wish to take in the House. That makes the case.

Incidentally, I do not agree with the rest of the paragraph. The Joint Committee also argues that planning inspectors are more expert and more dedicated than are Members of Parliament. As we have demonstrated this evening, we are a dedicated group of Members. We are concerned and we will be extremely thorough. My hon. Friend has been one of the most thorough of all in serving on the Committee. Nevertheless, it is interesting that that is the perception of the private Bill procedure in the House concerning issues which will profoundly affect individuals and the rights, livelihoods, homes, immediate locality and environment of so many people.

The case was made, not by me or the objectors to the Bill, but by the Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament. In paragraph 40 the Committee concluded

"that the process of decision-making by Government based upon the holding of a public local inquiry has many advantages in principle over private bill procedure . . . it offers a more familiar forum both for promoters and petitioners, an opportunity for local participation in decision-making, and detailed scrutiny of the proposal by full-time professional inspectors who are required to produce reasoned reports. In particular, it allows the planning and evironmental issues to be thoroughly reviewed. The Government has apparently used its influence in one or two exceptional cases over the years to persuade promoters of private bills to follow ordinary planning procedures so as to secure consideration of the planning aspects of their schemes at a public inquiry, and is prepared to do so again."

Sadly, the Government are heavily committed, as we found out from the letter of the Secretary of State for Wales, to a one-sided view of the Bill. Unless the Under-Secretary of State rises to his feet sooner or later and says that he supports the procedure that we are trying to introduce in new clause 1—the Committee found that Governments encourage promoters of private Bills to include in those Bills provision for local public inquiries —we have seen no evidence in relation to this Bill that the Government are willing to allow local people to have such rights.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend is portraying the Secretary of State as a Stalinist in this matter. We on the Opposition Benches are attempting to de-Stalinise the private Bill procedure by introducing some form of democratic control. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that there are three possible ways of de-Stalinising the Bill. One would be to submit it to a public inquiry. The second would be to submit it to a referendum. The third is that it should incorporate, voluntarily and happily, new clause 1 and the other amendments that have been grouped with it. That would give the local authority some reserve powers to say that as it will be the legatee of the development in 20 years time it wants to play a part now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that at no time during the past four years has Cardiff city council planning committee decided to use the procedure to refer matters to the Secretary of State on appeal. It is obvious why that is so. It knows that the Welsh Office will side with the Cardiff Bay development corporation because the parent of the Cardiff Bay development corporation is the Welsh Office and it can always use that threat. That democratic deficit is there at all times. I know that I am a poor substitute for the Under-Secretary of State on this matter, if on no other, in giving assent to new clause 1, but my hon. Friend must be able to tell the House firmly that in some way we should de-Stalinise the Bill and make it a more democratic procedure.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend uses colourful language, but I should like to put the case more modestly to the Under-Secretary. I have a simple question for him to which I seek a response. When the Joint Committee investigated the interesting balance between the use of the private Bill procedure and local planning inquiries it found that, on previous occasions, the Government were willing to persuade the promoters of a private Bill to use ordinary planning procedures. The Government repeated their willingness to pursue that practice when they gave evidence to the Joint Committee. The Committee recorded that the Government were willing to use their influence.

"to persuade promoters of private bills to follow ordinary planning procedures"

to secure the consideration of the planning aspects of any scheme at a public inquiry. Is the Minister willing to give us that assurance again? Are the Government willing to exercise their due influence with the promoters of the Bill to establish a procedure to allow a local planning inquiry on the planning aspects of the Bill? In evidence to the Joint Committee the Government said that they were willing to continue to exercise that influence. I should happily give way to the Minister to hear his response. I hope that the Minister will make a contribution to explain why the Government are not willing to use their influence on this occasion, as they have in the past, to secure a local planning inquiry. The Minister owes us an explanation of the Government's stand on the Bill.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend's request to the Minister is legitimate given the evidence that has been submitted by the Government to the Joint Committee. Does my hon. Friend consider the silence of the Under-Secretary and the

absence of the Secretary of State as evidence of their part in the web of conspiracy, deceit and corruption that seems to surround the Bill?

Mr. Rowlands: That is part and parcel of the one-sided view of the Government towards the Bill.

When I was Minister at the Welsh Office I was warned constantly, and properly, that on issues that might be subject to planning inquiries of one kind or another one had to stay neutral because of one's quasi-judicial role. [HON. MEMBERS: "Queasy?"] Queasy and quasi. As a Minister one had to retain a genuine quasi-judicial role and one had to have no strong feelings for or against any development. One had to retain one's objectivity when things landed on one's desk as a result of a planning inspector's report.

The Joint Committee found that the Government had exercised their influence in previous private Bills, but perhaps this time they are wholeheartedly on one side of the argument. Perhaps they do not want to exercise a quasi-judicial role in relation to certain key planning issues.

8.45 pm

Dr. Marek: I believe that my hon. Friend should repeat his request for the Minister to intervene. I noted earlier that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) had a note passed to him. Perhaps he is in two minds as to whether he should concede on this issue and allow the public in the Cardiff area to have some say and to have their voice heard. If the Minister stood up now and said that he believed in public participation and that the public voice should be heard, it might tip the balance for my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) should persist in seeking to persuade the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box to make the Government's position clear.

Mr. Rowlands: I should happily give way to the Minister to explain whether the Government are willing to continue to exercise their influence—as they told the Joint Committee and as they have done in the past—to ensure that a planning inquiry is held so that the local community can lodge their objections in the most familiar way to them. We all know that the Minister will not get on his feet because he is a naturally shy type. He is self-effacing and always seeks to disappear into the greenness of the background in the new grey image of the Government.

What is even more curious about the Government's position and the Minister's silence is the fact that the Government provided a formal response to the report published in July 1988 by the Joint Committee—perhaps the Minister has not read it. That response was entitled "Private Bills and New Procedures—A Consultation Document". It seems that consultation was in even before the disappearance of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). That consultation document was issued in June 1990 in response to the Joint Committee report.

Mr. Morgan: No dithering there.

Mr. Rowlands: It is extremely dithery when one reads it.

That document gave the Government's considered response to the Joint Committee's interesting report on the balance between the private Bill procedure and a local planning inquiry. The Government's response came down in favour of legislation in order to support the process for local planning inquiries as opposed to following the private Bill procedure. The Government referred to special orders that would be issued to enable such inquiries to take place. Therefore, the Government endorsed the fundamental drift of the Joint Committee report.

What is even more interesting are the examples that the Government cited that could be subject to the new type of procedure recommended by the Joint Committee and endorsed by the Government in their response.

In paragraph 49 the consultation document states:

"In most years there are also a small number of other works bills promoted. Some of these are introduced where the proposed works would interfere with navigation; current examples are the River Tees Barrage and Crossing, the Cardiff Bay Barrage".

So, in the Government's positive response to the Joint Committee report, which recommended some form of local planning inquiry, they referred to the Bill and the works connected with the Cardiff bay barrage. Therefore I can think of no reason why the Minister would not agree to such a planning inquiry now. The Government have already said that they intend to introduce primary legislation to enable such planning inquiries to be established. Our new clause therefore merely proposes what is already Government policy.

I know that the Under-Secretary was not a Minister in June 1990, but there is such a thing as collective responsibility, which is retrospective. In 1990 the Minister was a right-winger; goodness knows on what wing he is now—in fact, he has no wing as he is sedentary.

We have a right to know whether the Government's response in June 1990 to the recommendations of the Joint Committee for planning procedures and inquiries to be part and parcel of the investigation of petitioners' rights means that the Government will support the new clause tonight. After all, the Government cited the Bill as an illustration of why they believed that the Joint Committee's recommendations had force. Will the Government support the new clause, at least in principle? Will they say that they will exercise influence with the promoters so that a planning inquiry is included in the progress of the Bill, or will they insist upon such an inquiry as a condition of their continuing support for the Bill because such practice is in accordance with established Government policy?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend has made an excellent case for this issue at least to be decided by the people in the area. Unfortunately, he was so engrossed in building his case that he was unable to see exactly what the Under-Secretary was doing. He was wandering up to the Box to consult the civil servants and he is now writing a private note. Therefore, the critical part of my hon. Friend's arguments about the Cardiff bay barrage being subject to consultation has, I fear, not been heard by the Minister. He should hear it and we deserve an answer from him on whether he will back what has been put into the consultation paper.

Mr. Rowlands: A double silence is certainly not golden.

I have one other question to ask the Minister. Has he seen the Government document called "Private Bills and New Procedures—A Consultation Document"? As I understand it, in the Welsh Office he deals with planning inquiries and planning issues. Has he seen a document? If so, is he dissociating himself from the Government's

[Mr. Rowlands]

conclusions? Even if he is unwilling to exercise the influence that we hear the Government have been willing to exercise for private Bill promoters to encourage planning inquiries, is he at least willing to say that the Government—either this one or the next—will introduce legislation to ensure that planning inquiries are part and parcel of the process? There would be a consensus in support of such legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are not debating the report on private Bill procedure and that his remarks must be directly related to the new clause and the amendments.

Mr. Rowlands: I got carried away, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I think that it was very much in order to say that new clause 1 would ensure that planning procedure provisions were incorporated into the Bill. It was the conclusion of the report of a Joint Committee of the House that such procedure should be part of the process—or, indeed, a substitute for private Bills themselves. I was also drawing attention to the fact that the Government were endorsing—or appeared to endorse—much of the principle behind that conclusion.

New clause 1(3) accords with the general drift of Government policy. Therefore, why are not the Government backing, if not the new clause, the principle that we are trying to establish of a local planning inquiry to go alongside the private Bill procedure?

Mr. Morgan: There is one possible explanation for the Minister's silence. We all know that he is a member of the No Turning Back group—perhaps he is also a Member of the "No Getting Up group".

There is another point to which I wish to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands)—the need for the weight of opinion to be reflected in a democratic mechanism. That is the purpose of new clause 1. There were a record number of objectors to the Bill, many of them resident in my constituency. They were able to exercise a limited right because the Committee chose—we are grateful for it—to hold one week's proceedings in Cardiff. However, that hardly answers the need for a formal democratic expression of opinion. Although it is possible to petition Parliament, if Parliament wishes to sweep objectors aside by the use of the payroll vote, it will do so. People may have had a moment of glory in appearing before the Committee in Cardiff and will have read the minority report of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), but that is not the same as being able to have the powers that we seek to incorporate into the Bill in new clause 1.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

I wish to underline the Government's conclusion. I have some doubts about whether we should hand the whole procedure over to a local planning inquiry. That and a private Bill must go together. If not, there would be no opportunity, as would be granted under new clause 18, to debate the financial consequences. In that case, local planning inquiries would not be the right vehicle—this place is the correct vehicle in which to deal with public expenditure consequences. For hearing petitioners' objections, the local planning inquiry procedure is the apposite method with which to deal with these issues.

In their response to the Joint Committee's report, even the Government said that they considered it preferable

"to draft the legislation establishing the order-making procedures covering rail and light rapid transit proposals in such a way that it can be extended by subordinate legislation for use to authorise other works projects . . . such as barrages".

We come back to the Bill. The report mentions barrages

"and canal works . . . which would otherwise require approval by a private Act of Parliament."

The Government concluded that barrage developments of this kind should be subject to a planning procedure as opposed to the private Bill procedure. I doubt whether it should be subject to one or the other—I believe that a mixture of both is essential in such instances.

Why is the Minister so coy? Will he at least say that, in principle, he supports the new clause or the principle behind it? It merely supports what is likely to happen, whichever Government are in power—primary legislation to create such an order-making power, a genuine right to planning procedure and the right of citizens to have local planning inquiries so that their wishes and views can be heard in an environment which is more suitable for the average citizen than that of a private Bill hearing.

We should not have to argue—the door should be open. The Minister should be with us, not against us.

Mr. Rogers: I am not sure whether to support the new clause. Hon. Members will see from the Amendment Paper that I have not subscribed to it. I say that to explain to my hon. Friends who join me in opposing part of the Bill that I oppose only part of the Bill. If it is necessary to hold the Bill up on a point of principle concerning the barrage, I shall willingly go along with that. I realise that in the Cardiff bay area—the docks area—development is necessary. We need a plan for an area that is badly run down and needs support and investment for regeneration, but at some stage the purpose got lost, and somebody got hooked on the idea of a marina. Wherever the land meets the sea people say, "Let's build a marina. Let's throw a circle round to enclose the water." I understand why that is done. Yacht owners and boating fanatics want somewhere to park their boats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman is on his preamble, but he is making a Second Reading speech at the moment.

9 pm

Mr. Rogers: I accept your admonition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wanted to illustrate my support for the general principle of the Bill, because we may need accelerated planning procedures to resolve difficult problems. That is why my remarks were pertinent to the new clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The discussion is political as well as purely semantic. I was saying that the promoters of the Bill lost their way because they got hooked up with the concept of a marine development. Everyone must have a marina, it seems. A rash of them has spread throughout south Wales, and now it is suggested that we take away from local authorities the full responsibility for planning supervision.

Were such marine developments to spring up all around our coasts, no natural coastline would be left. Later, I may use my prerogative as a geologist to explore the intricacies

of alluvial deposition, distortion of estuarine areas, and other fluvial problems that can result from development, but you would rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I did so now.

With the exception of the plans for building the bridge —the barrage—across the mouth of the river, there is an urgent need for speeded-up planning procedures for the docklands area. We are not talking about a normal state of affairs, and, in principle, I should like such procedures to be extended to other areas of industrial dereliction.

Why should the promoters of the Bill want to throw away the Bill, as they will surely do, just over the principle of overcoming planning regulations? They will not accept the new clause at this stage of the game because of the money involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) challenged the Minister to say whether he supported Government policy as laid down in "Private Bills and New Procedures—A Consultation Document". The Minister must respond to that at some stage. I realise that his ability to respond quickly to questions thrown at him is limited, but he always presents himself as a man of principle, and I thought that his principles were loyalty and support for the Government. There could have been a knee-jerk reaction. Perhaps, without our noticing, he stood up and said that he supported the proposals in the document.

Mr. Rowlands: I would remind my hon. Friend—with some poignancy—that one of the most prominent members of the Joint Committee was Sir John Stradling Thomas. The Minister should respect his memory and his support for the proposals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not stray into a discussion of the Joint Committee. His remarks must be directly related to the new clause and the amendments grouped with it.

Mr. Rogers: My remarks are pertinent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, simply because it is suggested that, under the new procedures, a similar clause should be included in every private Bill. The new clause says that one should appear in the Bill. We ask whether the Minister supports the proposal which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, was supported by the late hon. Member for Monmouth.

I cannot understand why the promoters will not accept the new clause. Some people seem to feel that they have discovered the holy grail, and that only one body can redevelop the area—the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The corporation has a role, but the local authority and—even more so—the people of the area have a role too. Their views can be expressed through Members of Parliament, but can be expressed just as legitimately in other ways. We have no particular skills. Like other local representatives, we are elected. The planning requirements of Cardiff and the docklands area will evolve, because the community will evolve. Within the 10 years derogation laid down in the Bill, any works started will be exempt from planning considerations, so there may come a time when reconsideration is required. What would be wrong with going through the normal planning procedure then?

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said that everything would remain the same—that there would be planning applications and inquiries, and that local people would be able to involve themselves. If that is the case, why is clause 97 necessary?

It is fairly obvious that the Minister is, as it were, the Bill's second promoter. He responds to that with a cynical turn of his eyes and lips——

Mr. Morgan: That is his normal expression.

Mr. Rogers: It may be his normal expression, or it may be wind; I do not know. In any event, the expression was there.

The Minister may say, "We are putting in hundreds of millions of pounds, and we therefore have a vested interest, as do the taxpayers of Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom. It is their money, not that of the promoters, that is paying for the Bill." As a custodian of our money, perhaps the Minister can tell us why clause 97 is required. As we cannot obtain an answer from the promoters, let us have one from him.

We merely want to replace clause 97 with amendment No. 79—an entirely coincidental numerical palindrome. We want to ensure that the people of Cardiff are given a chance to participate. What is wrong with that? Why should participation be limited to the development corporation—people who have come in from outside, and who have substantial links with the Conservative party? We know that many of them have a cross-relationship with the Wales land authority. There is a nexus of sinister activity in south Wales, epitomised by the fact that the proposal was promoted originally by the then Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards, formerly Member of Parliament for Pembroke and now Lord Crickhowell. He is a non-executive member of Associated British Ports, which owns 160 acres of valuable land right in the middle of this development.

Especially worrying is the conspiracy of silence with which we are met. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked the Minister to respond. Does the Minister really believe that behaving like a dummy will prevent people from seeing through the web of corruption?

Mr. Ron Davies: I was intrigued by my hon. Friend's reference to Lord Crickhowell. He rightly drew our attention to Lord Crickhowell's heavy involvement in the promotion of the Cardiff bay barrage. Has my hon. Friend read the report of the debate in the House of Lords that took place shortly before the Easter recess? That concerned another Bill proposing the construction of a barrage, across the River Usk at Newport.

I am sure that there is no connection between Lord Crickhowell's considerable interests in the Usk valley and his opposition to the barrage. Will my hon. Friend confirm that there are no such sinister thoughts in his own mind?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that, in responding to that question, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will stay on the straight and narrow, and refer to the new clause and amendments.

Mr. Rogers: Absolutely, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would not go down that particular valley for all the tea in China. Well, that is not strictly true. The Usk valley is wonderful.

We shall, of course, have the same problem in the next Parliament, when another private Bill, proposing the closure of the mouth of the Usk, will arrive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us deal with this Parliament. I shall not be here in the next Parliament.

Mr. Rogers: For that reason, the House will be very much worse off after the next election.

Mr. Morgan: In the light of your ruling, Mr Deputy Speaker, it may not be in order for my hon. Friend to deal fully with the Usk barrage, but it is relevant for the House to consider how odd it is that people of influence, such as Members of Parliament and ex-Members of Parliament, change their minds when other Bills of a similar nature are considered. Apart from Lord Crickhowell's change of view vis-a-vis the Cardiff bay barrage, which he practically fathered and funded before he left this House to become the director of company closely linked with it, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) opposed a mini-barrage that was proposed by a Labour-controlled county council but did not object to a much larger barrage that was proposed by a Conservative Government.

Mr. Rogers: I do not intend to comment on the motives of Conservative Members of Parliament and ex-Ministers. However, it is significant that the ex-Secretary of State for Wales, Lord Crickhowell, is chairman of the National Rivers Authority. The problem is that the person who is entrusted by the nation with the well-being of our rivers is intimately involved, with a resulting substantial conflict of interest, in the rivers Ely and Rhondda.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): And the Taff.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, and the Taff. God forbid that I should forget the Taff. The use of the word "Taffy" for Welshmen is thought to come from the river Taff, but I understand that it comes from a little further west—from a river in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), the river Teifi.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): No, the Taff.

Mr. Rogers: I apologise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman has to some extent been corrupted by his hon. Friends. I am sure that he intends to return to the new clause.

Mr. Rogers: Yes. I see that the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) is here. Unfortunately, his Front Bench responsibilities chain him completely. I know that he would like to speak out on the matter. I do not know what he would say, but how nice it is to see him.

Mr. Michael *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Ron Davies *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am the co-sponsor of the new clause. I have been waiting for two hours to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not in order to question the judgment of the Chair on these matters.

Mr. Davies: That may well be the case, but——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has another point of order that does not reflect upon the judgment of the Chair, I shall take it after the Division.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central) *(seated and covered):* May I draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the fact that this Division is taking an untoward length of time? I ask that some investigation be made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am keeping an eye on the time.

The House having divided: Ayes, 163, Noes 29.

Division No. 113] **[9.13 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Callaghan, Jim
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foster, Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Snape, Peter

Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Buckley, George J.
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Duffy, A. E. P.
Gordon, Mildred
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ilsley, Eric
Lamond, James
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Pike, Peter L.
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ted Rowlands and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am now required to put——

Dr. Marek: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I will take the point of order afterwards. I am now required to put the Question on new clause 1.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 25, Noes 149.

Division No. 114] **[9.29 pm**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ilsley, Eric
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Morley, Elliot
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Rhodri Morgan and
Dr. John Marek.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Callaghan, Jim
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
McWilliam, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. Paul Flynn.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand the difficulties that we had prior to the last Division. If you felt that I was challenging your authority in any way, I wish to make it clear that I was seeking advice rather than questioning your judgment. I am sure that you will understand the point that concerns me. I am one of the co-signatories of the last group of amendments that we were discussing. You will note that new clause 1 is in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and myself. The

[Mr. Ron Davies]

amendments grouped with it are also in our names. The debate lasted for just under two hours. I was present throughout and showed my interest in that debate on a number of occasions. I had deliberately not made a large number of interventions, as other hon. Members had done, although I intervened when I felt that I had a contribution to make.

I was surprised, first, that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) moved the closure motion, although I understand that it was perfectly proper for him to do so. Secondly, I was surprised that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, decided to accept that motion when you knew that I was waiting to catch your eye and at least four or five of my hon. Friends had sat patiently throughout the debate, had not intervened and wanted to make contributions of their own. It might assist the conduct of the business that we are about to debate if we had some idea from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether your judgment—which we would not wish to question—would be exercised in the light of the length of time that has been taken up or the number of speakers still waiting to speak. I do not in any way wish to intrude on your prerogative which is properly yours, but it would assist the many Opposition Members who wish to speak during the coming hours if they had some idea of the factors in your mind in deciding whether to accept the closure.

9.45 pm

Mr. Morgan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Much of the debate, particularly the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), was concerned with whether the Minister would make a statement about whether the Government intended to apply the document to which he had referred. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), I do not question your judgment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but as the closure motion came when it did and you accepted it, was there a communication from the Minister to you before that to show that the Minister would not respond to the various challenges that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney had made to him? Was there a sign as to whether the Government agreed with their consultative paper and the position described by the Minister? Did the Minister inform you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he did not wish to respond, make a speech or intervene during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, or did you decide that, regardless of whether the Minister intended to speak, you would not allow him to do so and would accept the closure motion?

Dr. Marek: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I and about four or five other hon. Members sought to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not complain that I did not do so and you called the closure, but as I had a number of new points to make and some serious concerns about the new clause, I am worried whether the Minister will have time in any debate tonight to give the Department's view. Do you have any power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ascertain in advance whether the Department and the Minister wish to contribute?

After the previous debate, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, must know that the Department is concerned with getting the Bill through the House. I feel that it is only right that it should be given every chance to put its case.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point? I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was here during the debate.

Mr. Redmond: I accept your comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I always accept the ruling from the Chair. While it is perfectly true that I was not in the Chamber for the closure motion, I am deeply concerned. I am aware that you, as Deputy Speaker, seek at all times to uphold Back Bench opinions in relation to democracy in the Chamber. I am obviously concerned that a number of hon. Members wish to express an opinion on this important Bill. I have no wish to challenge your ruling on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the fact that a Division was called on the closure is a serious worry to Back Benchers.

In view of the representations that have been made in points of order, will you rule that in future in this important debate on the Bill any Back-Bencher wishing to speak will be allowed to do so without tactics from the Government, who obviously support the Bill? You will be aware of the previous arguments, in points of order before the debate started this evening, about the Secretary of State's letter that the Government are strongly supporting the Bill but decline to answer Back Benchers' questions. Will you rule that you will refuse to accept closure motions while there are hon. Members wishing to speak in the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to hon. Members for the courteous way in which they have raised their points of order. I recognise that some hon. Members were hoping to speak in the debate and were not able to do so when I accepted the closure motion. The House well knows that the Chair has the power to accept a closure motion when it judges it appropriate, and the Chair never gives its reasons for so doing.

In answer to the other question, every debate to come will be judged on its merits by whomever is in the Chair. These are hypothetical questions. We listen carefully to the debate, and anything that may have occurred during debate on the first group of amendments in no way creates a precedent for the amendments that are to come.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it further to the same point of order?

Mr. Rogers: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was on my feet when I was interrupted by the closure motion. It would have been far more appropriate if the motion had been put between speeches. I had not been speaking for very long. If that is to be the case, and if people who want to offer legitimate arguments are to be excluded from doing so, I do not feel that we are receiving our proper rights as Parliamentarians. We were elected to speak here, and so long as we conform to the Standing Orders and procedures of the House, as laid down, we have a right to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is nothing that I can add. I have to exercise my judgment in the Chair and I have done that to the best of my ability.

New Clause 5

SOURCES OF LEACHATE

'Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to sources of leachate in contact with the waters of the inland bay or of the groundwater in hydraulic contact with the waters of the inland bay and its proposals for removal, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate.'.—*[Dr. Kim Howells.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. Kim Howells: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

New Clause 6—*Phosphate and nitrate stripping*—

'Before constructing the Barrage, the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate-stripping of the waters of the rivers entering the inland bay and their tributaries in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay.'.

New Clause 8—*Sewer outfalls*—

'Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to the sewer outfalls discharging directly into the inland bay or into the waters of the rivers discharging into the Bay or the tributaries thereof, showing the proposed means of removal, relocation or improvement thereof and the agreement of the owner of each outfall to such removal, relocation or improvement.'.

New Clause 17—*Elimination of risks of pollution*—

'Before commencement of impounding by means of the barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish proposals for the sealing of the Ferry Road tip to the satisfaction of the rivers authority and the Environmental Health Officer of the city council that no material risk of infiltration of the inland bay or of groundwater by leachate from the tip will occur.'.

New Clause 19—*Maintenance of ground water standards*—

'Before the commencement of impounding the undertakers shall commission and publish proposals for the proper disposal of algal scum arising in the inland bay that are consistent with the preservation and maintenance of good water quality standards at the site of disposal and in adjoining waters.'.

Dr. Howells: Two rivers are to be dammed—the Taff and the Ely. They constantly carry effluent and litter down to the Bristol channel from what is probably the most densely populated area in Wales.

Mr. Rogers: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend so early in his speech, but I cannot allow him to proceed by closing the number at two river valleys. One of the most substantial contributions to the River Taff is from the two Rhondda rivers which meet at Porth and enter the Taff within 100 yards of my hon. Friend's——

Dr. Howells: House.

Mr. Rogers: No. My hon. Friend lives not in a house but in a home, and the river comes very close to it. I know that he is diligent in ensuring that that river is properly cleaned and is not polluted in any way. Does he not think it rather odd that——

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Resign.

Mr. Rogers: It is a resigning matter.

When he is talking about the pollution of our rivers, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) will, at some stage, refer to the chairman of the National Rivers Authority, who has the prime responsibility of ensuring clean rivers, not only in south Wales, but throughout the United Kingdom. I refer to Lord Crickhowell, who is a well-paid non-executive director of Associated British Ports, which has a strong interest in the Cardiff bay development. Lord Crickhowell was the Secretary of State for Wales when it was decided to put public money into the land owned by the company of which he is now a substantial director.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend for his learned intervention.

I was about to mention the extensive involvement of Rhondda—I have been told that I am not supposed to call it "the Rhondda". To amplify my original point, the rivers that I have mentioned flow through some of the most densely populated areas of Wales. Almost 77,000 people reside within Rhondda's administrative boundaries; almost 64,000 people live in Cynon Valley; 58,000 people live in Merthyr; and almost 95,000 people live in Taff-Ely.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend is referring yet again to my constituency. Perhaps he will tell the House that, of the 77,000 people who reside in Rhondda, 35,000 voted for me.

Dr. Howells: I am again astounded at my hon. Friend's knowledge and will learn from it.

At least 295,000 people live close to the rivers that drain into the Taff and the Ely, the rivers that are to be dammed, and that does not include the people who live in Cardiff or its environs. Probably nearly half a million people live close to those rivers. I make that point because it is important that people who do not know the area realise the implications of the provisions for the quality of water in those rivers.

We in the industrial areas of Wales have long neglected our rivers and the quality of their water. I have said on other occasions that I would dearly love the rivers of the industrial valleys of south Wales to resemble those in the area represented by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), which are some of the most marvellous rivers in Wales. I do not see why the rivers of industrial south Wales cannot resemble those rivers.

This is of direct bearing to the new clauses that we are discussing because if Cardiff—*[Interruption.]* I am afraid that the Minister does not seem very interested, but I understand that he has responsibility for these matters.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is ironic that during the previous debate my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) spent at least five minutes trying to encourage the Minister to rise to give the House the benefit of his wisdom—if he has any? Does he also agree that it is a sign of absolute arrogance and an offence to the House that, while he is making a speech of critical importance to his constituency and to the outcome of this debate, the Minister has nothing better to do than to sit on the Front Bench like a grinning martinet, chatting to his hon. Friends behind him? The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) would be better advised to listen to my hon. Friend's speech.

Dr. Howells: I hope that the Minister will take note of what I am saying because an intelligent response from him at the end of the debate would help him to salvage at least some votes in the coming general election.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I must advise my hon. Friend that I visit the Minister's constituency of Pembroke once, sometimes twice, a year without fail. The people in the pubs in which I drink in Meinclochog are appalled by the Minister's behaviour, and therefore——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. That is not relevant to the new clauses.

Mr. Sedgemore *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's comments are not relevant to the new clauses.

Mr. Sedgemore: If you will allow me to develop the point, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to develop the point. He must be more specific and deal with the new clauses. That would be welcome.

Mr. Sedgemore: If I could be more specific and deal with the new clauses, the question often asked about the Minister is now being asked in the House on this Bill. Unlike most English hon. Members, I have visited the area of the Cardiff bay barrage. I have come down on the side of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). The question often asked is, why does not the Minister know what he is talking about?

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend makes his point very well——

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That at this day's sitting, the British Technology Group Bill and the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 20.

Division No. 115] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkinson, David
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Price, Sir David
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Strang, Gavin
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Watts, John
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Duffy, A. E. P.
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Illsley, Eric
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Redmond, Martin
Rowlands, Ted
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allan Rogers and
Mr. Alan Williams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]*

As amended, again further considered.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

10.15 pm

Dr. Kim Howells: May I continue what I started by reading out new clause 5. It is important that everyone knows exactly what it stands for. The language is somewhat technical, but perhaps by explaining it I may be able to make my point more clearly. New clause 5 states:

"Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to sources of leachate in contact with the waters of the inland bay or of the groundwater in hydraulic contact with the waters of the inland bay and its proposals for removal, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate."

That is central to the future of the project. I shall be interested to know what the defence for continuing the project could possibly be until the problems are solved. I give notice that there are many tips in south Wales which issue leachate into water courses and water tables which drain into the tributaries of the Taff and the Ely which will be affected by the barrage.

The Institution of Civil Engineers defined leachate in a recent publication. I shall read it for the benefit of hon. Members. It states:

"Leachate consists of water which must not be allowed to flow from the sites carrying with it, in solution or suspension, chemicals, metal contaminants and organic matter. Care is needed to ensure that this leachate is not discharged into watercourses but some, or all, may percolate through the ground to underground aquifers. The main problem is generally caused by the continuing decomposition of the suspended organic matter which absorbs oxygen in this process. This oxygen requirement, known as the Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) is one measure of the 'strength' of the leachate.

If any leachate is discharged into a watercourse, it will absorb oxygen from the water to satisfy this demand and complete its decomposition, and unless the dilution is such that the watercourse can cope with this demand, the level of oxygen in the water can fall below that necessary to support fish and animal life and these will suffocate. In extreme circumstances, the levels can drop below that necessary to support plant life with disastrous results. A further problem which can occur is the production of ammonia which can also adversely affect fish and plant life."

I have quoted that report on pollution and its containment because it is important that we understand just how serious it will be if proper measures are not taken to prevent leachate from tips—whether in the immediate environs of the barrage or further upstream—feeding into the tributaries of those rivers. This is not a whimsical objection, but one that is recognised throughout the scientific and engineering world as absolutely central to any project of this type, especially one in such close proximity to so many people.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend mentioned the substantial danger of the accumulation of salts and other mineral materials in enclosed waters.

As he said, it is not a whimsical proposition. In a natural situation, substantial salt marshes develop, for example, where there has been development of spits such as those in the mouth of the river Dyfi and the Mawddach estuary in Cardigan bay. Wherever there is a shifting of alluvial material at the entrance to estuaries, there will be significant problems. My hon. Friend is right to point out the significant danger of completely enclosed areas such as estuaries.

I should like to make a point to which I am sure that my hon. Friend will return. If the barrage created one acre of extra land for industrial development, it could be argued that the barrage was a good thing. On the other hand, the barrage will do nothing for the industrial development of Cardiff.

Dr. Howells: That is a good point. I have heard many detrimental remarks from the sponsors of the Bill about the grounds upon which the Bill is being opposed. I have heard it said—very stupidly—that a development such as this should not founder on concern for waders or other bird wildlife in the area. I would argue that unless the problem is solved, the impounding of water containing leachate presents an enormous health risk not just to the wildlife which may inhabit the lagoon but to the people living around it.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is right that these are serious matters. In fairness, however, we are considering the amendments that he proposes. He referred specifically to leachate in the immediate area, although I know he also referred to other matters. I would point out to him that leachate removal is dealt with in clause 69(7)(a), which requires the Ferry road, Ferry road tip, Cowslip, Cogan and Penarth dock outfalls to be removed, relocated or diverted to the satisfaction of the river authority. I say that in recognition of the importance of the issue to which my hon. Friend refers and to emphasise that under the Bill it will be dealt with to the satisfaction of the authority.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I am sure that he means his remarks to be constructive. I would point out, however, that new clause 5 does not limit itself to the Ferry road tip, to which a later amendment refers. I propose to deal with that question because it is not dealt with properly in the Bill.

I will read new clause 5 to my hon. Friend. It says:

"the undertakers shall produce"—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has already read the new clause to the House, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) can read it for himself.

Dr. Howells: I fear, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the sponsor of the Bill has not read or understood new clause 5, which refers to

"sources of leachate in contact with the waters of the inland bay or of the groundwater in hydraulic contact with the waters of the inland bay".

In layman's language, that means the water that feeds into the lagoon. I have tried to show that it is not simply a question of water that may originate in Cardiff and the surrounding areas. We are talking about the rivers that are to be dammed, which are considerable bodies of water draining large areas which, because of our industrial heritage, include some of the most poisonous tips anywhere in Britain.

Mr. Ron Davies: I will give my hon. Friend a graphic example of the problem to which he refers. He and I represent neighbouring constituencies, and my hon. Friend's area, like mine, contains many mineworkings. In the past couple of months, the National Rivers Authority has been having great difficulty dealing with iron-rich

[Mr. Ron Davies]

water in the Rhymney valley, which comes from the old Britannia colliery. Now that the colliery has closed and the pumping has stopped, the workings are flooded. The leachate is rich in iron and other salts and is polluting what had previously been a clean river. Exactly the same circumstances could arise with the Taff, in which case precisely the problem to which my hon. Friend has referred would arise.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend. I am sure that if we chose, we could be here all night giving instances of colleries, iron works and so on that feed into rivers. I do not want to do that. There is no point, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will understand my point full well.

Mr. Michael: I appreciate the seriousness of the issues to which my hon. Friend is referring. I am merely trying to emphasise the fact that that seriousness is appreciated by everybody. Discussions have been held with the water and rivers authorities on the environmental management of the impoundment and neither authority considers that the proposals that are the subject of the new clauses need to be included in the Bill to protect their statutory function with regard to the environment.

It is not a question of disregarding the issues; the new clauses are not needed to ensure that the topics that my hon. Friend rightly highlights are dealt with. They can be considered seriously without any amendments to the Bill.

Dr. Howells: I tabled the new clauses and amendments precisely because I do not share my hon. Friend's faith in the development corporation. I am not so confident that its long-term objective is to do something about the pollution that flows into the Taff and Ely; nor do I see in the Bill any explanation of how the modifications will be paid for. I believe—this is at the heart of my argument —that we are putting the cart before the horse if we build a barrage before we have cleaned up the rivers.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has said, it is generally appreciated —not just in this country but around the world—that leachate is a major problem. To be fair to the Government—I am not often fair to them—I think that they have taken that on board and a good deal of work has already been done to try to discover how leachate can best be contained. The imminence of the barrage, however, increases the urgency. Although long-term plans to improve the quality of the water in the rivers may well be afoot, I fear that the barrage will arrive before the improvements. I require more concrete assurances to the contrary.

As I said earlier, the EEC has shown great concern about the matter, as has the European Council. In 1988, in Hanover, the Council invited the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to intensify their efforts to prevent water pollution; the Environment Council, in its turn, invited the Commission to submit proposals for measures required at Community level for the treatment of municipal sewage. Most of the proposals address the environmentally detrimental effect of effluents that are not sufficiently treated.

Such effluents are frequently put into the Taff and the Ely and their tributaries simply because—through no fault of the development corporation—not enough has been invested in the sewage treatment works in the past. I am sure that many hon. Members are well aware that at times of high rainfall, for example, raw sewage is released into most of the rivers that either flow or drain into the Taff and the Ely.

The assurances that we have received from Welsh Water plc are far from satisfactory. Derogations have been granted, which I have criticised in the past and will criticise again. I am not at all confident that the treatment works will be improved in time for the construction of the barrage. I fear that a good deal of contaminated water will flow into it.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend has not yet touched on the microbiological contamination of the valleys rivers——

Mr. Flynn: That is a serious problem.

Mr. Davies: I welcome my hon. Friend's support. I share a boundary with him as well, and we have discussed the specific problem that has arisen along the River Rhymney at Michaelston-y-Vedw, and, indeed, affects all the south Wales rivers.

The Welsh water authority, as it used to be, constructed an outfall giving directly on to the river to deal with the surcharge in the sewers at the times of heavy rainfall. At such times, much of the surface run-off goes into the foul sewer and surcharges it; the sewer then discharges directly into the river. In the case of the Taff and the Ely, microbiological contamination is a very good guide to water quality. At the moment, that contamination is flushed out to sea, but after the construction of the barrage it will go straight into the lagoon.

10.30 pm

Dr. Howells: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me about that. I had not intended to refer to it; I thought the case was already strong enough. However, it is a good point.

I spoke recently to a friend of mine who is a practising pharmacist. He told me of his outrage when he discovered at a meeting of pharmacists that assistants in chemist shops, as well as the owners, flush out-of-date medicines down lavatories. Some of them are extremely toxic. They flow directly into the sewers. These toxic substances are also poured down common drains and flow into the rivers. That toxic concoction will eventually end up in the barrage.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend is dealing with an extremely important and serious issue that is not resolved by the provisions in the Bill. He referred to raw sewage being discharged into rivers. Many of the south Wales valleys have new trunk foul sewers, but I take no pride in saying that the trunk sewer in my constituency has not been renewed. I hear complaints from constituents at my surgeries about the discharge of raw sewage into the Rhondda Fach and the Rhondda Fawr, both of which discharge into the Taff. Only last week I had a leter from one of the borough engineers in which he said that approval had been given for capital expenditure in order to control the discharge of foul sewage into the Rhondda Fach between Ferndale and Mardy. That scheme, however, will not be realised for many years. It is only one of many instances of breaks in the trunk foul sewer system in the Rhondda valley because of its peculair geography and narrow confines.

Dr. Howells: I am sure that my hon. Friend's point applies to many locations within this water catchment area. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) faces exactly the same problems in his constituency as I do. I know, too, that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) faces grave problems over sewage disposal in her constituency.

The detrimental effects of municipal waste water are self-evident in our rivers, particularly in the Taff and the Ely. At the most superficial level, the discharge of untreated municipal waste water can cause noxious conditions and thus reduce the amenity value of rivers, lakes, estuaries and coasts. That point needs to be emphasised because the raison d'être for the barrage scheme is that it should be an amenity. Given the state of the water flowing into it, it will not be much of an amenity. Indeed, it will be a health risk more than anything else. However, we may be able to deal with that matter in more detail at a later stage.

In fresh water, the reduction of dissolved oxygen and the introduction of ammonia and suspended solids can seriously reduce ecological quality, thus affecting a wide range of flora and fauna, including fish. We have suffered particularly badly from that. I have seen a beautiful painting—one that I am sure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would like to have on your wall—depicting Cardiff as it was before it was redeveloped by the Marquis of Bute. Coracles were shown being carried out of the waters of the Taff, which was one of the most famous salmon rivers in Wales. I understand that there is a chance that salmon will return. There has been something of an improvement in the water. The salmon now get as far as Pontypridd before finally succumbing.

Mr. Flynn: They could take only so much.

Dr. Howells: To make it that far, they had to be tough. If the lagoon is to be an amenity, the water will have to be cleaned. But it will not be an amenity—it is as simple as that.

Mr. Michael: I should like to draw attention to the quality of water currently in Bute East dock. That is exactly the same water as will be held in the general bay area. I can assure my hon. Friend that the people who walk around it, and those who boat on it, regard it as a considerable amenity. One sees dragon boats on it at the weekend. It is much appreciated.

Dr. Howells: The point is well taken. However, I have to say that if my hon. Friend is prepared to take his children for walks around a polluted dock, that is up to him. I do not consider it to be much of an amenity.

The reduction of water quality can also affect water intended for abstraction and human consumption. In that context, one thinks of someone who happens to fall into an area of impounded water. People will inevitably fall into this one. Indeed, some may jump in—especially after the next election. Municipal waste water is discharged into the sea, making conditions unsuitable for bathing and for shell fish cultivation. But if the barrage is built, that will become an irrelevance, because the waters simply will not reach the sea in their present condition.

It is important that we take into account the fact that, despite the trends of the past decade, south Wales still contains many working factories, including chemical plants. There are several very contentious chemical plants in my constituency. They are contentious because people have become much more environmentally aware. As a result of this awareness, the plants are subject to constant monitoring. That monitoring shows that the effluent from the factories is by no means satisfactory in all respects and at all times. It is very important that people should understand that the need for continued employment, balanced against the need to clean up the environment, will ensure that these factories remain in operation for a long time.

The current inadequacy of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—a subject that cannot be dealt with at length tonight—makes it obvious that improvements will not come over the next decade. I fear that discharges from waste water treatment plants are not always satisfactory because of the particularly noxious materials that are discharged by some factories and chemical plants. Certainly the water is not of a quality suitable for recycling.

It should be noted that over the past decade eutrophication has become a major problem in Community waters—certainly more so in our waters than anywhere else in the European Community. I am thinking especially of certain rivers and lakes. The proposal for a directive relating to municipal waste water treatment plants, together with the proposed directive concerning the protection of fresh coastal and marine waters against pollution caused by nitrates from diffuse sources, provides, inter alia, an opportunity for the European Community to take action to control the discharge of the two major nutrients—nitrogen and phosphorous—that are responsible for eutrophication. The barrage will not take advantage of that opportunity. On the contrary, its enormous cost will drain funds from projects that could control the discharge of such nutrients.

The EC directive lays down minimum requirements for the treatment of municipal waste and for the disposal of sludge, but because of the assimilative capacity of the waters into which treated waste waters are discharged it is proposed that the receiving waters should be classified into three types. It is important that we try to understand the quality of the water that will flow into the Taff and Ely, which will be dammed. It is proposed that, in general, a secondary or biological treatment will be required as a minimum. In more sensitive areas, additional treatment will be required to meet specific environmental needs such as the reduction of nutrients.

The Commission believes that, in principle, all municipal waste water discharged into marine waters should be heavily treated. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth will agree wholeheartedly and endorse that proper and right aim. I do not intend to talk about the effect of the barrage on water tables, but we must consider whether it is possible to carry out these improvements and modifications before the barrage is built. I should be interested to hear my hon. Friend's response to that, because it is critical to the viability of the project and its public acceptability.

The EC directive seeks to control the discharge of industrial waste waters that are of a similar nature to municpal waste water and that do not enter municipal waste water treatment plants before discharge into the environment. It is important to understand that the Commission felt that it was inappropriate to require member states to introduce what might be costly measures

[Dr. Howells]

to control municipal waste waters while ignoring discharges of comparable waste waters from industrial sources, especially where those discharges occur near one another. That is particularly important in south Wales because of the close proximity of the sources.

Mr. Rowlands: I am following my hon. Friend's argument with much interest. His remarks and observations remind me that in my constituency, despite all the directives, planning powers and vigilance, a company suddenly dumped 6,000 barrels of toxic waste on the edge of a river. The National Rivers Authority and the Secretary of State for Wales—I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman, who upheld the decision of Rhymney Valley district council—rightly said that Euromet should not have dumped on the edge of the river bank. Despite those powers and vigilance, such disastrous problems still occur. It behoves us not to pass the Bill without checking and being vigilant. We are being far too careless with our environment in south Wales.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Such incidents have occurred many times in south Wales, and will continue to happen. We can never be infallible and such incidents will occur again and again.

My hon. Friend's point is relevant to the new clauses, because the Bill does not provide for an audit of possible contaminants, even those held at factory sites, in case such an incident occurs again. The problem is that there is insularity in the Bill which attempts to build almost a fortress around the Cardiff bay development. Although the promoters are pleased to tell us that the champagne will dribble out to our communities when the wealth starts coming in, they seem to ignore the fact that Cardiff has probably the most organic link of any city to its hinterland; Cardiff owes its development to the coal industry. Ecologically it is indivisible from its hinterland. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney for making the point so well.

10.45 pm

There are many industrial sites within that drainage area. There are already high pollution levels in the waters of the Taff and the Ely. The EEC directive to which I have already referred lays down criteria for the identification of sensitive and less sensitive areas.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend rightly took an example from my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who shares the representation of Rhymney valley with me. May I refer my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) to an incident which happened on the Rhymney river last year. It is a good example of the unforeseen things which can happen. There was a fire at the Klockner-Pentapac factory which manufactures cosmetics. The fire authority came along promptly, doused the factory with water and eventually gained control of the fire. Of course, in the process the firemen swept out all the tanks which stored cosmetics. In no circumstances could anybody have foreseen that. The consequence was a direct wash straight into the River Rhymney of all the cosmetics. Almost the whole of the river from Aberbargoed to below Machen was devastated. The fish life was destroyed. Is not that precisely the sort of eventuality which could occur? At the moment the sea acts as a natural method of disposal of pollutants. If there was a barrage there, they would be held in the lagoon. No one could foresee such an occurrence.

Dr. Howells: The point has been well made by my hon. Friend. I am sure that many other hon. Members could relate similar instances of large numbers of fish stock being killed as a result of chemicals escaping into rivers. That will always occur.

Mr. Flynn: We need to create something called a National Rivers Authority.

Dr. Howells: That is exactly the point that I am coming to. The problem is that there is a distinct lack of trust in the policing powers of an organisation which is run by precisely the same person as is involved so deeply in the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

I know many people who work in the National Rivers Authority and I have discussed these matters with them on many occasions. They are fine people with tremendous records. They are concerned about and have made great strides in cleaning our rivers. I hope that the new clauses show the concern of myself and other hon. Members. The problem is that Cardiff Bay development corporation sees itself quite properly as a pioneering enterprise which will transform an area which has long needed transformation. But that organic link with the hinterland shows up the limitations of the scope of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. If we cannot have an organisation that sees Cardiff's hinterland as being part and parcel of that environmental, ecological and economic entity, it seems that the Welsh Office should take on that role. There should be proper audits of what chemicals are held along the banks. Proper safeguards should be written into such a major project so that Euromet does not happen again; and if there is a fire in a cosmetics factory such as that my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) described, there are proper containment structures and systems to ensure that, if the barrage is built, the pollution will not go into the lagoon. The link demands an overview and, in doing so, shows up the Bill's limitations.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Water Act 1989 contains substantial powers. The Secretary of State has many of the powers to which my hon. Friend refers, but the problem is that he will not use them. After all the incidents which occurred, and which we have discussed in tonight's brief debate, I pressed the Secretary of State to use the powers available to him under the Water Act. Unfortunately, he says every time that it is not appropriate to do so and that he does not wish to use the powers. The existence of the difficulties has been recognised. What is lacking is the political will to use the instruments that the House has put in place.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend has put the argument very well.

I shall turn to the problem which I mentioned earlier and which is central to the new clauses—eutrophication. It is not easy to say that word at this time of night, but I have managed to say it so far about eight times. New clause 6 deals with that issue, and states:

"Before constructing the Barrage, the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate stripping of the waters of the rivers

entering the inland bay and their tributaries in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay.".

The new clause has been drafted precisely in line with the EC directive which, in its criteria for the identification of sensitive and less sensitive areas, states:

"Lakes and streams reaching lakes reservoirs closed bays which are found to have a poor water exchange, whereby accumulation may take place. In these areas the removal of phosphorous should be included unless it can be demonstrated that the removal will have no effect on the level of eutrophication. Where discharges from large municipalities are made, the removal of nitrogen may also be considered."

There was agreement among my hon. Friends on the issue of the bacteriological pollution of rivers. The directive also mentions other areas of water which are found to have a poor water exchange or which receive large quantities of nutrients. It states:

"The discharges from small municipalities are usually of minor importance in those areas, but for large municipalities"—

I have already said that we are probably dealing with perhaps half a million people, a large municipality by any standards—

"the removal of phosphorous and nitrogen should be included unless it can be demonstrated that the removal will have no effect on the level of eutrophication."

Mr. Michael: Paragraphs (a) and (b) of clause 69(13) cover that issue. My hon. Friend raises important matters, but the Bill already deals with them. They state that when works are required upsteam of the inland bay, the undertakers are required to pay the costs of any works required to meet water quality standards over a period of 20 years. That provision could include phosphate-stripping if the water quality standards required it. The point is that the responsible authorities do not consider that that is necessary at present. The matter, which is serious, has been covered.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and I take his point. I have read the Bill carefully and I know that that is included, but it does not say how to ensure that eutrophication does not occur. I remember that at one time there was talk of a magic barge, which was going to go back and forth across the lagoon and do something to it which would stop algae from growing on and under the surface of the water. I pointed out at that time that I wondered how it could clear other forms of pollution, such as abandoned house doors and kitchen sinks, which daily go past my front window down the River Taff. That was the magic barge, but I have not heard a great deal about it since.

A clear recognition should have been included in the Bill by those who drafted it that the problem of nitrogen and phosphates occurs further upstream and that it is too late—and rather stupid—to deal with the problem once it has been impounded within a barrage. The obvious thing to do is to clean up the rivers first and then talk about how the problem might be dealt with. Even after rivers have been cleaned there will still be natural pollution, as anyone who has studied the problems in the third world knows. For example, in completely remote and uninhabited areas methane becomes a problem in impounded waters. I would be interested to know why the Bill does not contain any detailed accounts of how that problem will be solved.

Mr. Michael: If I may assist my hon. Friend, he referred again to algae growth. The management regime is there to control it. I referred to Bute East dock, and algae growth as a result of nutrients in the water has not been a problem there, so we already have practical evidence. These matters have been discussed with the statutory authorities, which have powers to deal with the issue if necessary. My hon. Friend and I would obviously want to develop and strengthen powers over such environmental matters and I am sure that we would find ourselves in agreement on those matters in general legislation. They are covered, either in the Bill or in the powers of the statutory bodies.

Dr. Howells: If they are covered, I cannot find them. I have to disagree with my hon. Friend about that matter. He draws comparisons with the still water of a dock. That is a fair comparison, because the water comes from a feeder from the River Taff. However, he will have observed, I am sure—as I observe every day that I am in my constituency—that there is an enormous difference between a river which rises and falls by 15 ft or 20 ft according to the amount of rainfall, and a feeder that goes off it into a dock in a tame and controlled way.

In 1989 there were serious problems of algae in——

Mr. Morgan: Perhaps it would assist the House if I mentioned that lorry loads of algal scum had to be removed from Bute East dock and the feeder in the summer of 1989, which was a longish and hottish summer, after about 1 August. Until then the algal growth had been providing rather a good feed for the mullet in the dock and, up to a point, algal growth is beneficial to the environment, as it provides foodstuff for that type of fish. However, after it starts to bloom it becomes an absolute menace and deprives the whole area of oxygen. Lorry loads of the material had to be removed at the insistence of the house dwellers on the new Tarmac housing development at Bute East dock.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend for that information.

Mr. Rogers: I am listening to this discussion, which is vital to the people who live in the area. Does my hon. Friend accept that the argument used by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is very like saying, "Let's have coal pits or pollution everywhere. Don't worry—we'll put in some money to clear it up afterwards"? One should do things logically and resolve the problem of pollution first instead of having to spend huge sums clearing up the environment afterwards. If the barrage created another inch of land for industrial development, there might be some value in it, but it does nothing except create a water vista.

The other point that I shall seek to cover later is the problem of the interface of fresh groundwater, coming from the rivers or the aquifer areas to the north of Cardiff, and the saline intrusion from the sea. The increased salinity of the area will be a substantial problem. In many parts of the country, increased salinity has been the subject of substantial surveys and monitoring by many bodies. I make this criticism of the technical people involved—not only were they late producing their reports, but many of those reports are not well done or even properly finished.

Dr. Howells: I shall listen with interest to my hon. Friend's account of the shortcomings of that part of the Bill, and I agree with the point of his earlier intervention.

I am sure that the Bill's supporters will agree—we cannot disagree on this—that the barrage development is a major project, probably the largest single project ever

[Dr. Howells]

undertaken in Wales. As I have already said, I welcome the development of the bay of which we are discussing one particular aspect tonight.

Mr. Flynn: All south Wales Members have an interest in cleaning up the rivers, some of which have been dead for a century. Is my hon. Friend aware that when I asked the National Rivers Authority and Welsh Water about their programme to clean the rivers to EEC standards, I was informed that there is no programme. The only rivers with a chance of being cleaned in the foreseeable future are those for which barrages are planned.

Dr. Howells: If——

Mr. Flynn: It is true.

Dr. Howells: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) has made that important statement. If what he has said is the case, it is a disgrace. I represent a constituency that does not have an area to be barraged—unless we try to write off all the problems of some of our valleys by sticking dams across their mouths, which I understand was a proposition advanced in the 1930s. Like my hon. Friends, I shall seek some clarification to ensure that those of us whose constituencies may contain a river that does not stand a chance of being barraged at some stage can nevertheless expect it to be cleaned up.

Mr. Flynn: May I offer my hon. Friend some clarification? In the attempt to be brief, I perhaps misled him. My point is that the only schemes for cleaning up rivers are the barrage schemes. Apart from that, I have no hope of and see no programme for—although I am pressing for one for my constituency—cleaning up the rivers regardless of whether barrages are constructed. My hon. Friend seems to be blaming the promoters for the sins of omission of Welsh Water and the National Rivers Authority.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend again for his intervention. He completely misunderstood what I said, which was that one should not draw up such a Bill while the deplorable state of affairs means that the rivers flowing into the barrage will not be properly cleaned.

I have had no indication that early work will be undertaken on either the Taff or the Ely, or on their tributaries, to overcome the problem of raw sewage being pumped into those rivers. That information, therefore, comes as a surprise to me. If it is true, it is extraordinary that the only rivers that will be cleaned up are those which are to barraged because it means that we should all be pressing for barrages—in other words, for the sealing up of rivers which for millions of years have formed our environments and flowed into the seas with an exchange of water that is absolutely vital for our weather systems. We are being asked to agree to something that we find iniquitous simply because we might obtain a promise from the authorities that they might clean up their act on the disposal of sewage. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Rogers: I agree with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) may be misleading the House inadvertently. I have substantially criticised Lord Crickhowell, who is wearing two hats in this matter. One of them is that of chairman of the National Rivers Authority. In fairness to him, sums of money have been allocated, for example, to clean up the Rhondda rivers. That is nothing to do with the Cardiff barrage. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West is preparing his arguments for the Usk barrage and laying the groundwork so that he can convince his constituents that they should support such a barrage proposal in order to have the River Usk cleaned up, but that is not a case for a barrage. The case needs to be far more substantial than that. The National Rivers Authority is providing some money for cleaning up rivers—it is certainly not enough, but it is being provided and it has nothing to do with the Cardiff bay barrage.

Dr. Howells: I thank my hon. Friend. Perhaps I may return to the point that I was making about 10 minutes ago.

Mr. Flynn: I regret intervening so often on this, but as the subject has been raised, I should inform my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that there was a plan to clean up the Usk river by taking the sewage out of it. That was way back in the 1970s when Newport had its own water authority. The plan was ditched when the Newport water authority became part of Welsh Water. Subsequently, the charges for water increased by 2,500 per cent. within a decade and the scheme for cleaning up the river was never implemented. The campaign to implement the scheme has been going on for 20 years and it has nothing to do with the barrages.

We should like to clean up the rivers with or without the barrage, but in south Wales there is no programme or plan to clean up our rivers. Nevertheless, the issue is separate from the barrage. It is a coincidence that the rivers on which a barrage might well be built may be cleaned up. The point made by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) is artificial. He is off target. He ought to complain and campaign for the National Rivers Authority to clean up the rivers. As a by-product of the two planned barrages, the rivers may be cleaned up. That is a different proposition. They will probably be cleaned up before other rivers which are more in need of it.

Dr. Howells: It is rare that I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West but his case is an extraordinary inversion of a simple argument. One should not proceed with a major project such as this, which will suck in large amounts of public money, before first tackling the problem, which my hon. Friend has eloquently described, of the reluctance of what was a public body and a body which is central to cleaning up the rivers of Wales and everywhere else to get on with the job.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Is not the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) rather like saying that the constituency of Pembroke has high unemployment which could be solved by putting a nuclear power station there? That would be to justify the nuclear power station by the high unemployment rather than to tackle the high unemployment head on. Is not that similar to the perverse argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West?

Dr. Howells: It is perverse.

Mr. Flynn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Howells: I shall not give way for the moment. I should like to get on.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) is filibustering.

Dr. Howells: Yes, he is doing a good job of filibustering. If may continue—

Mr. Flynn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Howells: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. To respond to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), I have been chairman or vice-chairman of the Welsh anti-nuclear authority for the past 12 years. His suggestion is entirely absurd.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That has nothing whatever to do with the Chair.

Dr. Howells: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for injecting that note of reality back into the proceedings.

About 15 minutes ago I spoke about the size of the development in financial and physical terms. It is a large development which is addressed by the EEC directive in terms of the kind of information it requested from member states about such developments.

The directive asks member states to provide information on the costs of the programme, giving capital investments and operating costs for the collection, treatment and disposal of municipal waste water. It asks for the identification in sensitive areas as well as less sensitive areas, including short explanations and notes. It asks for a short overview of the actual loads of municipal waste water discharged to fresh water, estuaries, coastal waters and land, and where insufficient data exists estimates should be made using available information.

It is extraordinary that the Bill for the biggest development in Wales, and one which is about impounding water of the type defined precisely in the EEC directive, gives no notion of the cost of cleaning up that water. Never mind about sending the figures to the EEC, they are not even sent as far as Pontypridd. At least, I have not received them and I would like to know why. Why are the costs not contained in the Bill? Why is there no information on the systems that will be used for cleaning up the nitrates, the phosphates, and so on? Is some kind of panacea for all this to be presented suddenly when the last breeze block is put in place on the face of the dam? Will it all fall into place?

To return to the question of nuclear facilities raised by two of my hon. Friends, I am reminded of the false optimism that led people to press on with developments in the belief that somehow the technology to deal with any problems that might arise would suddenly appear from nowhere. It is the result of a faith in the inevitability that science will somehow come up with the answers to whatever iniquity is perpetrated upon the planet.

Anyone who takes a sensible view of this will ask how such problems are to be addressed. I have not got far tonight in listing those problems. I have a couple more to list, including the one that I mentioned earlier about leachates. There are no firm proposals or costings, nor even an idea of a programme, for the works needed upstream on the Taff and Ely rivers to improve permanently the quality of the waters and the treatment of the sewage effluent which currently finds its way into both those rivers. There was talk at one time about the magic barge which would solve everything. I do not know what has happened to it. Perhaps, metaphorically, it has sunk —and good riddance to it, as I have rarely heard a more absurd suggestion.

Nor have I heard any suggestion about what will happen about something that is central to the Cardiff bay development. I refer to the fate of the Ferry road tip, a large landfill site which has long been a source of worry for many people, not only because of the leachates which may at the moment be finding their way into the mud flats which, if the Bill is enacted, will become the bottom of the lagoon. I have already listed some of the problems with leachates and some of the materials which may find their way into our water tables and bodies of water as a result of leachates. However, I understand that the future of the Ferry road tip is still far from clear. The Touche Ross consultancy report, commissioned by Cardiff city council last October in compliance with the Welsh Office request, recommends:

"The future of the Ferry Road site be established as quickly as possible in discussion with Welsh Office and that Committee's previous decision regarding continued tipping be reaffirmed."

There have been discussions in Cardiff city council about constructing some other form of waste disposal in conjunction with the Cardiff bay development corporation that will take some of the waste already in the landfill site. There has been talk about an anaerobic digestion plant. The very title is revolting, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I know that it is late, so I shall not upset your sleep by outlining what happens in anaerobic digestion.

11.15 pm

All the relevant technology is still being pioneered, but there is much talk about how to get bacteria to eat the contents of the Ferry road tip. An anaerobic plant somewhere on the foreshore in Cardiff has been suggested, but little has been said about the possible costs. I note, however, that the Touche Ross report has said that the cost would be about £4·5 million. Who will pay? Will it be the city council or the Cardiff bay development corporation, or will the cost be met by a joint venture? Where will the plant be cited? The people of Grangetown and Butetown should be told.

What will happen to the present tip? Will it be moved? My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is aware that a waste site at Pyle has been mentioned and he is right to be concerned about that.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Stormy Down site has been mentioned, but when that proposal was discussed at the Ogwr borough council some councillors said that they would lie down on the road to prevent any lorry from getting anywhere near the site with waste from the Ferry road tip in Cardiff. There is total opposition to the disposal of that waste in the Ogwr borough.

Dr. Howells: I can understand that opposition. At the best of times landfill sites are not welcome. If one authority attempts to shift a landfill site into another constituency for cosmetic reasons, that is asking for trouble. My hon. Friend's intervention is another example of the difficulties caused by the way in which the Bill has been drawn up. No solutions have been proposed for the central problems. I am not opposed to development, but I am opposed to any development that does not take into account likely problems.

Mr. Rogers: The short-sightedness of the corporation and the local authority was revealed when they held an exhibition in London when the Bill was first presented. At that time they had not even consulted adjacent local authorities. When they were criticised for that by people such as myself, consultation commenced.

My hon. Friend's background is the mining industry and he lives in the valleys. He will remember the traumatic experience to which the valleys of south Wales were subject to aid the developments in Newport at the Llanwern steel site. Our villages were hell holes because of the huge lorries that went through, but we suffered all that because we knew that our tips were being removed. We knew that the blots on the landscape were finally going. We suffered for a good cause—the new steel works at Llanwern.

We shall not have a similar experience with the removal of the Ferry road tip. When the huge lorries start travelling through the Vale of Glamorgan villages to reach Bridgend to dump the waste, there will be civil insurrection in south Wales. It just goes to show that the Bill has been badly conceived.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend draws a good analogy. There is an enormous difference between the case of Llanwern, in which a village was blighted for many years to lay the foundations for an excellent new steelworks, and the fate envisaged for the Ferry road tip in Cardiff.

The Touche Ross report requested by Cardiff city council and drawn up on the recommendation of the Welsh Office says:

"The intentions of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation have affected the waste management planning in Cardiff adversely. Accepting the political reality, the intentions of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation with respect to Ferry Road should be finalised. They feel however that CBDC has grossly underestimated the logistic, environmental, health and safety problems associated with exhuming 2 million cubic metres of waste.

The Consultants have in fact, following informal discussions with the Welsh Office, intimated that the removal of the tip may not now proceed in full."

I can well imagine that not many authorities would relish the prospect of moving 2 million cubic metres of waste —not to mention the feelings of those in the communities through which the waste will be driven. But if the waste is not moved, what will happen to it? If it stays where it is, who will pay for the defences that will have to be constructed to contain the leachate and prevent it from going into the lagoon following the building of a barrage across the river?

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend is citing a substantial criticism of the development corporation by the local authority. During the passage of the Bill, a certain image has been projected—that everything is working perfectly and that the local authority wants the development to take place. Is my hon. Friend now saying that the local authority is criticising the corporation?

Dr. Howells: I am merely saying that page 7 of the Touche Ross report drawn up for Cardiff city council says:

"The intentions of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation have affected the waste management planning in Cardiff adversely."

That is clear enough and that assertion is certainly a blot on the venture's otherwise perfect public copybook.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Are we not in a terrible fix with regard to the Ferry road tip? We dare not leave it there because there is no way of sealing it and there will be leachate problems in the lagoon. On the other hand, we cannot move it because no other local authority will be willing to receive it.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Both bodies are clear about it. That is why a special report was drawn up by Touche Ross and it is presumably why the report has received no publicity until now. The problem is central to the future of the project but it is one about which we do not hear. The promoters have managed the news well. We hear only the good news and never the bad news —even if we often disagree about what constitutes good news and what constitutes bad.

Dr. Marek: Will my hon. Friend consider asking the Minister his views on this important matter? No doubt the Welsh Office, having received the Bill some time ago, will have considered the matter, and Ministers may be able to set our minds at rest on it. The House would be interested if the Minister would intervene, however briefly, to clear up the matter.

Dr. Howells: I shall certainly invite the Minister to intervene, although knowing his reputation—about which I have written elsewhere—for riding out such storms I shall not be surprised if he does not. My hon. Friend has asked an important question; his remarks were certainly not flippant. We should like to know the thinking of the Welsh Office on that and on £500 million or £100 million of public money—the sum seems to vary from week to week.

The consultants also make the following recommendations:

"The status of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation's intentions with respect to Ferry Road should be determined in the near future. Accepting the political realities, if Ferry Road is acquired by CBDC, it should be ensured that adequate compensation for replacement of an equivalent amount of operational waste management capacity is provided."

In other words, the corporation must find another tip.

Anyone who has been following recent events in Taff-Ely will know that the proposal for a landfill site at Penrhos is no easy matter. It is also an enormously expensive matter. It is no longer possible simply to find a hole in the ground and chuck stuff into it, as has been done so often in the past, but there is nothing in the Bill to suggest that the problem even exists.

What are the chances that Cardiff city council will be able to operate a local authority waste-disposal company capable of dealing with the Ferry road tip leachate problem? I do not think that they are very good. I fear that environmental and ecological problems will be forced on us when the tip is removed. For, if it is not removed, I cannot see how the lagoon can possibly go ahead, unless huge modifications are made. Civil engineering works will be needed to ensure that the material in the existing site is contained, and considerable expenditure will be required if an alternative site is to be found. It will no longer be possible to use the Ferry road tip; it is no use damming a river to provide a beautiful stretch of water around which to construct wonderful flats and a marina if behind the flats seagulls are picking over botulism organisms on a rubbish tip.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Did not the development corporation more or less admit the existence of a massive problem by considering the removal of the tip so seriously? If it were possible to seal it to prevent the leachate

problem, the corporation would not have thought of spending millions of pounds to remove it. The barrage can go ahead only if the tip is removed.

Dr. Howells: Indeed. That is the point that I have been trying to make.

I shall end my speech here—I know that everyone will be massively relieved—[HON. MEMBERS: "No, no."]

Mr. Flynn: We have listened fascinated to my hon. Friend's account of all the pollutants that can enter the Taff, but it is difficult for us to judge the worth of his speech. When will he come to the point and tell us the amount of leachate, the amount of eutrophication and the number of organophosphates? Organophosphates, which are minute, have not been mentioned yet.

We know that there is pollution, but if we are to make a judgment we must know whether there is a minute or a massive amount. I have yet to hear any attempt to quantify it in what has, in terms of its length, been a very thorough speech.

Dr. Howells: I have hardly heard a more absurd point in my life. My hon. Friend knows as well as I do—he mentioned it earlier in connection with his constituency—why it is impossible to quantify the pollution. He has made a very cheap point.

As my hon. Friend knows, the funds simply are not available. This applies to my constituency as well as to his. I hope that he will tell his constituents when they find themselves living next to old landfill sites that we have no idea how much leachate is coming out of them, or how much methane is being generated. My hon. Friend is very unwise to make such criticism. If he is a scientist, as he says he is, he will know that any landfill site produces methane and leachate. The work has not been carried out because the money has not been made available. I am extremely surprised at my hon. Friend.

11.30 pm

Dr. Marek: I rather feared that I might not get into this debate either. The amount of leaching is central to the clause. If the Welsh Office and the Minister say nothing, I hope that the Bill's sponser, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who has, of course, looked at the matter in detail, will be able to help us. Perhaps he will tell us how much leaching there will be, whether it will be dangerous and what damage it will cause. How much will have to be spent to clean up, and what will be the recurrent costs? So far no one has been able to give precise answers to those questions.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend makes his point well.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) made an absurd point. Surely it is the responsibility of the promoters to say that there will be no pollution. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West should pay attention to the answer to his question. It is the responsibility of the undertakers to provide the information that he seeks. In fairness to the undertakers, I should say that they have carried out surveys in relation to coliform bacteria concentrations, potential demand, leaching and sewer outfalls. They are trying to identify the problem, but they have not come to any firm conclusion. Because of the problems and figures in some areas, the undertakers have had to draw up theoretical projections. It is fairly significant that all their suggestions seem to be on the safe side.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend answers the point very well. The Touche Ross report concludes that the Welsh Office must call an urgent meeting to establish the intentions of the Cardiff Bay development corporation about the future use of the Ferry road landfill site. That is crucial to enable Cardiff city council to decide whether a waste authority will be viable. What has the Minister to say about the matter? Will the Welsh Office demand a meeting with Cardiff city council and Cardiff Bay development corporation to hear exactly what will happen to the Ferry road tip?

Many hon. Members have spoken about the Ferry road tip. I have spoken at some length, and I began by saying that it is not the only tip that leaches into the rivers that eventually become the Taff and the Ely. There are many such tips. A survey in the past year shows that limited fines apply to the many tips that we already know about. The Bill's promoters should take that on board and should tell us exactly what they intend to do about it. Will the Cardiff Bay development corporation contribute to the cost of putting right those tips? Will it be subject to a levy to make sure that spillages, such as that which occurred in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, do not reach the rivers? That is a perfectly fair burden to place on the corporation because the scheme is about property development and property prices; it is not concerned with the environment. The Bill does not answer these questions, and it is a crying shame and to the detriment of south Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am sure that the entire House will join me in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on his speech. We owe him a debt of gratitude. He has presented a first-class analysis of the problems that will be created and illustrated vividly the difficulties faced by those who represent valley communities. My hon. Friend is a well-respected member of the Select Committee on the Environment, and I am sure that we shall all give full recognition to that fact when we come to weigh his contribution to the debate.

It is worth noting that the amendments are constructive. I hope that that will become clear as the debate unfolds. I hope, too, that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will recognise that the amendments will not defeat the Bill or reduce its effectiveness. All the amendments will strengthen the Bill and make it more acceptable to those who will be directly affected by it.

Dr. Marek: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall, but first I wish briefly to make two points. Having done that, I shall be more than happy to give way to my hon. Friend.

Two features have characterised the debate. First—this is the point on which my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd concluded—we have not received any answers from the promoters. I accept, of course, that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) asked how leaching can be quantified and how the degree of pollution can be assessed, and what can be done to remedy it. He must understand that it is not the responsibility of my hon. Friends and I to produce a scientific analysis. As

[Mr. Davies]

my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) rightly said, that is the direct responsibility of the promoters. They must satisfy the House, and they have failed to do so in that respect.

The second feature that has characterised the debate has been the absence of the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), for a great part of it. The hon. Gentleman has strolled back into the Chamber, I accept, but the Minister of State has been present throughout and has listened attentively. Many of the questions that have been raised can be answered only by the Under-Secretary. The solution of the problem of water pollution in the valleys—that is directly relevant to the new clause because it is the cause of the problem in the bay—rests directly with the Minister. There are powers available to him under the Water Act 1989, if he wants to use them, to take action to lay the necessary orders to prevent the recurrence of the pollution that has emanated from industrial concerns, for example, thus far.

The Minister has every reason to be present in the Chamber. He has even more reason to outline the position of the Welsh Office. It is not good enough for Ministers to sit on the Government Front Bench and do nothing while covertly using the machinery of government to ensure that when the Bill is debated Members come out from under stones or crawl out from the woodwork obediently to vote at the whim of the Government, without hearing one minute of our debates. If the Government are to take the responsibility of bringing Members into their Lobby, they have a responsibility to the House to set out their views on these important issues.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend has made the point extremely well. I was seeking to make the same point in my own way. As my hon. Friend said, the purpose of the amendments is not in any way destructive. Indeed, I believe that their acceptance would prove to be helpful to the Bill. When my hon. Friend said that they would not be destructive, the Under-Secretary of State guffawed in disbelief. He seems to be expressing disbelief even now.

The Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): Absolutely.

Dr. Marek: If he is doing that, he owes it to the House, if he is a man of integrity, to explain why he thinks that the amendments are destructive or otiose. If they are unnecessary in any way and he explains why that is so, I shall not seek to delay the House one moment longer in its consideration of the new clause. The Minister will help the House if he intervenes, after my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has completed his speech, to explain the Government's view.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) for that helpful and constructive intervention.

It is particularly worth placing on the record the wording of new clause 6 about phosphate and nitrate stripping. It states:

"'Before constructing the Barrage, the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate-stripping of the waters of the rivers entering the inland bay and their tributaries in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay.'"

No one could accuse new clause 6 of being a wrecking amendment. It is simply a deliberate attempt to safeguard water quality in the part of south Wales about which we are all so concerned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd recounted some telling and graphic examples of the problems facing the valleys in south Wales and the rivers that drain into the bay. Reference has already been made to the major occurences of pollution and there are some spectacular incidents. However, there is also regular, insidious pollution which drips and washes into the rivers on a daily basis. That is inevitable if we consider the geography, economy and social structure of the valley communities.

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The news that British troops have been sent into northern Iraq is a matter of such importance that a statement should be made to the House. As it appears that we will be continuing our deliberations into the early hours, can it be arranged for the House to consider that important development?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Obviously those on the Treasury Bench will have heard the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). At the moment, no request for a statement has been made to Mr. Speaker's office.

Mr. Davies: Because of the geography of our valley communities there is a conjunction of relatively densely populated settlements with a mix of fairly new industry while at the same time we have the legacy of the 19th century with abandoned mine and coal workings. That mix in an area of high rainfall and steep valley sides will inevitably result in a high level of pollution in our rivers. In addition, we face the problem of the inadequacy of our storm and farm sewers.

Several hon. Members who have spoken tonight have direct experience of living beside rivers. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd made it clear that from where he lives he can see what is coming down the river. I have a similar experience. I live beside the River Rhymney and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West shares my concern about this. I do not want to embarrass you, Madam Deputy Speaker, by describing some of the stuff that comes down the river. However, not all of it is natural material; some of it is man made. Inevitably at times of high rainfall, the river rises and leaves its flood debris in trees on the river bank. When the river subsides, we can see the souvenirs of the night's heavy rain scattered along the river.

If and when the barrage is built, that which is carried down the river at times of high rainfall will be deposited in the bay. That will cause major problems. Our rivers are grossly polluted. They obviously contain high levels of nitrates and phosphates and a great deal of organic material from sewers or in the form of sheep that fall into the rivers, dogs that are killed and thrown in or horses that are washed down river. Those are by no means rare occurrences in our valley communities. All that matter will end up in the bay—*[Interruption.]* It is not unusual to see a horse's leg or head going down the river. Horses fall in or die and are thrown in. Unfortunately, such things

happen regularly. That, together with the microbiological contamination, will reach the lagoon and create a major problem.

In fairness to the promoters, I should point out that they have gone on record as saying that the water quality in the lagoon will be sub-standard. They maintain, however, that the problem can be dealt with. I have read carefully all the documents and the report of the Committee proceedings. I have also listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. Moreover, I have read the reports that have been prepared by and on behalf of the promoters. I am not convinced that they have found a solution to the problem. They say that there will have to be regular patrols round the lagoon to pick up waste matter—the dead dogs and horses, and all the other rubbish.

11.45 pm

I do not mean to be unkind to the city of Cardiff, but I have to say that it is one of the dirtiest cities that I have ever visited. The streets of Cardiff are unclean. However, the suggestion is that after the lagoon is constructed an efficient cleaning system will miraculously appear that will pick up all the detritus. Rather than Cardiff city employees doing the scavenging, it is far more likely that rats and gulls will do it. *[Interruption.]* I am more than happy to give way to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) if he wishes to speak. Doubtless the hon. Gentleman has had a pleasant night out. I do not blame him for that; he is probably very well fed and he has probably had a drink or two. Now he seems to want to take part in the debate. Perhaps he has been sufficiently beguiled by the Government to come along and vote, even though he has not heard the debate. That is up to him. If, however, he wants to participate in it, he should not be provocative. Let me now put on record that the hon. Gentleman is leaving the Chamber with a gracious gesture, which will doubtless be recorded for posterity.

I hope to speak later about birds. My hon. Friends know that I am anxious to secure both a good environment for them and their protection. However, I do not want the gulls to proliferate. They will not be an amenity; they will drive away birds that are attracted to the lagoon and they will not improve living conditions in the vicinity.

The most telling condemnation of the proposal is that the promoters say that no contact sports will be allowed in the bay. We are told that the lagoon will be a powerful incentive to economic development and that it will make a magnificent contribution to Cardiff's environment. No contact with it, however, will be allowed. People will be unable to swim or fish in it, or to windsurf on it. The fear is that if they come into contact with the water it will become so grossly polluted that their health will be endangered.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend has made an important point about the amenities of the lake and of the two fingers that point north out of it. I am not sure that he is right about the fishing. Fishermen tend to undo knots with their teeth, which would be dangerous, but fishing is not a dangerous practice. It is not a contact sport, unless one falls into the water.

There are differences of opinion between the city of Cardiff environmental health officer, who advises against the practice of dragon boat racing, and the county and, I think, Tarmac plc, which owns the Bute East dock. Dragon boat racing is a form of Maori giant canoe racing, the vessels being not large enough to overturn. Unlike swimming, this is not a true contact sport, but it does involve splashing. Vigorous effort and passing can result in water coming into contact with lips. People making maximum physical effort tend to lick their lips, and even that is sufficient to result in a warning from the Cardiff city environmental health officer that people taking part in such sport in this location do so at serious health risk.

Mr. Davies: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's useful and interesting intervention.

The implications for fishing are unclear. I have in front of me a copy of a *Sunday Times* report on the algae pollution incident at Rutland Water last year. Although I want to return to that matter, I shall allow myself to be distracted for a moment from the main thrust of my argument in order to refer to this report, which deals with the studies that were carried out after the incident. Apparently, a sales engineer from Great Glen, Leicestershire, spent two weeks in bed because of symptoms that included nausea, headaches and aching and swollen limbs. Those symptoms developed after the man had come into contact with algae while fishing at the reservoir in August. I have no doubt that, if my worst fears are realised, problems will arise because of the practice of biting on shot—of course, fishermen cannot now use lead shot—and contamination in the course of eating, drinking and touching the face.

If the amendments are not accepted, we shall be faced with four particularly unacceptable phenomena in the bay. First, the lake itself will be unsightly, and, because of the high level of microbiological contamination and decomposing organic material, unpleasant odours will come from it. Secondly, the decomposing organic matter and the high incidence of rats and gulls will constitute a direct health hazard. Rats, of course, carry leptospirosis, and gulls are invariably heavily contaminated with salmonella. Several hon. Members are laughing. Let them understand that this is a major problem. Thirdly, there will be the problem of midges. No doubt this, too, will be a subject of great amusement to some hon. Members, but the promoters of the Bill recognise that it will be a major difficulty.

Let me put on the record a report in the *South Wales Echo*, which is a regular and enthusiastic advocate of this Bill. It carries this story:

"Swarms of midges could be a problem if the Cardiff Bay barrage goes ahead and a huge lake is formed, members of the House of Lords were told. For the first few years of the lake's existence the midges could coat washing on clothes lines and windows in the area near the lake, a scientist told a Select Committee. Some people could also develop allergies to the midges, even if they were dead, said Mr. Morlais Owen, the chief scientist of Welsh Water. He was giving evidence of water quality and other factors relating to the rivers Taff and Ely, which will be held back by the barrage. Mr. Owen said that the condition of the Taff had improved considerably during recent years, and Welsh Water were insisting on stringent conditions to safeguard the fish which had returned to the river."

He supported the barrage and advocated the highest standards, but he recognised that there will be a considerable problem. There will be not a health hazard but an annoyance.

We are being asked to authorise expenditure of more than £100 million to create the lake because it will be attractive to property developers. However, we are told

[Mr. Davies]

that for three months of the year people will not be able to go near it because of midges. It will not be a great attraction to anybody.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Global warming could become a worse problem. Malarial mosquitos were found on the Isle of Sheppey for quite a long time after servicemen had disembarked there at the end of the second world war. It is conceivable that, with global warming and international air travel, this large lagoon could attract the malarial mosquito to south Wales—perhaps not in this decade but in decades to come.

Mr. Davies: That is an appropriate intervention, but I do not want to be led too far into the future. My hon. Friend suggests that an atmospheric change in the bay could affect its insect life.

I was going to mention global warming in connection with blue-green algae. The rate of growth of algae, causing the problem of toxic poisoning, is directly controlled by, among other things, air temperature. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is right: if temperatures change by even a half a degree or a degree, we shall have no way of quantifying its impact on the growth of blue-green algae.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend referred to the evidence given by Mr. Morlais Owen, which was not expected to be hostile. In cross-examination, it was put to him:

"With two rivers discharging into the lake with pollutants in them—probably low oxygen levels—probably full of phosphates, algae, extensive rubbish tips nearby, storm water flows as sewage heavy metal pollution, midges and problems with micro-biological quality . . . 'are you familiar with a case like that anywhere?' Answer, No. Obviously I would have to say I know of no other lake which has been created in such circumstances."

Mr. Davies: That graphically shows what a leap in the dark we are being asked to take.

Mr. Morgan: A pig in a poke.

Mr. Davies: No, the pig comes down the river with the horses.

I was tempted earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) to refer to the dangers to fishermen. I referred to the problem that occurred in 1989. I refer briefly to an article in *The Sunday Times* which is relevant. It mentions a report by Anglia Water, which revealed that

"water had been piped to customers in parts of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire containing a substance suspected of being microsistine",

which is a toxin. That toxin results from the decomposition of blue-green algae. Such water will be used in the lake, around which people will walk with their children or dogs or in which they will fish.

Anglia Water's conclusion that there was nevertheless no threat to health was challenged this weekend by the scientists on whose research the report was based.

"Professor Ian Falconer of the university of New England in Australia found that the doses of the toxin in highly concentrated forms promoted the growth of tumours in mice. He said, 'The general flavour of the Anglia report is playing the incident down.' Dozens of people complained of nausea, stomach ache, diarrhoea and skin rashes after the blue-green algae infested reservoirs at Grafham in Cambrigeshire and Rutland Water in Leicestershire in October and November."

Those are precisely the blue-green algae which it is recognised by everybody, including the promoters, will contaminate the waters of the bay.

12 midnight

The article continued:

"Similarly dangerous levels of the algae have been found already this year in at least nine lakes and reservoirs in the midlands and southern England. The toxin in blue-green algae can sometimes cause liver damage in humans and kill birds, animals and fish. The National Rivers Authority, Britain's water pollution watchdog, yesterday warned that the algae posed a risk to anglers, water sports enthusiasts and other people using affected water for recreation."

That was the official warning given by the National Rivers Authority to the public about the dangers of being adjacent to or coming into contact with water contaminated by blue-green algae—precisely the conditions which, on the promoters' own admission, will apply in the Cardiff bay lagoon. It makes one wonder what the logic is behind the proposal.

The article continued:

"Dozens of other stretches of water have also been found to contain smaller amounts of the algae which is fed by sewage, farm pollution and natural chemicals reacting with sunlight. Anglia argued that its report's conclusions were based on the advice of Government scientists and John Howell, a toxicologist at the water research centre, an independent company funded by the industry. He had decided that there was no risk to human health because research by Falconer had shown no effect on mice given 1,000 times the doses that might have ended up in drinking water. In fact, Falconer found that doses that concentrated had killed many of the experimental animals and the lowest dose he has ever used, still 200 times higher than in the drinking water, caused an increase in general illness in the mice."

That was the incident which led to all the problems of illness and to the deaths of domestic and farm animals when they came into contact with water. They did not necessarily drink large amounts of water, but only came into contact with it. It was the incident which led to the angler to whom I referred earlier being struck down with various ailments.

It is not as though the NRA is not aware of the problem. I refer briefly to another report, again in the *South Wales Echo*, last November:

"Action to fight the growth of poisonous algae which infected eight lakes in South Wales this year has been announced by river watchdogs."

The final sentence was:

"In their first report on blue-green algal blooms which are thought to have killed 20 sheep, 15 dogs and put two soldiers in hospital in Wales in 1989 the National Rivers Authority makes a series of recommendations."

None of the recommendations is capable of being implemented in the circumstances of Cardiff bay. Even if they could be implemented, they would be an enormous continuing burden on the ratepayers of Cardiff and South Glamorgan. Provision is made by the promoters for the interim period, but what will happen then? Who will pick up the tab of ensuring that the lake in the middle of Cardiff, which will be useless, will be monitored, treated and controlled in such a way as not to make it fit for people to drink or fish in but merely to walk alongside and exercise their pets? It is a frightening prospect.

An interesting specialist report from the National Rivers Authority, dealing with toxic blue-green algae, was published last September. It contains issues that are relevant to the new clauses.

Mr. Rowlands: In the evidence given about the need to monitor, the same witness, Mr. Owen, was asked:

"the lake will have to rely, will it not, on extensive control measures for many years if not in perpetuity, to ensure that there is adequate quality of water and the environment".

He answered:

"that is correct, yes".

Mr. Davies: The more we consider the issue of water quality, the more we realise how wrong the Cardiff Bay development corporation has been in its assessment.

It is worth reflecting for a moment on the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda, who is not here at present, raised. We are not talking about the construction of a barrage that will generate power, assist communication across the bay, create a water reservoir or a body of water that will be of general use to the population for recreation, sporting or relaxed leisure purposes. We are told that the barrage is necessary to pond back the waters to enhance Cardiff's environment so that it will be attractive to property developers who will build high-tech industry or yuppie housing.

The promoters have made a monumental mistake. If they think that a reservoir—to disguise it for a moment—which will not be drinkable, and in which one will not be able to play or fish because it will be riddled with pollution, fly ridden, attractive to vermin, will give off odours, be covered in the summer by blue-green algae and contain deadly toxins, will attract people to invest in high-tech industries or build yuppie houses, it makes me wonder what sort of people they think will come. The industrialists whom I try to talk into coming to my constituency would not be attracted by that prospect.

I shall return to the report of the National Rivers Authority on toxic blue-green algae, published in September 1990. I want to develop that subject because, if the other matters are inconvenient, blue-green algae and the toxins that they produce are matters of life and death, and positive hazards to human health.

The report's introduction contains a brief summary, which is worth putting on record because I know that my hon. Friends will appreciate the definitions that it contains. It starts:

"Blue-green algae are organisms with some properties characteristic of both bacteria and algae. They are capable of photosynthesis and the pigment required for this process often gives them a blue-green colour. Many species of blue-green algae have the ability to fix gaseous nitrogen and, under suitable physical and chemical conditions"—

the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) when he referred to global warming—

"particularly in still waters"—

which is precisely what we shall have in the barrage—

"populations may grow to extremely high densities and, under certain circumstances, a scum if algae will form on the surface which can accumulate. These algae are also known to produce chemicals which can be toxic to mammals, including man."

This will be the attractive lake that will be created by the expenditure of £150 million of public money.

The report continues by referring to the problems of Rutland Water, and I do not want to develop that theme because I have already mentioned it. However, I shall briefly consider the factors that affect the incidence of blooms. You will be fascinated to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the blooms occur in the late summer when the temperature conditions are such that the algae break down, giving rise to the toxins. They grow

" relatively slowly; but a long period of stable weather, giving a constant physical (hydraulic) environment, is therefore required for large populations to develop. Within this constraint, the temperature and the nutrients available will determine the population size which may be achieved if good growth conditions persist. In most places in southern and eastern England"—

this report was referring to England but for our purposes it applies equally to Wales as the conditions are exactly the same there—

"nutrient availability is more than adequate and grazing by zooplankton is usually minimal, thus blue-green algae normally become dominant in the algal community in mid to late summer."

Those are precisely the conditions that would be created within the barrage as a result of the drainage factors that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd mentioned. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West said that those problems had already been experienced.

Mr. Morgan: I have not spoken about that yet.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West said in an earlier intervention that those were precisely the problems that had given rise to numerous complaints by residents of Cardiff in the big dock development.

You will be pleased to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall now skip a few pages of this report to come to the matters that are directly relevant to new clause 5. It says:

"About 25 species of blue-green algae have been implicated in poisoning incidents. Confirmation that algae can produce toxins is a difficult and lengthy process . . . The potential toxicity of a bloom or scum cannot be determined by its appearance odour, texture or any other simple feature."

We are creating a time bomb, the toxicity of which cannot be determined by anyone without recourse to detailed physical or scientific examination. Blooms capable of producing toxins have been reported from all over the world, including many European countries, and up to 75 per cent. of all such algae tested have been found to produce toxins.

The important and damning point is that:

"The toxicity of a single bloom, however, may fluctuate rapidly both in time and in space."

The conclusion that can be drawn from that is that, whatever the algae—we will not know which species it is—it may well be producing highly toxic material. No one will be able to tell because there will be no physical manifestation of the quality of the algae. It will not smell or look a particular colour and it may vary in terms of time and space.

We are told that this development will be attractive to all the yuppies who are going to move into Cardiff bay—pull the other one.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes a very good case, but I wonder if there is perhaps a large sluice gate in the barrage which could be opened at low tide to let out everything into the Severn. That would get rid of the algae, the dead horses and all the sewage.

Mr. Davies: That is a serious matter and my hon. Friend does the development corporation a disservice in mocking it because it recognises the problem and has studied ways to combat it. I know of two ways that it has considered, and I understand that one is still on the cards. The first was to allow an ingress of salt water. The belief was that, when the salt water mixed with the fresh water, the biological conditions would change, and that would kill the blooms.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The salt does one's throat good when one gargles.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

However, the flaw in that solution is that the salt water is heavier than the fresh water in the lagoon——

Mr. Griffiths: Algae do not gargle.

12.15 am

Mr. Davies: As my hon. Friend says, algae do not gargle. Furthermore, as the necessary mixing of the waters would not occur, that idea was put to one side.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is desperately anxious to find a solution to the problem and may confirm that the current solution to the problem of algae growth is thought to be something like a giant jacuzzi, in the belief that if the oxygen content of the waters in the bay can be altered, that will create conditions in which the algae cannot survive. The current idea seems to be to have a giant oxygenating plant which would have to be turned on at regular intervals, and which could reinvigorate the whole lagoon. You can therefore understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why people will not be allowed to swim in it.

Mr. Morgan: Perhaps it would help the House to know that page 36 of the Bill refers to the necessity of removing algal scum. It is not my hon. Friends and I who have introduced this algae fixation; it is the promoters, who have signed an agreement with the National Rivers Authority involving a wide variety of procedures, including the oxygenating equipment that my hon. Friend has mentioned and a giant algae hoover plant which will suck blooms of algae out of——

Mr. Win Griffiths: I thought that the hoover plant was in Merthyr.

Mr. Morgan: Well, it may involve an order for converting a hoover—I do not know. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has absented himself from the Chamber for that reason.

However, there is no mention of what will be done with the algae once it has been sucked out of the lake. It would fall under the definition of "sewage sludge" and there is nothing in the reference on page 36 to the removal of algal scum to tell us what will be done with that algal scum. Following the municipal waste water directive that has been mentioned, that scum cannot be dumped at sea or piped out to sea. Does my hon. Friend agree that we want more clarification on this point?

Mr. Davies: Yes; and, more importantly, so does the National Rivers Authority.

You will be delighted to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that brings me almost to my concluding point—

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall happily give way to my hon. Friend as I know that he does not want to end the debate too soon, but perhaps I can finish my sentence first.

The NRA recognises that there is a problem and has suggested ways in which blue-green algae can be controlled in the longer term. Before I develop that argument, which is directly relevant to the new clause, I happily give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth on the assurance that he will not seek to move the closure if I sit down.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend can be satisfied that I am merely rising to try to help him. The point that I made earlier applies equally to his current argument about these serious and important matters. The maintenance of water quality standards at the disposal site is dealt with by the NRA which, under its statutory procedures, must satisfy itself that these matters are dealt with satisfactorily. Those requirements are included in the Bill, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, West said. Interesting though these technical matters are, the Bill is satisfactory as it stands at the moment.

Mr. Davies. I understand that that is the promoters' response, but if we pass the Bill, we are allowing through legislation which has enormous environmental consequences that are worthy of more detailed debate, and which will allow expenditure of £150 million or £200 million of public money—or more—in pursuance of the idea that Cardiff can be regenerated by the lake. That is what this is about. We are now told that the main flaw in the technical arguments and the main problem of pollution will be dealt with at some unspecified time in the future and by some unspecified means.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: We must take it on trust.

Mr. Davies: Exactly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) says, we are expected to take it on trust. I am not prepared to take it on trust. I might be satisfied on this point if the National Rivers Authority said that it would implement A, B and C, how much it would cost and that that would bring about a solution to the problem. If that was on offer, I would be prepared to withdraw the new clause, as I am sure all my hon. Friends would be. But that is not on offer, so I am not prepared to accept the proposal.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Pike *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). I know that you will be impressed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I know that it is my hon. Friend from Burnley when I am not even looking at him. However, I know that he is there. I can sense his presence. I know that he has a valuable contribution to make to the debate and I shall happily give way to him. As I am sure that he recognises, this is essentially a matter involving us in Wales, so I shall give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend may be asking for the impossible when he says that he wants firm undertakings from the National Rivers Authority. The NRA may think of itself as god-like, but it is not a god. It cannot control the enormous problems that exist in estuarial areas. There is a mixing of water in such areas as a result of the interchange of sea water and fresh water, which vary substantially in their organic and inorganic content and relative salinity. There is almost a natural jacuzzi effect which gives rise to an enormous concentration of organic life at river mouths. That would be denied by the construction of a barrage. As a result of the accumulation of materials when it passes over and through the ground eventually to reach an estuary, fresh water probably has 10 times more organic material in it than sea water. That shows the continually compounding and evolving

problems that would occur behind an enclosed area. The hon. Members for Newport, West and for Cardiff, South and Penarth may snigger at that, but, as my hon. Friends have said, the barrage could be a time bomb for the people living in the area.

Mr. Davies: That is a telling point. However, I want to refer directly to new clauses 6 and 8 so I shall not be led down the path that my hon. Friend signals.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend will know that I was on the Environment Select Committee until six months ago and that I have always been a strong supporter of the National Rivers Authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) referred to the powers that the NRA had to deal with the specific points that have been made. I wonder whether he is aware that on more than one occasion the NRA has said that it does not have all the powers that it should have to carry out its functions and sometimes has to use persuasion. On other matters, it does not necessarily have all the resources that it needs to carry out the duties laid upon it by the Water Act 1989.

Mr. Davies: I have to confess that I did not know that. To use a term which I understand is now acceptable in the better political circles in this country, I am absolutely gobsmacked to hear that. No doubt that point will be developed.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I am desperately trying to bring my speech to a conclusion, but I know that my hon. Friend wants to develop this point. As he is in charge of the Bill, of course I have to give way to him.

Mr. Michael: I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) was not present when I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd to say that there were matters on which we agreed that we should seek improvements in general legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd put his finger on one such matter, but it is not one for the Bill.

Mr. Davies: Clearly, we are all united on that matter. I look forward to the day, in the not-too-distant future, when my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, together with myself and my hon. Friends the Members for Pontypridd and for Burnley, will be members of a Standing Committee pushing through legislation introduced by a Labour Government. In the meantime, let me return to the NRA report of last year.

Hon. Members will be pleased to know that there are methods of dealing with blue-green algae in the longer term. The report says:

"Blue-green algae in reservoirs and lakes may be controlled by direct and mostly non-selective algicidal techniques or by the artificial enhancement of natural selection through physical, chemical and biological methods. However, the use of algicidal techniques is not considered advisable because toxins may be released into the water during cell breakdown. Enhanced natural controls may be effective, but only under certain conditions."

"Enhanced natural controls" means some form of bio-engineering, which opens up the prospect of the Cardiff Bay development corporation setting up a system for genetically manipulating the blue-green algae, injecting them artifically into the lake and, by a process of natural selection, bringing about a clearance of the blue-green algae. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West is looking a little bemused at that suggestion. When the Cardiff Bay development corporation suggests that the manipulation of the genetic structure of the blue-green algae will be the solution to the problems of the bay, I will be satisfied that it has finally given up.

Mr. Morgan: Further to my hon. Friend's gob being figuratively smacked by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), and mine in turn by the idea that, in order to provide the water quality that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Panarth (Mr. Michael) and I want, both of us having a riparian constituency interest in the lake, algae can be genetically engineered to self-destruct at the right moment, is that the algal equivalent of pigs flying?

Mr. Davies: I think that that is a rhetorical question.

Before you remind me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am dealing with new clause 6 which refers to phosphate and nitrate stripping. I am referring particularly to phospate stripping because the report goes on to say:

"Reducing phosphorous availability would be effective but even total control of point sources is likely to leave diffuse sources which may be adequate for blue-green algal bloom production."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd said earlier, that means that although it may well be possible to pinpoint, and deal with, particularly concentrated areas of pollution—there is no suggestion that the Bill will deal with them—there would still be the regular routine leaching or seeping into water courses and into the bay of waters containing phosphates.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you have any information about reports that the French and the Americans have now accepted the Prime Minister's proposals to bring immediate help to the Kurds? If those reports are true——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): No, I have not heard anything about that at all.

Mr. Nicholls: Would it be possible, through the usual channels, for the Foreign Secretary to come along and give that information to the House because it would be the most welcome news?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Doubtless that will be passed on.

Mr. Davies: The report says:

"The control of diffuse sources is much more difficult and would still leave the previously introduced phosphorous within lake and reservoir muds being available for several years."

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) about the immediate need for action, but even if that were to happen and phosphate pollution ceased now, residual phosphate pollution of the muds will continue for five years or more.

12.30 pm

The report states:

"Permanent destratification methods are likely to depress the growth of blue-green algae in reservoirs indefinitely, but only if the mixed depth considerably exceeds the depth which sustains algal growth."

That will not be feasible in terms of the barrage. The report continues:

"Intermittent destratification would be subject to similar conditions and whilst it could depress the growth of all major algae it is a technique untried on the full reservoir scale."

So much for that.

The report then goes on to detail research and development, and certainly that is the only way in which a solution will be found. It states:

"Research and development in relation to blue-green algae blooms and their toxins fall into three broad areas: those relating to the formation and control of blue-green algal blooms, research specifically related to the toxins that they produce and research into the effect of the toxins. A number of possible methods for controlling algal populations have been suggested in the report, all of which require improvements or basic research before they could be described as being effective."

That is the essence of the problem. The NRA, after studying the most recent research, has concluded emphatically that more research needs to be done before an effective solution to the problem is found.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I have listened with interest to the discussion about the way in which the problem must be tackled. The need for more research has been outlined in the NRA report. Does the NRA venture to suggest a time scale in which the problem might be dealt with? If the barrage went ahead before a solution to the problem of the algae had been found, how many years would people have to suffer the possibility of toxin poisoning and goodness knows what else?

Mr. Davies: No time scale was offered in the NRA report, but it discussed not only improving existing techniques for control but basic research. We are talking not about a scheme that already exists but needs fine-tuning, but about basic research.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend is right that we are still talking about research rather than any practical prospect of being able to choke the sources of nutrients through sewage that can lead to highly eutrophic water and the right conditions for blooms. If there was any evidence in the Bill or in protective clauses signed by Welsh Water and the NRA that they had a solution to excess nutrients arising from sewage flowing into the waters of the bay, that would be fine; we could do without some of the airy-fairy ideas about genetically engineered algae. However, no whit of an approach has been made to solve the problem of storm sewer overflows that bring additional sewage into the rivers that feed into the lake.

Phosphate and nitrate stripping is specifically covered by another of our new clauses because the two Cilfynydd sewerage works that drain the Cynon valley and the upper Taff—Aberdare, Merthyr and so on—will continue to provide treated sewage in the future. It does not contain any solids and it is suitably clean for a flowing river, but that treated sewage will come down the river. We know that, in the summer, half the flow in the river Ely and one third of that in the river Taff is treated sewage. That is what gives the rivers the peculiarly pungent smell that one experiences in July and August when walking along their banks. No solution to the problem has so far been provided.

Mr. Davies: It is clear from my hon. Friend's intervention that we all agree that the problem has three dimensions—or, at least, three areas that require action. First, there is the problem of the existing sewer outfalls and the need to ensure that the controlled effluent is properly treated. Secondly, we need to recognise that, even if we achieved that now, there would still be a problem in the lagoon and a need to find some way of treating not only the blue-green algae but the toxins. I fear that the third matter—the leaching into the river of pollutants from the domestic areas of our valleys—has not received adequate attention. I refer, for example, to leaching from Berw road in Pontypridd and from the settlements right across the Taff and Ely river valleys. There is an enormous amount of casual spillage and pollution of all sorts goes into the rivers. Even if we tackle the problem of the existing sewer outfalls, that problem will remain. Action is needed on all three fronts.

The section of the report dealing with research and development concludes:

"Little is known about the environmental behaviour and fate of the toxins produced by blue-green algae."

In other words, even if we could deal with the problem of blue-green algae, we would still know little about the toxins themselves. The report says:

"Better analytical techniques, toxicity testing methods and reference collection material are needed, as is research to determine the mechanism used by the algae for, and the effect of environmental controls on, toxin production."

In its latest updated report, the National Rivers Authority, which has specific responsibility for the problem, concludes that not enough is known about the toxins produced by the algae. What we do know, however, is that if one comes into casual contact with them, one is likely to suffer sickness and diarrhoea and all the other ailments that we have described and that if one's dog or stock go near the water, they will die. We may not know the precise mechanisms involved but we certainly know that the toxins can create the most difficult problems.

The debate that we have just had—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I am not suggesting for one moment that we are concluding the debate. The debate thus far has shown——

Mr. Flynn: More.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is encouraging us to say more, but I know that some of my hon. Friends wish to make brief speeches of their own and that is why I am anxious to bring my brief contribution to a close.

It is clear that there is enormous doubt about the wisdom of building the barrage purely on the grounds of the quality of the water that will be impounded in the lagoon. We have made it clear beyond any doubt that people will not be able to swim or fish in it. They will not be able to touch it or surf on it. It is doubtful whether the dragon races will be able to be held. For much of the year, rather than being an attraction or a benefit to the city of Cardiff, the lagoon will be a disbenefit. If anything is guaranteed to convince us that the Bill deserves to fail, it is the certain knowledge that if it proceeds we shall be creating a monster that will be very difficult to control.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I rise to speak succinctly and in an impassioned fashion. I say that because I am sure that, at this time in the morning, the House is more likely to be moved by the crisp logic of Russell, Wittgenstein and Professor Ayer than by the beautiful language of the romantic poets which I normally use.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), who moved the Second Reading of the new clause, spoke lucidly, quietly and in devastating and impressive fashion. At one stage he paused and invited the

Minister to intervene: he wanted to know whether the Minister, given his specialist knowledge and advice, was prepared to say how much or how little pollution would end up in the lagoon that would be protected by the barrage. The Minister—who, for the purposes of the Bill, is clearly trying to turn silence into an art form—said nothing. I am not sure whether he has been struck dumb, or whether he has been converted to the old German proverb "Schweigen ist geld." I have always believed less that silence is golden than that, all too often, it is a mask for ignorance: certainly that is what Welsh people believe about the Minister, from Cardiff to Tenby and from Haverfordwest to Meinclochog.

At another point, one of the Bill's supporters asked my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd whether he could quantify the pollution that would end up in the lagoon. That is taking things a bit too far; with respect to my hon. Friend, it is a bit cheeky. He is relatively new to the House and may not know much about our procedures, but I am sure that he knows—no doubt he had his tongue in his cheek—that when hon. Members sponsor and speak in support of a Bill with such enormous implications, the burden of proof must be placed on them. It is their responsibility to reveal the damage, or the limits of the damage, that the Bill will cause. It is rather sad that, in this instance, the sponsors have not done their homework and given us that information.

I fear that, if we pass the Bill without the new clause and those grouped with it, rather than champagne dribbling into the valleys because of its economic advantages, poison will dribble into the sea and will then be washed back towards the valleys. I fear that environmental damage will prevent the natural toxic disintegration of nitrates and phosphates that might occur if the barrage were not built.

The sponsors say that the Secretary of State and the National Rivers Authority have all the powers that they need to get rid of the pollution. I must ask them not to allow their enthusiasm to be overrun by their naivety. They must know that, when there are conflicts between commerce and the environment, insidious, unspoken forces often prevent both the NRA and the Secretary of State from doing what they should do—and that is assuming, which I do not, that in this case they have the powers to make effective what they want to do.

Some 20 years ago I worked in what was then the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, where I dealt with planning appeals. Sometimes I passed them on to the Minister, but sometimes I was the last port of call and the writ of Sedgemore would run: I would make the decision. When I see a new clause like this—I do not want to discuss private Bill procedure; we are using it in any event—I ask myself what I would have done had I been faced with a planning application and one of the objectors had come up with this proposal and wanted to attach it to the application as a condition. I would have said to those who were appealing, "There is no chance on earth that I will grant your application unless the new clauses are included." The sooner that the sponsors say that they are prepared to accept them, the sooner we can move on.

Mr. Alan Williams: I wish to make two comments about the proposed new clauses. I congratulate hon. Members on their lengthy, detailed and expert contributions. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) spoke about all the new clauses in the group and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) concentrated on the one in which he is especially interested, which is new clause 6 on phosphate and nitrate stripping.

12.45 am

My first detailed knowledge of the Cardiff barrage came from a film about the proposal made in 1988 or 1989 by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The two main arguments advanced in that film dealt with the proposal's effect on wildlife, the wading birds, and the danger of eutrophication in the new bay from nitrates and phosphates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd estimated that about 500,000 people live in the Taff and Ely valleys, the valleys of the rivers that feed the Ely and the Rhondda valley. It is the most densely populated area in Wales and, apart from London, one of the most densely populated areas in Great Britain. It is a fact of life that all those people produce sewage which, even when it is properly treated, leaves nitrates and phosphates, and those chemicals are found in the Taff and the Ely. Nitrates and phosphates would be trapped behind the proposed barrage, creating an ideal environment for eutrophication.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) asked for figures and was told that it is up to the Bill's sponsors to produce them. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd spoke about 3 million cu m of rubbish in the Ferry road tip. *[Interruption.]* I have seen quoted a figure of 3 million tonnes of phosphates. About 1,000 tonnes of phosphates from sewage come down the Taff and Ely every year. There is another 1,000 tonnes from the use of fertilisers and about 500 tonnes from detergents. There is a danger that the bay will have a eutrophied environment, certainly in the summer.

Nitrates and phosphates are fertilisers and, in warm weather, they cause plants to multiply. There is no nitrate or phosphate in the open ocean and there is therefore little plant life there because it has to depend on the availability of other nutrients. In an ideal environment there is always a danger of eutrophication. New clause 6 asks the undertakers to publish a plan showing how they will carry out phosphate and nitrate stripping should that prove necessary. Perhaps in the first three to five years there will be no serious problem, but it is probable rather than possible that in future there will be a serious problem of phosphates and nitrates. What will the undertakers do to remove those chemicals? Their removal calls for expensive technologies, the cost of which I shall deal with later.

It has been known for 10 or 20 years, for example, that eutrophication is a serious problem in the Norfolk Broads. The *Observer* reported last year that the Nature Conservancy Council has found that the Broads had lost their rare plant life because of pollution and that they contained little more than algae and bacteria. When there is an algal bloom, the dead algae use up a great deal of oxygen. That means that the oxygen concentration goes through peaks and troughs in a 24-hour cycle. During the middle of the day there may be plenty of oxygen, but in the middle of the night the dead algae will consume a lot of oxygen. That has a knock-on effect on all animal life and fish in the water. Serious problems that are the result of high phosphate concentrations in Lake Erie have been well documented for the past 20 or 30 years.

It has been suggested on several occasions during the debate that there are solutions to the algae part of the giant hoover effect, as described by my hon. Friend the Member

for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). It has been said that there may be a technological fix to the problem, but in so many technologies we are a bit too clever by half. For example, the River Colorado is an environmental disaster in many ways. An episode of "Horizon" about 10 or 15 years ago was entitled, "Where did the Colorado go?" I am sure that the House knows that the River Colorado no longer reaches the sea; it ends in a desert in Mexico. That is because along its length there over 100 reservoirs, the waters of which are used by farmers for irrigation. There is massive evaporation. The spreading of water over large areas of land greatly accelerates natural evaporation, and as the river flows from America into Mexico there is much less water than that which nature intended. It does not reach the——

Mr. Michael *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 97, Noes 15.

Division No. 116] **[12.52 am**

AYES

Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Murphy, Paul
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Michael and
Mr. Gwilym Jones.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Marek, Dr John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Rogers, Allan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Kim Howells and
Mr. Ted Rowlands.

Whereupon MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for Closure).*

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Government have lost this vote very heavily—and I use the words "the Government" advisedly. At the beginning of the debate we heard a point of order concerning the Rt. Hon. David Hunt, the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members are not referred to by name; they are referred to by constituency.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State for Wales wrote to all his Government colleagues, saying:

"Because of the conventions on private Bills"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was in the House when this matter was raised some hours ago. I doubt very much whether I can add to what was said by the Chair on that occasion.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you have received from any member of the Government a request for permission to make a statement to explain the mess. It appears that the Government have collapsed in chaos. As you, Sir, have said, the question of the letter from the Secretary of State for Wales was raised earlier today. In effect, that letter imposed a semi-official Whip. The Government cannot sustain a closure motion, and are clearly in disarray.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have received no such request.

Mr. Morgan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that we find ourselves in an unprecedented situation. At least half the payroll vote is unavailable, despite——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not in an unprecedented situation at all. We have had a Division, the result of the Division has been announced, and we shall now resume the debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is just conceivable that, earlier this evening, you saw the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) explain on television that the Government are in a state of collapse. The right hon. Gentleman has been on the box about three times, pointing out that there are saboteurs in the Tory party. He has taken the rebels home, and has left the Government without the necessary 100 supporters. He has turned them into a rabble.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Earlier I was speaking in support of new clause 6 and phosphate and nitrate stripping. Eutrophication may occur a few years after construction of the barrage. If so, the waters that feed it will have to be stripped of nitrates and phosphates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) spoke impressively about toxic algae, with which we have had considerable problems in the past two years. There was an incident two years ago at Rutland water, where dogs and sheep died simply from drinking the water. Last year, there were appalling problems along the north-east coast.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise to my hon. Friend for intervening, but some of us have been in the Chamber for——

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Too long.

Mr. Davies: That illustrates the point that I want to make. Some hon. Members have been present since the start of this business. The Bill is of much concern to our constituents. We wish to debate it and listen to other points of view. Will you look at the rabble on the Conservative Benches? They are engaged in a deliberate campaign against my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) of barracking or trying to disrupt his speech. *[Interruption.]* They are at it again. Will you ensure the same order and good manners that we had before that crowd came into the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that hon. Members heard what the hon. Gentleman said and will respond to it.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As people are coming in here half-sozzled, would not it be a good idea for you to order the bars to be closed?

Mr. Morgan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I seek your guidance? I have the distinct impression that this debate is becoming impossible because of the noise that is emanating from the Conservative Benches——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It seems that the noise is coming equally from both sides of the House, and it is unacceptable from either side. I very much hope that the normal courtesies that are extended to any hon. Member will be observed.

Mr. Williams: I am finding it quite difficult to continue with so many interruptions. The vote was one thing, but the continual chatter makes it difficult to discuss expenditure of hundreds of millions of pounds of public money.

Dr. Marek: The vote showed that the House believes that this important Bill should not be hurried and that the new clauses are important. I am not sure that I shall be able to contribute to the debate before the second closure, so will my hon. Friend appeal to the Under-Secretary of State to give us the view of the Welsh Office? The Under-Secretary is shaking his head.

Mr. Morley: Disgraceful.

Dr. Marek: It is disgraceful. We have heard of the letter saying that the Welsh Office is behind the Bill. It has instructed all its Ministers to be here, yet those Ministers are not prepared to stand up and say even one sentence about whether the clause is right or wrong. Does not my hon. Friend think that that is disgraceful? Will he appeal to the Minister to speak?

1.15 am

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his worthy contribution. If the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), the junior Minister, wishes to intervene, I will be willing to give way at any time. We need the view of the Welsh Office and of the Government on the Bill. Since 7 o'clock 90 per cent. of what has been said has been critical of the Bill. We have had two powerful contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). I am pleased that as a result of the Division we have been given more time to elaborate the arguments about pollution.

In relation to the problems of phosphates and nitrates that will be trapped, I said a few moments ago that the toxic algae problem appeared in 1989. Last year we had severe problems along the north-east coast from algal blooms. Indeed, the sale of shellfish had to be stopped for several weeks. The livelihood of 3,000 fishermen who collect mussels, prawns, crab and so on was jeopardised when toxins in shellfish were found to be up to 50 times the permitted concentrations.

Inland waters were also affected by algal blooms last year; 501 reservoirs and inland lakes were affected, including one in my constituency, by problems caused by nitrates and phosphates. What if similar problems emerge in the Cardiff bay barrage? What will be done about nitrate and phosphate stripping? Is the technology available? Will money be available?

In new clause 6 we call on the undertakers to publish a plan for phosphate and nitrate stripping of the waters entering the inland bay if that becomes necessary, and to demonstrate to us that that can be done. We want the undertakers to tell us whether it is technically possible and to explain how it will be done.

It is difficult to remove nitrates and phosphates from water. Water can be denitrified by the use of bacteria, but that cannot be done on a large scale. Ion exchange methods can be used to replace the nitrates by chlorides. Precipitation methods using ferric sulphate can deal with phosphates, but it is very expensive. I have a quote which shows how expensive it is. It was from the former Secretary of State for the Environment—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is still an excess of sedentary conversation.

Mr. Williams: The former Secretary of State for the Environment, now the chairman of the Conservative party, estimated last year—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask members of the Government Front Bench to respect the conventions of the House and allow the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) to make his speech without interruption.

Mr. Williams: The cost of removing phosphates and nitrates from Britain's sewage before it is dumped at sea would involve building secondary sewerage plant at a cost of up to £7 billion. That could become necessary if algal blooms became a recurrent problem in the North sea. For the Taff and Ely, pro rata, the figure would work out at up to £100 million. That is in addition to the costs of building

[Mr. Williams]

the barrage. If we find in a year or two or whenever that there is a serious problem of the eutrophication of toxic algae, it could cost anything up to £100 million to clear.

New clause 6 asks simply that the promoters produce a plan of how they would tackle the problem, to show that it can be done and that there will be a commitment that the money will be made available.

Mr. Flynn: In the babble, I think that we have lost some of the subtleties of my hon. Friend's argument. I know that there have been cases of eutrophication in the Yns Y Fro reservoir in my constituency and serious eutrophication of blue-green algae on Rutland water. Those problems have been cleared up and, as far as I know, those and hundreds of other stretches of water are operational again. But is my hon. Friend saying that they have been cleared up at the cost he said, or something similar?

Mr. Williams: No, eutrophication is seasonal—it comes and goes. It comes in warm weather. If the hon. Gentleman had listened intently to the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly he would have realised that eutrophication is temperature dependent. It does not occur in winter, but when there are long days and warm weather algae multiplies rapidly, and then goes away. But let us suppose that it becomes a recurrent problem, and there is every possibility that that could happen, especially in the Rivers Taff and Ely because there is a terrific population of half a million people there, and the sewage effluent is continually fed into the rivers. Therefore, the waters are naturally high in nitrogen phosphate. If there is a regular, recurrent problem, and there are not to be fish deaths year after year—one of the side-effects of algae blooms—one must tackle the problem at source. If one does that, one is talking of costs running up to about £100 million to clear the problem.

Mr. Rogers: The argument of my hon. Friends the Members for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) is that the construction of the barrage will cause pollution in the lagoon area behind it. There is no doubt about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly stressed the possible effect on the health of the people living around the district. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen is now stressing the enormous cost that it might pose to taxpayers in general in order to alleviate problems that could arise. Surely it would be much better if the Bill's promoters accepted that, in order to have development in the Cardiff bay district, there is absolutely no need to have a barrage that does not add a single square foot to the amount of land available for industrial and housing development. The only reason why the barrage is being constructed, which will then create all the pollution problems, is—as the report states—to create a water vista and enhance the prices of houses around it. From the arguments put forward on that issue alone, that seems an enormous price to pay for a water vista.

Mr. Williams: My hon. Friend's contribution summarises very well the strong feeling of the Opposition Members who have contributed most to the debate—the barrage is for purely visual effect and will not create or pull in any jobs. Of course, we want the districts of Cardiff to be developed and maximum industry and jobs pulled into them. None of us is against that. We are in the Labour party because we believe that Government and public funds should be used in that way. But, in terms of trapping the water, flooding the mud flats, which are important for wild life and wading birds, and creating a potential environmental disaster, the barrage is an appalling waste of public money. That money could be far better used in the health service, in infrastructure or in a number of other ways.

Mr. Rogers: Since I posed those questions I think that I have found the answer in the evidence of Chesterton Professional Services, which were employed by Cardiff Bay development corporation. In its report it says that the full barrage would have a betterment effect on the land in the area, increasing its value from £114 million to £347 million. That is the reason why the barrage is being constructed. It is designed not to add to the economic development of Cardiff but to make money for these people.

Mr. Williams: My hon. Friend makes an excellent case. I cannot understand why, when the economy is in the crisis that it is, we are wasting our money in this way.

New clause 17 concerns eliminating the risks of pollution from leachates, especialy from the Ferry road tip. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd dealt at length with the problems associated with the Ferry road tip, which contains 3 million cu m of rubbish, which is not toxic waste but mainly domestic. Nevertheless, it is an enormous quantity. The onus should be on the undertakers to show that the tip can be sealed off and that there will be no leachate from it. I think that the hon. Member for Pontypridd demonstrated the logical trap that the undertakers are in as regards this tip. First, they have been thinking of moving the whole tip and trying to relocate it, perhaps in Stormy Down—I do not know.

I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is looking at me furiously. I was not suggesting that. I think that the tip should stay exactly where it is.

I read another story, although I do not know whether it is a possibility, saying that all the contents of the tip could be put in trains and carried to Bedfordshire at a cost of £40 million. That was a serious proposal, but I do not know whether it is a runner. Is not it the height of absurdity to be carrying the domestic rubbish of 10, 20 or 30 years ago in trains 200 miles across the country to bury it in Bedfordshire? I wonder what the people of Bedfordshire think about that? The trains would be incredibly smelly because the waste has half-decayed anaerobically. The putrefaction and the smell would be incredible.

Mr. Skinner: Is it going to go by rail?

Mr. Williams: I am not sure whether it will. Given this Government, perhaps it will be taken in lorries along the M4. Imagine being stuck behind one of those lorries on the Severn bridge for half an hour in a traffic jam.

Can the Ferry road tip be sealed? What are the alternatives? Is there a way to seal that sort of tip so that no leachates would reach the barrage? Frankly, I do not think that we can seal tips that effectively, especially as the water table may be raised and that such tips give off methane the whole time. The problem of the tip defeats this proposal.

I ask hon. Members to support this set of new clauses. In opposing the construction of the barrage, I think that there are strong environmental reasons why the project should not go ahead.

Mr. Morgan: While the Government Whips, the promoters and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) are absent from the Chamber, having a confab about what they should do in the circumstances, I wish to raise some additional points, some of which would be better raised in the presence of my hon. Friend. Indeed, I wished to pay him a compliment and to say that, as far as I am concerned, he is a prominent environmentalist in the Cardiff context. I am sure that he will be willing to concede that I am the same, and that we are both doing the Lord's work—he is doing it in his way, and I am doing it in the Lord's way, but we are nevertheless both doing the Lord's work. I very much admire my hon. Friend's approach, although I believe that our approach, as incorporated in these five new clauses, following the attempt to terminate the debate which, fortunately, fell rather flat because of the Government's disarray——

1.30 am

Mr. Win Griffiths: It would never have happened under the former Prime Minister.

Mr. Morgan: Yes, Tory schism is at work here, as well as dither. One tactic that the Government may adopt——

Mr. Griffiths: They are taking legal advice.

Mr. Morgan: Not only that—they are also trying to gather the duvet vote, but if they look for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I hope that they go to his present residence at No. 11 Downing street and not to his former residence, or they may get a lesson in what goes on at night in London. That tactic should be approached carefully.

During the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth made many strong pleas to my hon. Friends, saying that we should not be promoting new clause 5 on leachate; new clause 6 on phosphate and nitrate stripping; new clause 8 on sewage removal; new clause 17 on the future of the Ferry road tip; and new clause 19 on algal scum disposal——

Mr. Skinner: What is that?

Mr. Morgan: I can draw it for my hon. Friend, although I am not sure that one can adequately describe it. However, if my hon. Friend were to come down on one of the free trips that the Cardiff Bay development corporation may offer him, I could show him——

Mr. Skinner: No.

Mr. Morgan: Well, it is a case of whatever turns you on, is it not, Mr. Deputy Speaker? If my hon. Friend will not come down to Cardiff, I shall have to do my best later to explain what algal scum is.

I am pleased that I shall now have the chance to discuss the five new clauses as I wrote every single word of them myself. It is a sign of the good sense of the House that, being aware that I had not had the chance to speak to provisions that I had drafted late at night in the Library, pity was taken on me. Much as they would like to make further progress, hon. Members thought that it was not fair to close the debate until I had had a chance to say a word or two about the new clauses.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth takes a different approach to the new clauses. He accepts that these five subjects are critical to the acceptability of the Bill. I know that they are critical and my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd, who made his maiden speech on the Bill, also accepted that they are critical. This is one of the most important of our many important debates on the acceptability of the barrage, its side effects and direct and indirect consequences. We must consider whether an amenity lake of the quality about which we are talking will actually be an amenity lake, and if it is not an amenity lake in the normal accepted definition of the phrase in 1995, when it might open for business, or in 2005, when standards will have risen further, there is no point in having it. We should be terribly derelict in our duty if we did not consider whether the barrage will be worth the candle unless by 2005 it can provide the amenities that people will expect at a level appropriate to that year and not to the lower 1985 standards.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, "All those things are mentioned in the Bill. Phosphate and nitrate stripping, algal scum and the Ferry road tip are all mentioned." We have not invented the subject matter of the new clauses; we have merely taken it from the existing Bill and incorporated it differently to give greater assurances. We ask that the House does not approve the Bill until the promoters show how they will solve the well-known environmental problems. If my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth were here, he would accept that his position is that the National Rivers Authority, Welsh Water or other appropriate bodies have suitable undertakings and that we should take it on trust that those undertakings will be put into effect in accordance with the standards laid down by those bodies. However, the problem is that the NRA, for example, did not exist on the previous occasion when objections could be made to the Bill, when it came from the other place to this House.

On this Bill, the NRA did not have the chance to formulate the bargaining position that it has on the River Usk Barrage Bill, which has entered the other place. The NRA is objecting strongly to that Bill. According to a conversation that I had with it this morning, there is more than a 50-50 chance that it will be able to maintain that objection throughout the negotiations with the promoters.

The NRA came into existence on 1 September 1988. The last day for objecting to this Bill was some six weeks before that, on 26 July. Until 1 September, the Welsh division of the NRA was merely a subsidiary of Welsh Water. If Welsh Water did not want to object to the Bill —and it did not—there was nothing that the people who five weeks later formed the NRA could do. We were told that they did want to object, but we shall never really know the answer to that.

By 1 September, when the NRA came into existence, it could not object because the closing date for objections was 26 July. The NRA's bargaining position is therefore extremely weak. It must obtain the best bargain that it can. That is all that it can do. It can say that it wants a fish pass which will use the latest available and best technology. On the Usk barrage it can say that if the promoters do not provide a fish pass that the NRA likes, it will stop the Bill.

[Mr. Morgan]

On the Cardiff bay barrage it can try to bargain for an adequate fish pass, but in the end the promoters can say, "This is the best fish pass that we can come up with, but we are going ahead with the Bill because you did not exist as a separate body with a specific duty of conservation of aquatic flora and fauna until it was too late to object." The NRA will not be able to insist on a fish pass, for example.

We are not discussing fisheries yet. We are discussing algal scum, phosphates, leachates and water quality in general.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Those matters still have an effect on the fish.

Mr. Morgan: They certainly do. The same principle undoubtedly applies to phosphate and nitrate stripping, the matter dealt with in new clause 6.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has come back into the Chamber. I have been speaking about him in glowing and complimentary terms as an environmentalist who approaches the problem from a slightly different angle from me. I am asking how things are to be done before the barrage is built. I am not prepared to take it on trust that the appropriate authorities are happy with the undertakings that they have received. Such authorities are in the weak bargaining position that I have described. They could not object to the Bill because they did not exist when the opportunity was available to do so. I paraphrase briefly for my hon. Friend what I have said in the past few minutes.

Tonight we are trying to decide whether the approach of the new clauses is more relevant for achieving the standards that everyone will seek in the year 2005, or whether the approach of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is more appropriate. His approach is that the National Rivers Authority says that it has an undertaking which is long and detailed and refers to algal scum, water quality, future water quality standards and what it will have to do to enforce them. But in its present bargaining position, if we do not retrospectively include the provisions for which the NRA would have asked if it had existed on 26 July—the last day for submitting objections to the Bill——

Mr. Cryer: Another aspect on which my hon. Friend may wish to comment is the letter from the Secretary of State for Wales demonstrating strong support for the Bill. I remind my hon. Friend that the current chairman of the National Rivers Authority is Lord Crickhowell, a former Secretary of State for Wales. Therefore, unless something is included in the Bill, people might suspect that the standards of environmental protection that my hon. Friend regards as desirable—I am sure that that view is shared by the whole House—might go by the board. Whether or not their suspicions are accurate, people may believe that there is a conspiracy between successive Secretaries of State for Wales to get through the House what is referred to in the letter as a "very exciting project". It is important for ensuring decent standards of conduct in public life that the safeguards that my hon. Friend seeks are included in the Bill.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend enables me to refer to the new Tory tendency of trying to be all things to all men, one of the descriptions of our new and much-loved Prime Minister, particularly among Opposition Members but not so much among Tory Members. That was the criticism of the Prime Minister made, I think, by Sir Alan Walters, in this rash of criticism that has broken out.

The Secretary of State for Wales has been doing the same thing. The letter to which my hon. Friend referred has been sent to all members of the Cabinet to tell their Parliamentary Private Secretaries to be here tonight—some were obviously lost in the post, or there would have been 115 here. Perhaps the number of Parliamentary Private Secretaries has been reduced dramatically since last weekend—we are not quite sure which.

The same subject was covered by another letter which the Secretary of State wrote on 16 April, faxed to Ian Prestt, the director general of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, an extremely distinguished former senior civil servant in the Department of the Environment. It said:

> "I cannot accept your allegation that my letter of 31 March is 'tantamount to an official whip'. The Government has consistently made clear its substantial interest in the objectives of the Bill."

So far so good. That is the same as the letter sent to members of the Cabinet. Then the Secretary of State for Wales went on:

> "Subject only to the additional work and consultation on ground water, I remain committed to the barrage as the best way of assisting the regeneration of Cardiff Bay."

There is no mention of that in his letter to the Cabinet; nothing about the duties that he will have to discharge subject to the enactment of the Bill in saying whether there should be a final go or no-go decision on the barrage depending on the decisions on ground water and the public consultation exercise at the end of the year. Why should he be sending a different message to his Cabinet colleagues and hiding from them the fact that he has this quasi-judicial role in the early months of next year when, trying to be all things to all men, he tells the RSPB that of course he is aware of all his additional duties arising from the Bill? Why did he not send the same message to his fellow Cabinet members when he wrote telling them to be here as though this was the last word on the Bill?

How far should promoters have to go? Should they have to explain to the House how they propose to solve the giant problems of the project? Take, for example, the Ferry road tip dealt with in new clause 17. That new clause says that before the barrage is constructed the promoters must produce and publish their proposals for the future of the Ferry road tip. We all realise that what happens to that tip is vital to the viability of the barrage, the cleanliness of the water in the barrage and the availability of land for development in the barrage. The protective clauses mention that but they do not say what is to be done and it is important that we should try to establish that at this stage through the publication of a proposal for the Ferry road tip. The Cardiff Bay development corporation has been operating in secrecy and speaking with forked tongue on the subject.

Mr. Skinner: One reason why the promoters are not terribly worried about including the safeguards that my hon. Friend is outlining is that the Government have a majority of 150 and they know that they can shove private Bills through in the middle of the night. They need only keep a few Members here—they have not made it tonight, that is true—and the safeguards can go by the board. The

Government will put on an official or semi-official Whip in order to get the Bill through. That has been the feature of such legislation since 1979. The Government's majority has enabled the promoters to get away with blue murder. They have used the Government's built-in majority rather than allowing such matters to be dealt with on a non-party basis.

Mr. Morgan: I could not agree more.

The Secretary of State has spoken with forked tongue through his front organisation, the Cardiff Bay development corporation, on the precise subject of new clause 17, which states:

"Before commencement of impounding by means of the barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish proposals for the sealing of the Ferry Road tip to the satisfaction of the rivers authority and the Environmental Health Officer of the city council that no material risk of infiltration of the inland bay or of groundwater by leachate from the tip will occur.".

1.45 am

Consider what we have learnt from the Touche Ross report. That report was undertaken at the insistence of the Welsh Office for the Cardiff city council to aid its execution of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. That report states:

"The intentions of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation have affected the waste management planning in Cardiff adversely. Accepting the political reality, the intentions of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation with respect to Ferry Road should be finalised."

That is exactly what we are saying. We believe that they should be produced and published. The report states that the consultants

"feel however that CBDC has grossly underestimated the logistic, environmental, health and safety problems associated with exhuming 2 million cubic metres of waste"—

let alone with transporting that to Bedford. Now we come to the interesting part of the report, which the Welsh Office will know all about as it is mentioned. It says:

"The Consultants have, in fact, following informal discussions with the Welsh Office, intimated that the removal of the tip may not now proceed in full."

What will be done? We do not know. In public it is said that the tip will be removed, probably to Bedfordshire, or possibly to some other site in south Wales.

Dr. Marek: It would help the House if my hon. Friend could give the reasons for the existence of the Cardiff Bay development corporation. Does it have any social objectives, or is it in it just for the money? What are its terms of reference? What were the terms of reference for Touche Ross? Only when we know precisely those terms of reference can we interpret the information that my hon. Friend has provided objectively.

Mr. Morgan: It would detain the House unduly if I went over the purposes of the corporation—I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your eagle eye and ear would prevent me. It had something to do with creating a superlative maritme city in Cardiff and reuniting the old docks area with the city centre.

The commission given by Cardiff city council to Touche Ross was designed to enable it to comply with the Environmental Protection Act 1990. That Act stated that by last Friday all local authorities in Wales had to produce proposals on how they intended to manage waste disposal in their areas. The new scheme introduced LAWDACS —local authority waste disposal authorities and companies—while the local authority monitoring role in connection with waste disposal had to separate from the actual collection and from disposal of that waste. Local authorities had to produce their relevant proposals by Friday.

In October 1990, the Cardiff city council hired Touche Ross to produce those proposals. The consultants referred to the "informal discussions" that had gone on behind closed doors with the Welsh Office. The public in Cardiff know nothing about those discussions, and, contrary to all the published evidence in the press and the general impression that the Ferry road tip would be removed, the consultants employed by the council have been told informally by the Welsh Office that no such thing will happen. They have been told that the tip will not be moved, or that not all of it will be moved, or that it will simply be moved from one half of the site to another.

A form of waste disposal alps may be created, with a low-level site in one part of the Ferry road tip and a high-level site in another. It beats me how that can be done with decomposing refuse, but I understand that that is the sort of proposal that the Welsh Office is now discussing with consultants. The general public do not know that, Parliament does not know it, the Select Committee was not told it. We were all told, "There are other options, but the favoured solution is the removal of the Ferry road tip to Bedford." To dispense with such confusion, we must be clear, before the corporation starts impounding the water, what it proposes to do with the tip. It cannot say one thing to the public in Cardiff and another behindhand to the Welsh Office, which may then, it seems, talk to consultants here and there without the knowledge of Parliament or of voters in Cardiff.

Mr. Cryer: I am tempted by my hon. Friend's comments and by the comments made earlier in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to ask for confirmation that there is no guarantee that, if the tip is moved in whole or in part, it will be moved by environmentally friendly railway and not by environmentally hostile heavy juggernauts thundering through Cardiff and down many highways and by-ways before reaching Bedfordshire or wherever else it is dumped. The Government have an anti-rail policy, and it is clear that, with no guarantees laid down, thousands of lorry movements may be required to get rid of such a huge tip. Does my hon. Friend agree that if it had definitely been stated that there would be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is this an intervention?

Mr. Cryer: I am enabling my hon. Friend to have a drink of water, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so killing two birds with one stone. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if that had been clearly stated, Cardiff citizens would be lining the streets in protest at the proposal?

Mr. Morgan: Having a drink of London tap water reminds one of what an important subject water quality is —for all of us, both now and in future. My hon. Friend is entirely right, and it is very much an open question. Let us suppose that the tip removal went ahead in part or in whole, which is what most members of the public in Cardiff think will happen given all the official public statements about the preferred option. The waste would probably go by road if it went to the site in Mid Glamorgan that the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) mentioned, causing the hon. Member for

[Mr. Morgan]

Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) to jump 3 ft off the ground. If the waste were taken to Bedfordshire, however, I am reasonably assured that the move would be feasible only by long-distrance rail haulage. Contrary to the impression given in Cardiff, secret negotiations are taking place with a view to leaving the tip in place or shovelling it around —landscaping it or making it a golf course, a playing field or whatever. To be honest, we do not know what will happen. I do not think that the proposals have gone that far. It looks as though the promoters have been speaking with forked tongue and the public in Cardiff and Parliament have been grossly misled.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend was asked a straight and simple question about the possibility or likelihood of the tip removal involving large numbers of lorry movements through the streets of Cardiff. Perhaps he knows something that I do not know. As I understand it, the removal would—or will—involve train movements and not lorry movements. Does my hon. Friend agree with me on that simple point? If not, can he give me the authority for any doubts that he has on the matter?

Mr. Morgan: Yes, I shall be happy to clarify the matter as far as I can. Suppose that the tip is wholly or partly removed. If it is taken to the site in Mid Glamorgan that was referred to, I do not know of a railhead that could be used. That was my point. The waste would therefore have to go by road. I understand, however, that if the waste went to Bedfordshire, it would go by rail. My hon. Friend is right, however, that if the waste went to the site in Mid Glamorgan, it would not travel through residential streets, although it would travel quite close to some streets of new estate houses in my constituency, along a main haulage dual carriageway.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend has clarified the position. I understand that, when disposal to sites outside south Wales is considered, rail transport proves to be the only option. However, my hon. Friend keeps referring to other options relating to, for instance, sites in Mid Glamorgan. Has he any authority for that, or is it another of the red herrings that featured in an earlier stage of discussion about the tip? I know of no such suggestion.

Mr. Morgan: If my hon. Friend is in a position to say that former quarry sites in Mid Glamorgan owned by Wimpey Waste Management are definitely off limits through some process of debarring, he had better intervene again. I have the impression from the development corporation's statements that if it removes the site—which is still its public and official line—it will be up to waste management contractors to put in the best offer: outfits such as Wimpey Waste Management, which owns the enormous quarry in the southern part of Mid Glamorgan, and Shanks McEwan in Bedford. If Wimpey Waste Management won the contract, perhaps the development corporation would deal with it, feeling obliged to accept the best offer. Neither company would be debarred.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Ogwr): When the possibility of the Ferry road tip being taken by the lorryload and put into the old quarries at Stormy Down was raised, Ogur borough council, as the planning authority, resolved in principle that it would not be suitable to move the tip to the large hole in Stormy Down, which is in my constituency. Many of the councillors were very upset about the possibility of such action. The councillor in the ward where I live—Cefn Cribwr, known by its old parish name of Tythegston Higher—said that he would be prepared to lie in the road and prevent any of the lorries coming anywhere near Stormy Down. That was Councillor Viv Thomas.

Mr. Morgan: I am happy to answer that question, while my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth finds out whether he is able to reassure the House as I asked him to.

We have been upsetting ourselves over the environmental consequences of large-scale waste removal—exhumation, as it is described in the consultants' report, stray paragraphs of which have come to our notice and have enabled us to conduct a proper, well-informed debate. The report contradicts the official line—which is believed by the public in Cardiff—and removes most of the possibility of large-scale waste removal to either Mid-Glamorgan or Bedfordshire. It appears that the Welsh Office knows something that Parliament does not. I should be happy to give way to the Minister, if he wants to say more about the negotiations between Touche Ross and the Welsh Office. I have read out Touche Ross's version—that, following its informal discussions with the Welsh Office, the removal of the tip may not proceed in full. If that is true, I am very happy to hear it.

Mr. Michael: I appreciate that we are dealing with widely ranging issues, but I do not think that we should create worry where none should exist. I am told that Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire are the only options being considered by the development corporation and that rail is the only option being considered for transport to those locations. That eliminates Mid Glamorgan and road transport. Does my hon. Friend have information that contradicts that? I am sure that he agrees that on serious matters such as this we should not operate on gossip or innuendo. I have checked my memory of those matters with the promoters and what I have said knocks other suggestions on the head.

2 am

Mr. Morgan: I would be glad to be knocked on the head if it would remove from my memory a conversation with the promoters in which they said that the issue would depend on the offers from waste management contractors. I would be happy to accept the withdrawal of that statement. We have had information about secret negotiations in the Welsh Office about the tip not being moved. New clause 7 deals with the sealing of that tip if it is not moved. We are becoming bogged down in the lesser of two probabilities about the future of the Ferry road tip. There have been negotiations between Touche Ross on behalf of Cardiff city council and the Welsh Office, whose representatives remain sedentary and silent. They are probably still shell shocked by their failure on the closure motion, despite a circular letter to the Parliamentary Private Secretaries who are now safely tucked under their duvets.

Mr. Michael: I appreciate that my hon. Friend wishes to explore people's minds. I am sure that at all times he wants to explore people's approach to matters to make sure that they are right, and to look at other options. My hon. Friend, of all people, would not want anyone to close

his mind to other options. As I have said in relation to the tip's removal, the option that I mentioned is the only one that is being or has been considered. Leaching is consequent upon the issues that we are debating, and those issues are dealt with by the Bill as it stands.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend is right to say that these issues are mentioned in the Bill. They are also mentioned in our new clauses. We are both pointing to the need for a solution to problems of leaching, phosphate and nitrate in the waters feeding the barrage, removal of the existing sewer outfalls and algae. Our new clauses strengthen the safeguards that my hon. Friend says are already in the Bill. The approach that my hon. Friend commends to the House does not require the promoters to show the House before it passes the Bill, or before its contents satisfy somebody else, how they intend to solve those problems.

We do not know what the promoters intend to do about the Ferry road tip. Our latest understanding, following bits of news about negotiations between Touche Ross and the Welsh Office, is that the tip is not to be removed. In that case, we need to know how it will be sealed. How do we deal with the problems covered by new clause 5 on leaching and new clause 17 on the sealing of the tip? There are two approaches to the problem, on the Welsh Office assumption that the Ferry road tip is to stay. We would like a definitive statement from the promoters or from the Welsh Office as to whether the tip is to stay or to go. I think that it will remain, but the official line is that it is to be removed. It would be useful to be able to determine the matter tonight, but if we are not told, that is 10 times more reason than we thought we had for insisting on new clauses 5 and 17 about the future of the Ferry road tip.

What will happen to the tip? If it is to stay, how are we to seal off such a large tip—in size, it is in the top 20—that is at the height of its powers of decomposition? It is a major producer of methane. It adjoins the old gasworks tip, with all the phenolics, cyanide and cyanates that are to be found in the ground deep underneath the gasworks, which produced gas by coke. The ground water surges round the old coke, which contains cyanates and phenolics. There is the decomposing tip, with all the methane and organics. It will be in contact with a much higher level of ground water following the closing off at the permanent high water level of the barrage.

We need to know before the impoundment starts how the promoters intend to solve the problem. To paraphrase the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth as reasonably as I can, he says that we should be satisfied with the undertakings that have been secured by the National Rivers Authority, Cardiff city council or Welsh Water, or by the words that appear in the Bill, even though they are far from specific about the solutions that are proposed.

Phosphate and nitrate removal could have a colossal effect on my constituents. If it is necessary to introduce phosphate and nitrate removal plants on the Taff and the Ely of the sort that are on the Rhine, where are they to be situated? Such plants are large. They could be situated at the double sewage works at Cilfynydd, one of which deals with the sewage from the Cynon and the other with the sewage from the Taff north of Pontypridd up to Merthyr. It would be possible to bolt on to the sewage works a removal plant. That would be handy, but the trouble is that a lot of sewage comes out into the Taff through the storm sewer disposal works that are below the sewage works.

I apologise for turning my back on you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I turned 180 deg while explaining these matters to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. The hour is late, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I ask you to excuse me.

The Ely might just be in the vale of Glamorgan. The Miskin sewage works are the main works that cover the Taff-Ely borough, an area in which the population has exploded during the past 20 years. The works are brand new and they do a great job. Large quantities of treated sewage are discharged back into the River Ely, which passes through my constituency. During a dry summer, 50 per cent. of the water in the river comes from the sewage works, and it contains a colossal amount of nitrate and phosphate.

As I have said, it is possible to bolt on removal works to remove phosphates and nitrates that are in the sewage, but they will not deal with storm overflows, and I am told that there are about 250 in the catchment areas. Given the rainfall in south Wales, the overflows work summer and winter, which means that a great deal of sewage does not pass via the sewerage works. There is also dog excrement that is washed into the rain water sewers, which ends up in the river. That is a major source of phosphates and, to a lesser extent, nitrates. None of that will be covered by the waters of the bay unless there is a phosphate and nitrate treatment works in operation just before the water enters the lake. That is where my constituency comes on the scene.

The Rhine is taken almost completely off its production line, as it were. It is taken from its normal flow. That means carving out a new river channel, and the river, in its entirety, is passed through decomposition tanks of iron for phosphates and aluminium for nitrates, or it might be the other way round. Either way, there is a need for an iron decomposition tank and an aluminium tank to react against the phosphates and nitrates and neutralise them.

Where is that to be done in my constituency? Will part of the playing fields in the castle grounds be taken? Where are we to take the Taff from its normal stream and pass it through two tanks and then return it to its formal flow? Is there any other solution? Do we know what the solution is? Have we heard anything that amounts to a solution to the problem of phosphate and nitrate removal? Even the promoters accept that the removal may become necessary if we are to comply with the municipal waste water directives of which my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd spoke so eloquently. Those concerns must be met before we can buy this pig in a poke. I do not know whether the necessary land is available, but if no solution can be found there should be no barrage. There should be no impounding until we can see how the problems that the barrage will create can be solved. If we cannot see how the problems can be solved, there should be no barrage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth believes that the NRA is aware of the problems and will set the standards. There are many committed, hard-working staff in the NRA and they will do their job. However, it is far too late for them to do their job fully in the sense of being able to bargain as equal partners with the Cardiff Bay development corporation because the NRA did not exist when objections were to be heard. The

[Mr. Morgan]

NRA was unable to bargain and say that, unless certain solutions to problems were forthcoming, the permissions would not be granted.

Lord Crickhowell's position is also a problem. Regardless of his persuasive qualities and personal commitment to his job as chairman of the NRA, he must be conscious that he cannot be unbiased in relation to the Cardiff bay barrage. His commitment is, if possible, even greater than that of the present Secretary of State for Wales as a result of his sense of parental responsibility for the project.

Dr. Marek: Reference has been made to the land holdings of companies associated with Lord Crickhowell. Does my hon. Friend have any further information about that? That point is important and pertinent with regard to the NRA and the way in which its policies are prosecuted and whether there may be a conflict of interest between Lord Crickhowell in his capacity as the member of a company with an interest in land in the Cardiff bay barrage area and his position as chairman of the NRA.

Mr. Morgan: I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has the permission of Mr. Deputy Speaker to take us down that road to investigate those inter-locking interests. The post-Cabinet, post-parliamentary appointments secured by the former Secretary of State for Wales have left him in an extremely difficult position with regard to the Cardiff bay barrage.

Dr. Marek: I am sure that Mr. Deputy Speaker would rule my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West out of order if he were to stray out of order. However, I hope that he will be in order because we are discussing new clauses that are principally concerned with the cleanliness of water, and that is an essential function of the NRA. Subject to the view of Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West would be in order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had enough discussion about how I might hypothetically rule in certain hypothetical circumstances. If the debate relates to new clause 5, it will be in order.

Mr. Morgan: I am grateful for your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I understand the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham. His point is pertinent because it relates to the former Secretary of State for Wales who is now the chairman of the NRA, director of Associated British Ports Holdings and of HTV and several other companies. The former Secretary of State for Wales is Captain Clean-up. He is supposed to be like Caesar's wife —or was it Lot's wife?—and be above suspicion when it comes to pollution.

Captain Clean-up must be in the van of leading the fight to eradicate water pollution. However, in the other place, Lord Crickhowell adopted a position that I could not follow. As chairman of the NRA and as an interested member of the other place, he knocked six bells out of the Usk barrage, saying that the NRA takes a strong view about such barriers because it is not satisfied about the fish bars or about the conservation of the aquatic flora and fauna, and he said that there was no way in which he could sleep tight in bed if he allowed the proposal to go through when it seems so thoroughly dangerous and pernicious.

The position in this case is completely different. The National Rivers Authority did not exist at that time. Its chairman is known to be the progenitor of the scheme. Standing on Penarth head one day with a local architect, he thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be nice to have a barrage between Penarth head and Queen Alexandra dock gate? What a wonderful lake it would make." When politicians near the end of their careers, they like to leave behind a memorial to their period in office. The Secretary of State for Wales did not want his eight years in that job simply to appear as a footnote in the history books. He wanted to create something big so that people would say, "That was Lord Crickhowell's—Captain Clean-up's—idea."

2.15 am

That creates a credibility problem when the person who favours the Cardiff Bay barrage knocks six bells out of the Usk barrage. That was not his idea. However, Lord Crickhowell is now chairman of the NRA; that is his primary responsibility. The NRA has the power, given by legislation, formally to object. It is a separate body, but that was not the case at the last date when objections could be lodged against the Bill.

Mr. Win Griffiths: My hon. Friend is pursuing an interesting line of inquiry concerning the attitude of the NRA's chairman to the inland lake that the barrage would create in Cardiff, compared with his attitude to the proposal for a barrage across the River Usk. He suggests that part of the problem is that the NRA did not exist when objections to the Cardiff Bay barrage had to be lodged. That may be the most important point. Might it not be that the former Secretary of State for Wales took the title Lord Crickhowell because Crickhowell is on the banks of the River Usk?

Mr. Morgan: I understand that he did not take the title Lord Pembroke because he wanted to leave that title to the present Member of Parliament for Pembroke after he loses his seat at the next election. However, I shudder to think what quango may be found for him to chair if the widely forecast change of Government takes place, involving the loss of his seat. Lord Crickhowell is associated with the Usk valley where he had a house. However, it is a speculative point, and I intend to confine myself to the facts.

Welsh Water was in effect the predecessor of the National Rivers Authority, which came into being six weeks too late to object to the Bill. Welsh Water had no duty to conserve aquatic flora and fauna, but its successor body, the National Rivers Authority, has. Before 1 September 1988, the only body that had a duty to conserve aquatic flora and fauna was the Nature Conservancy Council. As might have been expected, it objected to the Bill. Had the NRA been in existence on 26 July 1988, it, too, would have objected. The view of the NRA's council for Wales staff is that it would have felt obliged to object on the ground that it had a duty to conserve aquatic flora and fauna, a duty that its predecessor body did not have. It is one of those accidents, but the House could remedy it by accepting some of these amendments.

Mr. Rogers: If my hon. Friend had not been in order, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would have stopped him. He attributed motives to Lord Crickhowell, a former Secretary of State——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was about to reproach the hon. Gentleman when he moved away from that point. I hope that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will not now tempt me to make the reproach that I was about to make then. Perhaps we should get back to the speech of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have left the question of Lord Crickhowell.

Mr. Rogers: I accept your admonition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I want to refer directly to new clause 6, which says:

"the undertakers and water company shall produce and publish a plan".

When the previous Secretary of State for Wales granted permission, that requirement did not exist. The then Secretary of State is now a very substantial director of Associated British Ports, which owns 160 acres in the Cardiff bay area. One could not attribute to him a desire to have a statue erected, but he seems to have taken advantage of the revolving door—moving out of Government and into one of the companies that he helped. This kind of thing happens all the time. All Opposition Members criticise Conservative Members for it. We have seen it in the case of British Aerospace. I do not think that the previous Secretary of State for Wales is any better than the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: I have finished.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend has raised a point that tangentially——

Mr. Win Griffiths: "Tangenitally".

Mr. Morgan: I do not think that that version is at all suitable.

Nothing that I have said should have given my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), or any other hon. Member, the impression that I approve of the arrangement by which Lord Crickhowell, immediately on ceasing to be a member of the Cabinet, became chairman of the National Rivers Authority and a director of Associated British Ports. From the point of view of the unbiased treatment of this Bill, that is regrettable. It is bound to lead to a problem of perception, even if there is no conflict of interests. We have to accept that there is a problem and that Parliament must try to satisfy people who are worried about water-pollution-related issues. At the time in question, the NRA did not exist, and since then the person widely regarded as the father of the barrage has become chairman of that authority and a director of Associated British Ports.

Some of the amendments that were not selected dealt with this matter. We tried to clean up the act in relation to the barrage and ex-Ministers. We tried to do likewise in the case of British Telecom, but our amendments were not called. A former Secretary of State is a director of British Gas, but again our amendments were not selected. And the same applies to Associated British Ports. No doubt the very judicious decision of the authorities of the House to ensure that such amendments were not called has been proved right by the fact that, today, we have not needed to devote very much time to the activities of former members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman please return to the new clauses that are before the House?

Mr. Morgan: Mention has been made of the fact that, when a barrage is built, the inter-tidal movement is broken up. There is fresh water on one side and salt water on the other, but there is no partially saline water between. That partially saline water may seem of little importance to hon. Members, but it is incredibly important as a flushing mechanism. It is called the kidneys of the system because it moves in and out vigorously in areas with high tidal ranges such as the upper Bristol channel. It acts extremely effectively, although not in accord with modern practice, as the kidneys of urban industrial south Wales and Bristol.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I agree that the tidal range in the Severn estuary helps to flush out many of the harmful pollutants, but we must remember that there is much pollution to be treated and that that flushing process does not make those waters safe.

Mr. Morgan: I am glad that my hon. Friend has made that point. It was almost a Pavlovian reaction, which I expected as I am aware of his passionate commitment to clean beaches and a clean marine environment. That is a further responsibility of the National Rivers Authority. He took some unjustified and fearful hammerings from Welsh Water but has been proved right. Welsh Water said that EC directives would be unnecessary for the treatment of sewage discharges near public bathing beaches. It said that they did no harm, that it had the right means of dealing with long sea outfalls and that other pollutants would be dealt with by the vigorous action of the Bristol channel.

No hon. Member has mentioned new clause 8—unless I missed it while I was having a cup of tea.

Mr. Ron Davies: What was in the tea?

Mr. Morgan: I have mentioned the problems with London drinking water, which passes through three kidneys before it reaches the taps.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Seven.

Mr. Morgan: I did not realise that an expert on kidneys was present.

New clause 8, which has received less attention than the other four new clauses, relates to sewage outfalls. In the same spirit of the other four new clauses, it says:

"Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to the sewer outfalls discharging directly into the inland bay"—

that is partly dealt with by the Bill—

"or into the waters of the rivers discharging into the Bay"—

that is not dealt with by the Bill, but it was dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd—

"or the tributaries thereof, showing the proposed means of removal, relocation or improvement"—

that phrase recurs time and again in the promoters' version of the Bill, which we have improved—

"and the agreement of the owner of each outfall to such removal, relocation or improvement"—

[Mr. Morgan]

another phrase borrowed from a standard clause that recurs in the handiwork of the promoters and their parliamentary agents.

The importance of our additions are twofold. First, we tried not only to make specific the obligations on the National Rivers Authority and Welsh Water for water treatment, sewage removal or treatment but to say to the promoters, "Before you impound the barrage you must be able to show how you will do the job." We insisted on that because they have not dealt with storm sewer overflows or with what will happen when the 14 direct sewers are diverted so that they do not discharge into the lake. Where will they discharge into? The Bristol channel. Is that an improvement? It is a bit of an improvement. Obviously they could not discharge into the lake and we do not want them discharging, as now, into very enclosed tidal waters where, because of increasing population pressures, they discharge more and more on the incoming tide, washing raw sewage up the rivers Taff and Ely into the town centre, and then back down again on the outgoing tide. That did not happen in the old days when the population pressure was right. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth would agree that they should be got rid of, but diverting them round the corner into the Bristol channel is not the right solution. That is why we have proposed an improvement.

2.30 am

Mr. Michael: I am sure that my hon. Friend does not want to mislead the House. I am glad that he has welcomed the diversion of those sewers from Cardiff bay. It is only the introduction of the barrage under the Bill that gives that promise. He suggested that the sewers are merely to be diverted round the corner into the Bristol channel. Will he acknowledge that, due to considerable pressure exerted by my hon. Friend the Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) and myself, we are to have treatment at the Lavernock works, to which the sewers will be diverted, to meet European standards—an issue on which my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), along with other hon. Members, have fought over a considerable period? I take the point about the fear that he was expressing, but that has been dealt with by assurances given by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Does my hon. Friend also accept that the diversion of sewer outfalls upstream must be a matter for the water authority and the National Rivers Authority to resolve? I agree with him that there should be an onus on the Government to improve water quality in the rivers. We would all unite on that, but it is too onerous a responsibility to cover in the Bill. It is a matter for more general legislation because such a clean-up is required not as a consequence of the Bill but as part of the improvement of water quality of rivers generally.

Mr. Morgan: I am happy to give my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth and for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) maximum credit. They worked together to get assurances about the Lavernock outfall and got an improvement on the original intention when we discussed the matter on Second Reading.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth would be happy to concede that the key point is the interpretation of the relevant EEC municipal waste water directives. We are all aware that while legislation may be encouraging, the actual experience of walking along our river banks shows that conditions do not always improve according to the legislation. The National Rivers Authority and Welsh Water will say that they have done their best and have spent a lot of money, but that consumers would not pay for more improvements. Unless there is compulsion, the authorities do not always do what is required.

Ten years ago, when one walked along the banks of the River Ely in my constituency there was no smell of sewage because there was no discharge of sewage from the Cowslip and Cogan outfalls on the rising tide and the sewage was not carried inland. As more houses were built in the area, sewage had to be discharged at all times when the outfall was covered by water. Then the sewage was carried upstream first and downstream later. As soon as the tide goes down, the banks are hideously ill-smelling. Those are the sort of practical problems. Does the public believe that the job will be done as it is supposed to be in this optimistic legislation? The public want us to try to enforce that lesson by introducing greater compulsion.

Mr. Michael: I do not want to take up the time of the House by correcting the odd description that my hon. Friend gave of the results of the Cowslip estate. There are certainly problems there, but they will be helped by the measures resulting from the barrage. My hon. Friend said that it was not enough to have things in legislation or regulation. The fact that EC directives have contained rules has not necessarily brought about the results that we would require—that is certainly true.

The diverted sewers from the Cardiff bay area will feed into Lavernock and, as a result of the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment at the last year's North sea conference, a firm undertaking was given with regard to treatment at future outfalls around the coast of Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan and I exerted pressure to try to ensure that that undertaking should apply to the Lavernock outfall and should not be regarded, as the Government then appeared to intend, as something for which permission had already been given. We received an absolute promise from the Secretary of State for the Environment that it would be a treated outfall and would fall within the terms of the undertaking given at the North sea conference.

Mr. Morgan: I accept everything that my hon. Friend has said. The only difference between us relates to the form of treatment that would need to be given. My interpretation of the EC directive on municipal waste water is that it could very well compel Welsh Water and the National Rivers Authority to come to an arrangement whereby third-stage treatment—phosphate and nitrate removal—would have to be carried out at Lavernock or any other sea outfall taking municipal waste water.

The undertaking that my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth and for Vale of Glamorgan got from the Secretary of State was that secondary treatment, which does not include phosphate and nitrate removal, would be carried out. That involves biological reaction, oxygenation and the usual treatments that take place in most British sewage works. But my reading of the EC directive is that the Lavernock sea outfall would be regarded as discharging into a sensitive district because

there are so many bathing beaches there—it is almost one continuous bathing beach from Lavernock point to Barry island. It is not one of the great resorts of Great Britain, but is a popular resort, which would make it a sensitive water. In addition, the outfall discharges from a population of more than 10,000 people, in terms of coastal discharges, and 2,000 people, in terms of inland population—for which Cardiff, Penarth, Dinas Powys and Barry certainly qualify.

If the outfall requires third-stage treatment, we need an undertaking from the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales that goes beyond the undertaking that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has received. That is the only difference between us. I am happy with the undertaking that he has received so far as it goes, but the very fact that there is a difference of opinion between our interpretation of the EC directive reinforces the reason for the new clauses.

If, as we state in new clause 8, those sewers must be diverted and treated up to the EC standards that will exist in 1995 when the barrage will open for business, and third-stage treatment is required, there is still no undertaking to cover that. That is my understanding of the Secretaries of State's undertaking to my hon. Friends for Cardiff, South and Penarth and for Vale of Glamorgan. The undertaking covers only secondary treatment, but I think that the EC directive means that there will have to be full tertiary River Rhine-type treatment, including phosphate and nitrate removal. That is why we argue that the Bill must be specific—the matter cannot be left to the interpretation of the National Rivers Authority and Welsh Water. Those organisations may say, "Who really needs it, you only need that sort of thing on the Rhine. We do not want to mess around with that—it is much too expensive."

Mr. Win Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene at last, although I realise that he was pursuing an important argument regarding the intervention by our hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Micheal). During his discourse, before the original intervention when we both tried to intervene, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) was making a case about the cost to consumers of all the remedial works which were necessary to deal with this pollution. I merely want to confirm that the chairman of the former Welsh water authority and the current chairman of its successor, the privatised Welsh Water company, Mr. John Jones, is a constituent of mine. Whenever we meet he never fails to remind me that the cleaning up of our act as regards water quality is an expensive business. I therefore stress what my hon. Friend is saying, as that argument needs to be emphasised and to be considered in relation to the incredible extra costs that will be involved in keeping the water in the lagoon behind the barrage to a reasonable standard, if that can be successfully achieved over a long period of time.

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend used the phrase "cleaning up our act" and that is a good description of the set of clauses that we are debating because it is precisely what we are trying to do. I use the word "our" as though we were among the sponsors, which we are not. We are mainly Members of Parliament representing south Wales, who are especially interested in the Bill. I include my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham as an honorary south Walian, which I am sure he will be pleased about, although I do not know whether his constituents would.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend mentioned the attitude of people such as the chairman of Welsh Water, who say that the consumer will never pay for that sort of treatment. They say that if there can be a conspiracy between consumers worried about the size of their water and sewerage bills, and the Government, who do not want the retail prices index to shoot up again to 8·9 per cent. or whatever and therefore say, "Keep water charges down", a conspiracy to keep the EC out of our water affairs, then so much the better. Our standards will be lower than those of the Germans and the Dutch, but what the hell. We British are a pretty dirty nation, especially we people in south Wales—we live among tips and so forth. People like the chairman of Welsh Water will say that if we can possibly get away with a minimalist approach, let us get away with it, as we have done for years.

I can remember meetings that I attended, with my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend, with the old Welsh Water—when it included the Welsh responsibilities of the present National Rivers Authority—where the question was asked, "Who needs any kind of treatment in coastal waters?" Five or six years ago there were long sea outfalls and it was said that the vigour of the British channel, the world's greatest natural flush lavatory, with 5 cu km of salt water roaring up the channel and back down again, dispersed the waste. The fact that it undispersed it and brought it back on the next tide did not seem to occur to Welsh Water, but eventually it had to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend. However, one can see from his description that that same minimalist attitude still remains, and that is why new clause 8 is necessary to ensure that the promoters are firmly pinned down before impoundment takes place to decide whether these are sensitive waters. If they are, how do the promoters propose to comply with the municipal waste water treatment requirements for tertiary—that is full—treatment? That means that one is able to drink the water when it comes out of the sewage treatment works; it does not contain eutrophicating surplus nutrients for algae, have biological consequences for our beaches, or contain the alleged super-germs, which have driven tourists away from all the beaches in the upper Bristol channel once it became known that they were there.

Dr. Marek: Before my hon. Friend leaves that point, will he say a little more about the River Rhine and consider whether what happens there would be effective in the Cardiff bay area? Where are the settlement tanks on the Rhine? How much do they cost? How effective are they? Could such treatment be used on the Taff?

2.45 am

Mr. Morgan: That intervention is pertinent to new clause 6 on phosphate and nitrate stripping. People were panic stricken about the state of the Rhine. Since the introduction of the Bill and the inception of the NRA, I know that the NRA has sent people to the Rhine to see the phosphate treatment works. I do not think that there is one in this country yet. Nobody has yet attempted to apply the higher standards in this country. As the only place where such works can be seen in action is on the Rhine, the NRA went over to see it. It has made a ballpark estimate

[Mr. Morgan]

of how much one would cost, as per the terms of new clause 6. The NRA is not unconscious of the EEC's possible requirement and of the duties that would then fall on the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office to comply with any directives because national authorities have to comply with EEC directives and are fined by the European Commission and Court of Justice if they do not.

The NRA popped over to have a look at the many phosphate-stripping works on the Rhine, all of which have been built in the past 10 years, totally transforming the Rhine—except when there is a nasty big chemical spill in Switzerland. The NRA has tried to apply that to the phosphate and nitrate problem on the Taff from the Cilfynydd sewage works and to the problem on the Ely at Miskin, the Taff and Ely being the two rivers that discharge into the bay that we are talking about converting into a lake. It was thought that it would cost about £50 million to apply phosphate stripping at the points where the Taff and the Ely enter the lake. Although one cannot cover money in such a Bill, that is the money side.

Much more important, however—as is evident from the way in which we have worded new clause 6 on phosphate and nitrate stripping—is the location of the settlement tanks, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham mentioned in the earlier part of his intervention. That issue raises the question whether one has the necessary land or the compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land that would be required to take the Taff and Ely out of their courses, through iron and aluminium deposition tanks, and bring them back on to their natural courses so that they can discharge into the lake. There are no powers under the Bill for the compulsory acquisition of the land needed to bring the Taff and the Ely off-line and back on-line via the iron and aluminium tanks which are the only effective method of phosphate stripping. The treatment could take place at the sewage works, but that would miss out all the storm sewer overflows, or SSOs, which are a colossal localised problem in south Wales where there are hundreds of such overflows.

If hon. Members do not know what an SSO is, there is a superb example on Lambeth bridge. Those of us who live in Kennington can see it when we walk home at night. There is not a big SSO problem in London, which does not get the variations in rainfall encountered in south Wales, where the valley formation and large numbers of people living in enclosed valley communities mean that when the river rises—after rain, it might rise as much as 6 inches in a few hours—after a heavy rainstorm in south Wales, the rivers Rhondda, Cynon, upper Taff and Ely all rise rapidly and the SSOs discharge sewage because that is preferable to sewage being discharged upwards through people's toilets, flooding their kitchens and bathrooms. That problem is local to south Wales, which is why it is important to put it on the record now. It is relevant to the question of how to remove phosphates and nitrates, and to the issue of acquiring the land to take the Taff and the Ely off-course so that the water can be put through the tanks. Without the necessary powers, one is leaving oneself open to the classic Welsh Water and NRA response in Wales —that people in Wales do not really want that sort of thing, that they cannot afford it and would not pay for it, so why should our standards be as high as Germany's? We should be in the lead on public standards, not always having to catch up with what the Germans were doing on the Rhine five years ago.

The intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham is relevant because I am extremely concerned about the nitrate and phosphate stripping of the rivers and I do not know where the nitrate and phosphate-stripping works would be located. I have asked several times whether they would be located in Sophia Gardens, next to Glamorgan county cricket club. Is that where they envisage putting the giant third-stage treatment works? If it does not go there, where else could it go? It must go into public playing fields somewhere, which are covered by covenants. If new clause 6 is not accepted, the promoters will not be under any compulsion to show where they would put the works. The same applies to new clause 8 on the sewer diversions. If the sewer diversion powers were applied, the sewage was taken out to Lavernock and secondary treatment was provided, that would be fair enough. We know that that could be done. It would not involve a lot of land.

I interpret the EEC municipal waste water directive as requiring third-stage treatment. That puts the promoters in serious trouble. Where in the Lavernock area could it be sited? Would it involve reviving the old plants for the Cog Moors sewage works near Dinas Powys where my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend and I used to live? It is a fine village. In the geography textbooks it is called the largest village in Wales. Between there and the north-eastern suburbs of Barry there was to be a large sewage treatment works. That was about 20 years ago. There was a big campaign against the works in Dinas Powys. People did not want a sewage treatment works, but they accepted it in the end. However, Welsh Water decided not to build it. It said that it did not need it and that long sea outfalls would do the trick.

Now Welsh Water is seeking to build sewage treatment works again. It always tries to get away with a minimalist approach by saying that people in Wales do not want to afford sewage treatment, do not really need it and that the channel is always there. The easy way out is to bung the sewage in the sea. Now everyone has had to wake up to the fact that bunging sewage in the sea drives away tourists and leaves one open to legal challenge from the EEC. Under pressure from Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, local Members of Parliament and members of the public who are anxious about their environment, Ministers have had to give undertakings.

Parents will not take young children to swim at St. Mary's Well bay, Penarth or other places where I took my children to swim in the belief that the salt killed all the germs. People no longer take that attitude. They want to know whether a beach has the EEC blue flag award. That can be achieved only if promoters of measures such as this are tied down to proving that they can meet the standards. The new clause would tie them down and if they could not show to the satisfaction of the authorities how they intended to meet the standards of waste water treatment that will apply when the barrage opens for business through to 2005 or 2015—that is as far as legislators can reasonably look ahead, to our retirement—they could not build the barrage. It would be a dereliction of our duty to allow them to do so. Unless we do that, we cannot bring about the improvements that are required.

We must be able to show that we are giving sewage treatment the priority that it deserves, that the south Wales tourist industry deserves and that the local public who want to teach their children to swim deserve.

We cannot always foresee exactly how an environmental problem will turn out. One of the latest problems that has emerged is generation of methane by tips, which was not foreseen. That is referred to in the new clause that deals with the Ferry road tip. That tip is a major generator of methane. The Ferry road tip is the direct subject matter of new clause 17 and the indirect subject matter of new clause 5. It is the biggest tip in Wales and one of the biggest in Britain. It contains 2 million cu m of waste. We were told by the promoters last year, when they proposed to acquire the tip for the purposes of removing it to Bedford, that it contained 3 million cu m, but we are now told that a more accurate measurement is 2 million cu m. We are happy to accept that downgrading, but it is still a very big tip.

The tip is at the peak of its methane-generating capabilities. It is at the height of its decomposition now because the average life of the black bags buried under the top soil is about 10 years. The tip has been open for business since 1972 and is still going strong. It has another seven or eight years of life, if use of it does not stop by Cardiff Bay development corporation acquiring it.

The interesting point about the methane is that no one realised until two or three years ago how serious a problem methane generation from tips was. We now know that it is a serious problem. Methane can migrate several hundred metres underground before it suddenly shoots up to the surface where it can be lit by a spark. It can get inside a house. That happened in Derbyshire last year or two years ago. Bells were set off everywhere. There was a major report.

Methane from tips such as that at Ferry road is a major problem which has just crept up on legislators such as ourselves and the regulatory authorities to which we vote money every year. We never realised how important it was. Giant tips generate a lot of methane and Ferry road tip will presumably be a major source of methane.

Cardiff city council is a forward-looking authority which has bought its own gas-testing rig. One result of Cardiff's being good at its job is that when the Department of the Environment collected statistics on the generation of methane from sites—they were published in the newspapers about two weeks ago—Cardiff was shown to have more notifiable sites generating methane above a certain level than any other city. I cannot remember whether Cardiff had 17 and London 19, or the other way round. That does not mean that the sites in Cardiff generate as much methane as those in London. It merely means that the authorities in Cardiff have been doing their job properly and have actively tried to discover where the methane is being generated at old tips, at today's tips and at places which are not even tips but where there is organic material under the soil, and they have found that there are 17 or 19 notifiable sites. That puts it roughly on a par with London, which is 20 times as big. If London had a gas-detection rig, I am sure that it would have 20 times as many methane-generating sites as Cardiff.

Ferry road tip is easily Cardiff's biggest waste disposal site and new clause 17 proposes that it should have major treatment. On the assumption that it is not moved but left in situ, we want to know how it is to be treated.

But there is an even bigger problem about the Ferry road tip. New clause 17 specifies that a measure of sealing must be carried out there before impoundment. We have emphasised that because the Ferry road tip is crucial to the Ferry road side of the barrage—in other words, the western edge of the barrage.

As we have heard dozens of times during the passage of the Bill through both Houses of Parliament, the purpose of the barrage is to create a lake which will assist in regenerating the area by producing land for development worth many millions of pounds per acre rather than £500,000 per acre, because it will be a classier environment. That is a lovely theory, but the problem is the geography of the lake.

Development on the east side of the lake near the docks is proceeding anyway. Running from the Queen Alexander dock entrance to the pierhead building, the property development subsidiary of Associated British Ports has said that it is proceeding with the first phase of its £160 million development on its 160 acres regardless of the barrage. It hopes to start in October.

It is only the area near the Ferry road tip on the west side of the barrage that the barrage can possibly make any difference to. That is why, after Second Reading 18 months ago, it was said that the Ferry road tip would be moved to Bedfordshire and fresh top soil brought in so that the land could be used for houses, business parks, offices and so on. There were lovely models of that. That would be the pay-off from the barrage. The barrage makes no difference to the east side near the docks, but it does make a difference to the area near the Ferry road tip.

We are now confronted with the revelations from the Touche Ross report and the discussions between its consultants and the Welsh Office. I note that the junior Minister is writing furiously—no doubt he is evaluating his response to my speech. It is now clear that the Ferry road tip will not be removed, so how does one develop the west side of the barrage?

3 am

Is a high-class property development envisaged near a tip that will be generating methane? That tip must be sealed and the methane extracted from it. We have set out in new clause 17 what should happen to the Ferry road tip. It should be treated, sealed and then converted for the most appropriate low-density land use as a former municipal tip. As in the past, it could be developed as a playing field and, eventually, after 50 years, when the tip is inert and no more methane is being generated, it could be converted for a more high-class use.

At present it is impossible to envisage the exhumation of that tip, its wholesale excavation or the outlandish transportation of it in cross-country trains full of stinking, half-decomposed refuse. The tip should be treated to make it more environmentally acceptable. That means that one must accept that the site can no longer form the centrepiece of a high-class, yuppie development of office blocks. One will not get mega-valuable property development on the land around the Ferry road tip.

If the tip remains, it must be converted for playing field use and similar low-density development, with industrial development around it. That would be acceptable, sensible and safe so long as the tip is made safe as a result of methane extraction and sealing. If one accepts that, one must accept that there is no economic case for the barrage.

The sole purpose of the barrage has been to generate high-class property development around the Ferry road tip. If the tip remains, however, sensible, safe development will occur if we accept the strictures of new clause 17. One should not imagine that it is possible to remove the problem from Cardiff to Bedford.

Sludge dumping at sea is covered by the sewage diversion proposal in new clause 8 and by new clause 19. We have had a lengthy, scientific, erudite deposition on algae scum from my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and I shall not repeat what he said. He is right to suggest that algae represent a great problem. They are recognised as such on page 36 of the Bill which already specifies the removal of algae growths as a duty to be laid on the undertakers.

Algae growths are a problem in dry summers such as those that we had in 1976, 1981, 1989 and 1990. In general, however, we have an exceptionally dry summer every five years. In those years the entire country is subject to drought and that causes huge algae blooms. When that happens, the oxygen levels crash. Algae require oxygen at the breeding stage; without it they die and decay anaerobically at the bottom of the water. A major fish kill will then result. At one time, it was envisaged that there would be a large coarse fishery in the bay. We are still not absolutely clear whether the promoters still envisage a coarse fishery. One new clause that I tabled, but which has not been selected, stipulated that they must include a coarse fishery. It would be a crying shame if the requisite water quality standards could not be achieved. I am sure that the promoters will want to inform the general public in Cardiff what they are to expect and whether there will be a coarse fishery. After all—and we shall return to this subject on the midges amendment—without a coarse fishery, how will one control the midges? Coarse fish eat colossal quantities of midges and we are informed that there will be 11 billion midges—not in the middle of the lake but above the shallows and around the edges, nearer to where people will be walking.

The problem with algae is that they may crash and cause a major fish kill—if we have any fish—every five years when there is a summer drought. To prevent that from happening, one has to step in and hoover them out. A harvesting machine must be developed to pull the algae out of the water before they reach the blooming stage and cause a crash. In a drought, just the right conditions may be created. The sunlight, the temperature of the water, the nutrients coming in from sewage disposal and so on may all be ideal.

The promoters must tell us what they intend to do to avert the problem of algae. If they accept what most scientists accept—that every five years, when there is a drought, there will be an uncontrollable problem—they must accept, too, that that will mean a major stink in the lake. The lake may have to be drained. All the fish in it will have died and will have to be fished out. We may be talking about millions of coarse fish—which will then have to be taken out and burnt—in addition to the algal scum, which will also have to be disposed of. It cannot be dumped at sea. There is no question of sewage sludge including algal scum being shoved out by way of diverted sewer pipes via the Lavernock outfall. In 1995, that will not be allowed. There will be no method of handling huge quantities of algal scum, and that will result in major fish kills and major problems in the drought summers that we must expect every five years.

We want to tie the promoters down now. We want them to make proposals regarding the treatment of the algal blooms and scum mentioned on page 36 of the Bill. We have not invented the subject. We want to see the colour of the promoters' money before we give them permission to impound. How do they propose to solve the problem? At the moment, the only solution that we are offered is a load of waffle—a promise that the National Rivers Authority will extract from the promoters an assurance that they will solve the problem. But the distinguished specialist scientists are saying that they do not yet have a solution. We say, "If the scientists say that there is not a solution to the problem, we must leave an obligation on the promoters to find a solution or accept that they cannot build a barrage." We cannot allow them to build a barrage on trust, knowing of the kind of problems that they themselves admit will arise. The highly eutrophic waters will give rise in drought summers not just to the early-season cladophera-type algae that we see every year in Cardiff but to the later microcystis and to the other nasties that caused the deaths on Rutland Water. Every five years, in drought conditions, we would have a proliferation of blue-greens and therefore oxygen crashes and consequent fish kills. We should then have to face the problem of draining the lake and scraping out and burning dead fish bodies.

The current ministerial sales line, and the approach of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, who has moved to the Front Bench, is, "Trust the authorities to extract the right undertakings and to establish the correct and acceptable modus operandi with the promoters." We say that if the promoters cannot show us what that modus operandi will be, we do not think that the barrage should be built. We therefore urge that a permission to impound shall be dependent on the achievement of a specific modus operandi acceptable to the scientists working in the regulatory bodies. We want that informaion to be produced and published with no hole-in-corner negotiations going on between the Welsh Office and consultants behind the backs of the people of Cardiff and their democratic representatives and about which we know nothing—unless, that is, we are lucky enough to acquire odd parts of the consultants' reports. That is not good enough. We want to be specific. We want the promoters to produce and publish a plan that shows exactly how they propose to solve the problem of leachates seeping out of the Ferry road tip and of the sealing off of that tip.

We have not heard yet, but it is obvious that the promoters are worried about the sealing, or they would never have suggested removing the tip wholesale as a sine qua non of any subsequent property development. We think that they are probably coming round to the view that it cannot be moved—in which case they should accept new clause 17, and recognise that it should be treated and sealed. That would be a step towards an acceptable compromise between the promoters and those who feel that the problems have not been solved in relation to the five big issues—leachate, phosphate and nitrate stripping, sewage removal, the sealing of the Ferry road tip and the disposal of algal growth arising from surplus nutrients, which itself arises from the insoluble problems posed by the 250 or so storm sewer overflows in the rivers feeding the man-made lake and their tributaries.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd said that it was putting the cart before the horse for the

sponsors to seek permission for the building of the barrage before solving the problems. I think that I have found the solution. The only time that the cart is put before the horse is when the horse is suffering from galloping gastric dysentery. In those circumstances, in front of the horse is the only place for the cart to be.

The south Wales river system is not yet in a position to avoid galloping gastric dysentery—and with the 250 storm sewer overflows it may never be. The barrage should not be built until a solution is proposed. It has been suggested —my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) heard it, and I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth also mentioned it —that, given its considerable Government backing, if we accept the package the Government will feel obliged to put their hands in their pockets and give a lot of money to Welsh Water, the National Rivers Authority or the barrage. The barrage must have first-class conditions. Never mind what happens to investment programmes elsewhere in Wales; the Treasury must cough up for the barrage—although it may not cough up for many other purposes, such as hospitals.

The Government's sales pitch is "Have a barrage—you may not want it, but we are telling you that it is good for you." We ask, "What will you give us with the barrage? Will you improve the sewerage system?" They say, "Sure —if you are willing to accept the barrage, we will certainly give you money for your sewage disposal system." In the first place, that could not be called honest dealing with the public in south Wales. If our sewerage needs improvement, it should have it.

No improvement of the storm sewer overflows is being offered. People say, "Surely there is a technique. If there are 250 such overflows in the valleys—in the tributaries of the Taff and Ely, and in the rivers themselves, which feed the lake—there must be a solution." I have not heard of one. In the 1970s, a huge investment was devoted to solving the storm sewer overflow problem on the Tyne, the Wear and the Mersey. Those areas were in a way similar —they housed the first wave of the industrial revolution, and contain the old sewerage systems. Anyone who walked along the banks of the Tyne in the 1960s and 1970s will remember that in the middle of Newcastle the river stank, due to storm sewer overflows.

I believe that £100 million was invested. That was heavy bread back in 1971, when the Secretary of State for Wales of 1987-89 was Secretary of State for the Environment in the Government led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He authorised the Mersey and the Tyne to have complete new sewerage systems, which included new rainwater sewers about 10 ft wide running alongside the Mersey, the Tyne and Wear. The purpose was to catch all the surplus rainwater to prevent the rivers from always being full of sewage after heavy rain.

As far as I know it is impossible to do that in south Wales. A new rainwater sewer parallel to the Taff and comparable to the system alongside the Tyne and the Mersey to solve storm sewer overflow problems would leave no room for the houses in the valleys. It would be above the road and the houses would dominate the environment. That is because the Mersey, Tyne and Wear do not have catchment areas with rainfall similar to that in south Wales. Rain in south Wales discharges immediately into the rivers in the 19 valleys.

3.15 am

I am sure that the Minister of State, Welsh Office is aware of the level of rainfall on the plateau of the south Wales coalfield from which rivers would discharge into this lake. There are 90 to 100 inches of rain a year there, which is greatly in excess of the rainfall in the catchment areas of the Mersey, Tyne and Wear. The problem is made worse by deforestation because wood was needed for pit props or battle ships. That led to the loss of soil on the valley sides and there are bare sandstone faces on many of the valleys which feed the tributaries. Rainwater on the plateau gushes down the bare sandstone faces. There is no soil to absorb it and it is not taken up by the roots of trees because there are no trees. The water reaches the rivers within an hour. The river rises fast and the pressure on the rainwater sewers is such that if sewage was not discharged into them, it would enter the houses.

A rainwater gutter system similar to that on the Mersey, Tyne and Wear to take surplus water after heavy rain would need to be 10 to 20 ft high and would obliterate the landscape. It is physically out of the question. Municipal engineers who are experts in that field say that such a solution would totally obliterate the living environment of the valleys.

Mr. Win Griffiths: My hon. Friend is in full flood on this issue. He is discussing the possible adoption of the scheme that was introduced on the Tyne and the Mersey in the early 1970s. Is there any solution to the storm drain problem? If there is not, what will happen in the valleys?

Mr. Morgan: Modest improvements could be made to the storm sewer overflows. The filters could be cleaned and more modern valves could be fitted. There is no proposal to do that, but civil engineers are looking at the problem in south Wales and they say that we could have better storm sewer overflows. There are 250 of them and it is said that we do not know where some of them are. Many of them are private and do not belong to the National Rivers Authority or Welsh Water. Some of them are owned by small private sewerage works, and not all of them are authorised. Some have been built at isolated dwellings.

Storm sewer overflows could all be classified and equipped with modern filters and valves. That solves one problem and might catch some of the solid material, but it will not solve the problem of nutrients because small non-solid bits of material would still be washed into the rivers.

The problem occurs only during spate flows, and some people contend that that solves the problem. Such a suggestion is sometimes made about Rutland Water, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly spoke so eloquently. Everybody panicked after 10 sheep and 20 dogs—or perhaps it was 20 sheep and 10 dogs—died after lapping the water in the summer of 1989. Everyone said, "My God, what are we going to do about this?" The promoters and the regulatory authorities were asked what they intended to do to avoid a repetition of the Rutland Water incident, bearing in mind that it is admitted in the Bill that the waters are highly eutrophicated. They have not tried to deny that. They know that it means that in warm weather there is the potential for massive algae growth. They said that there was no need to worry about the Cardiff bay barrage lake because the water exchange will be so much more rapid than that which prevailed in the Rutland Water incident, where the same water had

[Mr. Morgan]

been present for 18 months. The average exchange in Cardiff bay would take place over about five days. It was said that the storm sewer overflows would work after heavy rain, and retention in the lake would be only one or two days.

Although retention time in a man-made lake will be far less than that in a river system—it might be only five days—any enriching material that is in the water, whether solids or ground-down bits of solids that have passed through the filters, will not be discharged through the sluices, which primarily will be top sluices to suit the fish. Any material that is below the top two or three feet of water in a 30 ft barrage will not be discharged. It will be blocked when it hits the wall. It will drop to the bottom at the speed that the water drops when it hits the concrete wall. It will then be distributed at the bottom of the lake. That, basically, is what the following year's algae will eat. That is what the following year's midges will feed on. They regard enriched mud as a favourable environment. That is the sort of environment that we shall see for the foreseeable future because of the SSOs.

It is true that SSOs do not open unless there has been a heavy shower, but many of them operate frequently in the summer. There might be a thunderstorm in July or August and a massive flow of water. There may be the discharge of 50 or 100 SSOs. The day after the storm might be warm and dry. Indeed, the following week might be dry. The sewage will enter the lake and be distributed on the bottom. If there is a dry spell of about a week thereafter, conditions will be perfect for an algae bloom. It looks as though there is one in the glass of water that I have been handed, for which I am otherwise grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend. I think that it is known as Passing Cloud—my original American Indian name, but that was in a previous life.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I wish that it had been Sitting Bull.

Mr. Morgan: I hope that the *Hansard* reporter caught that interjection. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman prefers that name because Sitting Bull opposed the advance of the railway. The private Bill procedure of the United States Congress was used to advance capitalism and the eradication of the hunting grounds of the Sioux. I remember that when I was a boy I used to pronounce the name of that tribe as Siowax, not realising that French explorers had reached the lands of the Sioux before the Welsh.

Storm sewer overflows represent a real problem, and one which should not be dodged. To avoid that happening, we must incorporate in the Bill the reinforced concrete mechanism set out in new clause 8 dealing with sewer diversion, and the mechanisms that are set out in the other new clauses providing for phosphate and nitrate stripping. We say that in the absence of a reinforced concrete mechanism and without the finding of a solution, there will be no barrage and impounding will not start. As it stands, the Bill is wishy-washy. It states, in effect, "All right, use the best available technology and you should be able to obtain permission to go ahead with the project. If there are problems, people will accept that you did not know as much as should have been known at the time. We hope that a lower standard will be accepted. After all, what could Parliament have been expected to do about this in 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 when it considered the Bill?"

Mr. Win Griffiths: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West for the past hour and 55 minutes, but he has not yet referred to the fact that once the barrage is built, it will be there to stay. Given what my hon. Friend has said about unavoidable, catastrophic pollution problems, what about the cost implications and the dis-cost benefits of the barrage in view of the pollution problems?

Mr. Morgan: I am not quite sure what dis-cost benefits are. However, as I have already said, we must move on from the present position. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and I agree about that. We do not accept that we can continue to use the sea and, in particular, the Bristol channel as the world's greatest flush lavatory for much longer. We accept that the sea does a great job because of the vigour of the tidal action and that it acts as the kidneys of the system in intertidal areas by its saline flushing action and its sweeping out to sea—and the sweeping in of whatever is out at sea, including pollutants. The sea acts as a good, basic "nature knows best" mechanism for correcting the worst aspects of virology, bacteriology and solids and other visually offensive sewage material.

The sea does a job, but we must adopt second and third stage treatment. If we have treatment coupled with the marine flushing action of the sea moving in and out, that is a respectable environment for the standards that we anticipate for the 21st century.

Development would then progress very much along the lines envisaged by Sam Pickstock, the chairman of Tarmac Homes, in his epic interview in *Country Living*. He said that he thought that the future of Cardiff did not lie with trying to make it a mediterranean playground as portrayed in those wonderful artists' impressions. Those artists were hired by the promoters to draw brilliant iridescent blue lakes with little white boats bobbing up and down on them manned by people wearing green tee-shirts, black sunglasses and red shorts. That is all very pretty, but as Sam Pickstock said, what has that got to do with south Wales or Cardiff? Cardiff is not the mediterranean. Why can we not accept the environment in which we operate? If it is a little misty, grey, brown, or whatever the appropriate pastel shade might be for the south Wales environment, why try to compare it with the mediterranean or with Baltimore?

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has made a pertinent point about the image and the reality in terms of the technical problems that he so ably described to the House. With regard to the overflows from the storm sewers, I assume that there would be a build-up of organic material on the bottom of the lagoon. In the summer, the water will heat up. As it is accepted that there will be periods when the oxygen level in the lagoon would be extremely low, would not hydrogen sulphide gas be produced? Everyone knows that the smell of that gas does not fit in with the colourful mediterranean picture presented by the promoters. Will my hon. Friend comment on that?

Mr. Morgan: I had intended to make that important point. The promoters say that they thought of it and that

they have provided a solution, but they do not know whether it works because it has never been tried anywhere else. One of the few good features of the Bill is that it includes a specific commitment to provide 5 cu litres of dissolved oxygen per gallon of water. I do not remember the precise standard, but it is to be found in the NRA protective clauses.

During a summer drought, river flows would drop. The proportion of river flows represented by treated sewage would therefore increase, in which case eutrophication would become not just a problem but an acute problem. Highly enriched water would enter a warm, shallow lake and provide perfect conditions for the multiplication of algae. The regulatory authorities would pursue the undertakings that they had obtained from the promoters when the oxygen level looked as though it would drop below the required standard. At that point the oxygenation machines would be introduced—standard machines that one sees in all sewage works. Cardiff bay lake would then become one of the world's largest sewage works. Artificially injected oxygen would be introduced to neutralise the highly enriched treated sewage water.

3.30 am

Mr. Win Griffiths: My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred to the deposition of the pollutants on the bed of the lake. Might not the oxygenation process be similar to what happens in a jacuzzi? Apart from the unpleasant smell of hydrogen sulphide, would not an unpleasant scum form on top of the lake?

Mr. Morgan: My hon. Friend raises an important point. He anticipates what could easily happen but what is not intended to happen. The promoters intend to get in first. When they realised, having consulted their monitoring equipment, that the oxygen level was dropping to the point where anaerobic fermentation takes place they would introduce oxygenation equipment to increase the oxygen level. Healthy bacteria, rather than anaerobic bacteria, would form the metabolic process in that enriched environment.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Is not that the counsel of desperation? Large amounts of oxygen would be pumped into the lagoon. We face the same problem in the River Towy in Carmarthen. Poorly treated sewage enters the river upstream, which leads downstream to low oxygen levels in the summer and to the pumping of oxygen into the river. We have the equipment to pump oxygen into the river. Is not it similar to artificial respiration? A lagoon would be created where there could be low oxygen levels. Having created a problem, we should then have to devise a technical "fix." Would not it be much wiser not to create the problem in the first place?

Mr. Morgan: I was about to make that point. Oxygen would not be introduced for a known amenity purpose. We should have to cope with the deleterious side effects on the environment.

This is being done on the basis of the sales pitch that it is good for the environment. How are we to turn the environmental promise into reality when we know that the proposed solution to the problem of detritus is a kind of mobile boom that is supposed to collect floating bits of log and the doors that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd sees passing as he looks down on the River Taff? What might be described as a lorry without wheels will be one of the intrusions into the lake. This machine will grab at bits of detritus. Then there will be the algae-harvesting equipment, whose purpose will be to prevent the algal blooms from getting out of hand. Those machines, too, will have to be able to get into the shallows as the algae will grow in a big way around the fringes. In terms of raised water temperature, sunlight has a much more drastic effect at the edges than in the middle, where the water may be 20 ft deep. Major algal blooms will not occur in the middle, but at the edges—in the correct conditions of nutrients and sunlight—a couple of algae could become a billion in about an hour.

In addition, there will be the oxygenation equipment. I still have a very deep scepticism about the nature of this equipment. It is reckoned that there will be fixed oxygenation points, as well as mobile points whose purpose will be to do a "fire brigade" job. Obviously, the lake will have a very variable bed. If patches of water look as though they are about to have an algal bloom, the oxygenation equipment will be rushed in on a "fire brigade" basis.

So, in the middle of a drought, in a hot August, there will be three things rushing around the lake at the same time. That, of course, is the very time at which the lake, as an amenity, should be at its most attractive. When do most people go out walking? On a fine summer evening. When do most tourists go round the world? In August. Whether what is proposed might produce an acceptable environment on a freezing February day, shortly after a furious rain storm, is hardly relevant. The question is whether it will be an amenity when most people will want such an amenity. The early artists' impressions on the basis of which this scheme was sold depicted a shimmering, blue lake with lots of little dinghies bobbing about, and the occasional person water-skiing. A fleet of mobile oxygenating machines and an algae harvesting boat sucking up algae, or cutting it away from stones, and then discharging it on to some beach or jetty provide a very different picture. People will think, "This is a pretty rum lake. What was it made for? Is that big concrete wall for the pupose of generating electricity? It certainly prevents us from seeing the winking lights of Weston-super-Mare." They will come to the conclusion that the people of Cardiff have been sold a bum deal, and that the people who thought the scheme up should have been told, after about six months of study, that while it looked nice on paper—especially when depicted by an artist in the most favourable possible light, with lots of bright colours and pretty scenes—the environmental problems would not be manageable.

From time to time, including tonight, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has referred to the Bute East dock. He has said that the water coming into this lake will be the same as that in the Bute East dock. He has made the point that if that dock constitutes an amenity, the man-made lake resulting from this barrage will surely be an amenity. It is important to put on record the fact that there are many problems in respect of the Bute East dock. The water is drawn in from the feeder at Black Weir and flows down through the town centre. That comes from the same source—the River Taff—but there are some differences, the biggest of which is that Bute East dock is a 10 ft deep square box whereas the Cardiff bay lake would be a sloping shallow-edged lake. Most of it would be shallows, but there are no shallows in the Bute East dock,

[Mr. Morgan]

so there is no potential for warming in sunlight. Water 1 ft or 2 ft deep provides ideal conditions for algal blooms; water 10 ft deep does not. Algae are still in Bute East dock, but not huge blooms.

In August 1989, algal blooms were worse in the feeder than in Bute East dock. Complaints to the city environmental health officer resulted in his having to warn the owners of Bute East dock—South Glamorgan county council, Tarmac plc and Cardiff city council—that they must get rid of the algae because they were clogging the feeder, which is about 4 ft deep. The algae were apparent in the dock. Employees at the county council's new headquarters, which adjoin the dock, could see that something strange was happening, but it was not a bloom; the real bloom occurred in the feeders.

Bute East dock is not as shallow as the proposed man-made lake will be, but lorryloads of algae were removed on the instructions of the city environmental health officer in order to comply with the complaints of residents of the new Tarmac housing estate, which was built with the assistance of the Welsh Office through the highest urban development grant ever given in Britain of £8 million. It is a good development, but occasionally it causes problems with eutrophication and algal blooms, of which August 1989 was a prime example.

The second difference between Bute East dock and the new man-made lake is that the dock was directly locked with the sea. As a result, it is not all fresh water but has a salt water cell at the bottom. Approximately 1 ft of pure salt water has deposited itself on the bottom of the dock because salt water is heavier than fresh water. To some extent, that would control some of the problems that would arise with the man-made lake. The promoters accept that salt water will occasionally enter the lake by accident, which is why there will be a bottom sluice to get rid of it. That has the beneficial effect of being a modest form of biological control on the worst biological problems of salt water flowing from the Taff via the feeder.

The third difference between Bute East dock and the lake is that the input can be controlled. Water from the Taff and Ely cannot be controlled, but what flows into the Bute East dock can be controlled. Flows can be cut off or increased because the feeder acts as a control. There is no control over what comes down the Taff and Ely, so Bute East dock has fewer management problems. The few problems that have been experienced act as a warning, which is why we have emphasised the need to ensure that the barrage cannot be impounded until the promoters find solutions to the problems that we have raised. The city environmental health officer has expressed great concern about the use already of Bute East dock for rowing purposes even though it is not conventional rowing where one might capsize. It is dragon racing in large galleys which are unlikely to capsize. Nevertheless, there is still potential danger from Weil's disease; although it is a rare disease, it is fatal. Therefore, the environmental health officer has asked for strict controls, but he does not have power to ban the use of the dock. He can warn the public, but he cannot ban them from using the dock.

3.45 am

The same problem occurs with salmon in the River Taff. Salmon have returned to the Taff since the sewage works at Cilfynydd were opened and they have also returned to the River Ely since the Miskin sewage works were opened because the oxygen levels in the rivers in the summer have improved. But the National Rivers Authority warns people who catch the salmon not to eat them. I remind hon. Members that there are no trout in the Taff or in the Ely because trout are non-migratory fish which eat while they are in a river. Salmon and sea trout migrate; they are in a spawning mode when they are coming up the river and in a migrating mode when going down, and they are not interested in eating. They breathe oxygen in through the water. That can taint the flesh and pose certain problems, but they can survive because they are not eating.

I was shocked when Lord Crickhowell, on Second Reading in the other place, did not mention that. He said that the fact that salmon had returned to the Taff showed that the answer had been found to our prayers and that we now had a clean river. He forgot that we had a re-oxygenated river because of the building of the sewage works at Cilfynydd. However, that did not allow salmon to eat in the river; it meant that salmon could make a spawning run when they were already well stoked up with food from their transatlantic migration. Official advice to the public was not to eat those salmon. The River Taff and its tributaries meet the standard for salmonic fisheries because it considers only oxygen levels, but they do not reach the standard of allowing people to consume their products because of the tainting of the flesh and the carrying of virological diseases. Rivers which pass through urban areas such as Cardiff and Pontypridd are bound to have rats, and, if there are rats, there will be virological side effects.

Those are some of the environmental problems of water quality involved in the five new clauses which have been grouped together. We must nail the promoters down on them because the Bill was represented before the establishment of the National Rivers Authority. Now that it has come into being we are trying to put into the Bill what we think it would have been negotiating for had it been in existence. We see the evidence of that in what it is asking for in the Usk Barrage Bill. It is too late for the NRA to do the job on this Bill so we are trying to do it. We hope that there will be some movement later today when we complete the debate.

Dr. Marek: I listened with great interest to what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) had to say. He said it succinctly, but used such a lot of material that his speech took some time in total. He demonstrated very well the purpose of the five new clauses, which are grouped together and are all important. It is a pity that we have not yet had any comment, either from the Bill's sponsor—who has just walked back into the Chamber—or the Minister.

Reference has been made to the leaked letter from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Home Secretary. I shall not read it all out, but at the end of the first paragraph the Secretary of State for Wales talks about the Cardiff bay barrage. He states:

> "I see it as a vital component of one of the most exciting urban regeneration projects in Europe, whose completion will bring enormous economic benefits to the whole of South Wales."

One might have thought that we would have at least one word uttered from those on the Treasury Bench this evening, but we have not heard anything. In the leaked document, the Secretary of State for Wales describes the

barrage as one of the most exciting urban regeneration projects. I should have thought that a Minister would have come to the Dispatch Box to say so.

Mr. Wyn Griffiths: Would not my hon. Friend go even further and say that, although the Treasury Bench has been graced by the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State, given the release of the letter, the Secretary of State should have been here to defend the letter and comment on the fundamentally important debate that we have been having on the conditions under which we can consider the building of the barrage?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I thought that I saw the Secretary of State for Wales drifting in through the door into one of the Lobbies. At present, government is done by fiat because the Government majority is huge. There are other people to do the Government's work and sit there on the Front Bench. I mean no disrespect to the Minister, but he has no doubt been told that his job is to sit there and say nothing. It is a great pity because we are debating a private Bill that will affect the lives of many tens of thousands of Welsh citizens in the Cardiff district. At this consideration stage, we should be fashioning the Bill into a better piece of legislation.

We had a Division on the closure motion on the clauses and the House decided not to close the debate. I always believe that there is a purpose in what the House does and if it decided not to close the debate, why did it do so? Its purpose must have been either that there is some sense in the clauses and they merit further debate or that the Government have lost control of the House. The Whip has clearly been put on because of the leaked letter from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Home Secretary. The Government have lost control of the House and are no longer able to summon 100 of their Back-Benchers or payroll vote to force the Bill through.

What are the Government doing? It is a Government Bill as I see it; the Secretary of State for Wales said that he regards it as one of the most exciting urban regeneration projects. It is not difficult to discern from that what the Government should be doing, and have been doing secretly—giving the Bill their vigorous support.

Mr. Alan Williams: Is not this a curious debate? Hon. Members decided a couple of hours ago that we needed more debate on these clauses, yet no one from the Government has said a word about the pollution consequences of the barrage and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, who is the sponsor of the Bill, has not been in the Chamber. It is a very one-sided debate. We could keep putting forward the arguments, but no one is here to try to reply.

Dr. Marek: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. We are not here merely because we want to block the Bill. Let me make my position absolutely clear; I should like to see the right form of development in that part of Cardiff, and that probably goes for many of my hon. Friends who sit on these Benches. However, we are worried about the way in which it is done.

It is treating the House with disrespect to a certain extent when the sponsor of the Bill is not here to listen to our arguments and seek to put us right or to make helpful observations, or for the Minister and other members on the Treasury Bench merely to sit there—no doubt on instructions. They are not going to say anything publicly in the House because they have a large majority and prefer to govern in secret by writing confidential letters from one Secretary of State to another. That is not the way in which we should legislate.

Mr. Alan Williams: It is disgraceful.

Dr. Marek: I think that it is disgraceful and if the Government had any integrity they would at least talk to the sponsor of the Bill, take it away and come back with it another day, having thought about it afresh. If they will not do that, all that we can do is to continue to press our reasonable arguments to find out whether concessions can be made, the arguments find favour or are right or until the sponsor of the Bill or the Minister stands up and tells us where we are going wrong in our arguments.

There are five new clauses in this group and they are governed by the Cardiff Bay development corporation. Although I raised the question earlier with one of my hon. Friends, it would help me if the sponsor of the Bill, or the Minister, could give me the present terms of reference for the Cardiff Bay development corporation and say exactly how it approached the Bill. Did it table the Bill because it wanted to make a lot of money out of it? Was it because certain landowners in the area would become extremely wealthy? That is unlikely to be the case on its own. If there was a term of reference relating to the benefit of the people of Cardiff, how strongly has that been put in the articles of association or in the setting up of the development corporation? Only after finding that out can we place some trust in what is in the Bill, and can we believe what we are told, where the Bill does not spell out the details.

All the new clauses are similar and they have rightly been grouped together. The first clause states:

"Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to sources of leachate in contact with the waters of the inland bay or of the groundwater in hydraulic contact with the waters of the inland bay and its proposals for removal, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate.".

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) spoke at length on that clause and made many pertinent points that I do not want to repeat. However, I do not think that he has been answered succinctly or effectively by the Minister, by other Members on the Treasury Bench, who have said nothing all evening, or by the sponsor of the Bill.

What is wrong with the undertakers producing and publishing a plan

"pertaining to sources of leachate in contact with the waters of the inland bay or of the groundwater in hydraulic contact with the waters of the inland bay and its proposals for removal, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate."?

The new clause does not state that all leachate must be removed, simply that proposals for the removal, relocation and improvement of such sources must be drawn up and published. It does not mean complete removal, relocation or improvement. It is a straightforward, simple and helpful new clause which, if agreed to by the sponsor or on the Government's recommendation to the sponsor that it is a helpful clause, would enable us to finish our debate on this group much earlier. New clause 5 is thus eminently sensible.

4 am

New clause 6, which is grouped with new clause 5, states:

"Before constructing the Barrage, the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate-stripping of the waters of the rivers entering the inland bay and their tributaries in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay."

Again, it is a helpful new clause. Although it refers to "compliance with future water quality objectives", there is no commitment to action apart from producing and publishing a plan. The new clause relates purely to the provision of information and the undertaking of research.

We have not received a sensible reply to our request for new clause 6 to be passed and added to the Bill. The Minister could have told my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that he thought that sensible. The public—the people of Cardiff and of Wales—should know. The Minister has simply sat on the Front Bench and remained quite. Indeed, my hon. Friend is not in his place to tell me why those provisions cannot be accepted.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does my hon. Friend agree that the main reason why the promoters do not agree with new clause 6 is that it exposes the inadequacies of the preparation for the barrage in the Bill, which refuses to acknowledge that there are problems which, at the moment, appear difficult to solve but which, if admitted to in the Bill as drafted, would mean that the promoters would have to call a halt to these proceedings. As hon. Members have already said, it is a bit like praying that a solution to a major problem will somehow come along, provided that one keeps the momentum of the development going, and that the technical problems will be solved when it is convenient to do so. The basis of our objections, as expressed in new clause 6 and the new clauses grouped with it, is that we believe that the solutions should be clear before the development proceeds any further.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes a helpful point.

What am I to think? I can only think and surmise along the lines suggested by my hon. Friend. In the absence of any counter-argument, there can only be the supposition that there are serious problems over what happens to the water. Indeed, I go further and say that the development corporation is probably in this for the money. People working for the corporation are probably earning good money. The chances are that they will make their money selling the houses before the lake is full, and that when it is full, they will be away and the people who bought the houses will have to put up with all the problems. By then the employees of the corporation will have left the job or retired. They would no longer have any responsibility. That is probably too cynical a view. Certainly at this stage, I do not wish to ascribe that view to people working for the corporation. But surely it is up to the Minister—it is now the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, as Ministers seem to be taking it in shifts and to be under strict instructions not to say a word.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: The Minister is writing something.

Dr. Marek: I hope that he is writing a reply to set our minds at ease. It is up to the Minister or my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to prove to the House that what I have asserted is not the case.

New clause 6 is entirely sensible. It asks for nothing other than the production and publication of a plan.

One might think that new clause 8 caused a problem and would involve the expenditure of millions of pounds. But it says:

"Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to the sewer outfalls discharging directly into the inland bay or into the waters of the rivers discharging into the Bay or the tributaries thereof, showing the proposed means of removal, relocation or improvement thereof and the agreement of the owner of each outfall to such removal, relocation or improvement."

A certain amount of action is required by the new clause. It asks first for a plan to be produced and published. No action is required in that part of the new clause. It is simply a question of doing some research, finding out the position and producing and publishing a plan pertaining to the sewer outfalls. No one in the House would object to that. There cannot be anything wrong with knowing the location of the sewer outfalls which discharge into the river. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West brought out that point forcefully in his speech. He said that there are serious problems with storm sewer overflows and that they should be mapped and charted so that we know where they are. I am sure that every citizen in Cardiff would say, "Hear, hear" to that.

The first part of new clause 8 asks for a plan to be produced. The second part of new clause 8 asks the undertakers to show the proposed means of removal, relocation or improvement of each outfall. Some of the SSOs or sewer outfalls may be entirely innocuous. Of course, many of them are not innocuous, so something would have to be done about them. But if a fresh water lake is to be dammed up, every citizen would think it absolutely right for the Cardiff Bay development corporation to examine each of the sewer outfalls and either remove or relocate them. At the very least, it should improve them. There is nothing whatever wrong with new clause 8. Yet we have heard nothing from the Minister. Nor, indeed, have we had a comprehensive reply from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Dr. Kim Howells: I do not know whether my hon. Friend has enjoyed a tour of the docks with the Cardiff Bay development corporation. The undertakers of the Bill make great use of the fact that there are some particularly noisome, vile sewage outfalls at present. They take one to Pier Head and point down and show a vermin run and an outfall that flows out through the old dock. They say, "How long do you want that to continue?" Then they cast their hands up across the mud flats that stretch out towards the channel and denounce all the mud flats as though they were an extension of the sewer.

As one of those who visited the docks and was shown around, although not as part of the great freebie which I understand took place at a different time, I drew a different conclusion. My conclusion was that those sewage outfalls must certainly be eradicated, but as part of the general eradication of outfalls to which the Government are now pledged. There is an indefinite time limit, but they are pledged to that. The lesson to be drawn from it is that the mud flats should be cleaned up and that they are not

something to be abhorred. I have found them quite attractive at times. If the course line and river were cleaned up they have the potential to be very attractive.

In pushing this, we are making our overall argument that the clean-up of the estuary can be achieved without the construction of a barrage and we just have answers about what exactly will happen to the sewage outfalls.

Mr. Ron Davies *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I want to be absolutely clear that the House knows what we are doing. I will put the Question again on the closure.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 52, Noes 8.

Division No. 117] **[4.11 am**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Kirkhope, Timothy
Boswell, Tim	Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Bowis, John	Lightbown, David
Brazier, Julian	MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Bright, Graham	Mans, Keith
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'Y's)*	Michael, Alun
Burt, Alistair	Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Moss, Malcolm
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Nicholls, Patrick
Dorrell, Stephen	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James	Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Flynn, Paul	Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Foster, Derek	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Gale, Roger	Stern, Michael
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan	Stevens, Lewis
Golding, Mrs Llin	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Goodlad, Alastair	Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Grist, Ian	Thurnham, Peter
Hanley, Jeremy	Tredinnick, David
Harris, David	Widdecombe, Ann
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Wood, Timothy
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*	
Hunt, Rt Hon David	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Irvine, Michael	**Mr. Allan Rogers and**
Jackson, Robert	**Mr. Elliot Morley.**

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Skinner, Dennis
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	
Morgan, Rhodri	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Nellist, Dave	**Dr. John Marek and**
Rowlands, Ted	**Dr. Kim Howells.**

Whereupon MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative, because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 36 (Majority for Closure).*

Dr. Marek: I have never before had the privilege of being cut off in full flow by Members on my own side, but it has been an instructive exercise. The Government have now abandoned the Bill.

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend will regret that.

Dr. Marek: Let us see some evidence. I shall be happy to regret it, if it happens.

Only 52 Members wanted to close the debate. I shall be happy to sit down immediately if the Minister, or a sponsor of the Bill, attempts to answer some of the questions that have arisen under the new clauses, but so far nothing has happened. The Minister remains silent, perhaps because his troops are not behind him: only 52 are here. I wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth were present to answer some of my questions.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Before the Division, my hon. Friend was talking about new clauses 6 and 8. All that we are doing in those two new clauses is called for a plan. No work or expenditure would be needed; it is a precautionary principle. The building of the barrage will pose a danger of serious pollution problems. Our request is very modest. How can hon. Members claim any "green" credentials while refusing to adopt a precautionary plan?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has returned: I beseech him to answer some of our questions. It is a great pity that he was not here for most of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West.

Anxiety has been expressed about the cleanliness of the lake and the health aspects. The Minister refuses to open his mouth. He has been given strict instructions by somebody not to speak.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for expressing pleasure at seeing me and I am pleased to be here for his speech. I was present for large chunks of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and found them enjoyable and enlightening. Some hours ago I answered the questions that are raised by the amendments. My answers were contained in brief and modest interventions and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) heard some, if not all, of them. They were brief and to the point. I hope that I have dealt sufficiently with the points that were made.

4.30 am

Dr. Marek: I am grateful for that explanation, which is better than what we have had from the Minister, who has not said anything.

Mr. Michael: The Minister must account for himself. He does not represent a Cardiff constituency. I do, and my constituency includes the whole of the Cardiff bay development area, although that development has serious implications for other Cardiff constituencies, especially those of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West and of the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist). That is why we take such a positive interest in the matter.

Dr. Marek: I appreciate that, and not for a moment do I think that it could be otherwise. However, the Welsh Office has a central role because it is responsible for almost every facet of administration in Wales. The leaked letter from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Home Secretary states that he sees

"the Cardiff Bay development as a vital component in one of the most exciting urban regeneration projects in Europe."

In view of the serious problems raised by some Opposition Members about pollution that could be caused by the barrage, Treasury spokesmen should have given their view. That is done for most other private Bills and I do not understand why the Welsh Office should write

[Dr. Marek]

secret letters to other Ministers and not be prepared to account for its secret action in the full glare of television and the other media.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is quite wrong to describe these letters as secret. They are extremely public and everybody seems to be repeating like a mantra references to them. My hon. Friends obviously intend to be helpful, but they are giving the Secretary of State publicity for supporting the Bill. The matter is important and I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the fact that the co-promoter of the Bill is Labour-controlled South Glamorgan county council. That positive support comes from the members and leaders of that authority, and those people live in the area of the proposed development. I accept that it may be difficult to perceive that from the long-distance perspective of Wrexham, but I assure my hon. Friend of that positive support. I hope that that will encourage him to support that Bill, even if my earlier comments did not.

Dr. Marek: I am extremely glad to have that reassurance. I hope that my hon. Friend will remain in the Chamber, because I intend to direct my speech principally at him. He cannot pretend that the Government have nothing to do with the Bill. The letter contains the names of many Parliamentary Private Secretaries, but I will not detain the House by reading out all of them.

Mr. Michael: I have written to hon. Members asking them to support the Bill. Why does not my hon. Friend give me some credit for what I have tried to do? Why is he so concerned to give publicity to the Secretary of State for Wales? My hon. Friend's attitude is most unfriendly.

Dr. Marek: I have not brought my hon. Friend's letter with me into the Chamber.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend put it straight into the bin.

Dr. Marek: No, I did not. It is in the House. I could produce it in a few minutes.

Mr. Rogers: Talk of the letter is obviously disturbing some of my hon. Friends because they find themselves in the same camp as the Tories. It is clear that the Government have a strong locus in these matters and that is why the Under-Secretary of State should answer some of the questions that have been asked during the debate. The Government have put hundreds of millions of pounds of public money into the venture and much of that money will be spent on works that are included in the Bill. Surely the Minister should justify that expenditure. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) will understand that Back-Bench Members, for whatever reasons, may or may not support the Bill, but if the Government spend hundreds of millions of pounds of public money they should answer to Parliament for that expenditure.

Dr. Marek: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Two of my hon. Friends have proposed closures of the debate and those motions have not been carried. I would expect my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to admit that there is some substance in the arguments that have been advanced or at least to recognise some of the fears that are reflected in the new clauses and to promise to consider the new clauses carefully, or even perhaps to accept some of them. If it is not possible for that to be done on the spur of the moment, he could at least get together with the Government and say, "The Bill has not passed through the House as we thought it would when we embarked on our consideration of it at 7 pm. We had better adjourn the debate so that we can consider what must be done. Perhaps we should meet my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) to discuss the best way of proceeding with the Bill."

Mr. Michael: I made it clear earlier that serious issues were being raised by hon. Members, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) in opening the debate. As I said to him, however, the issues are covered by the wording of the Bill as far as they should be, and that other more general items should be covered in more general legislation. I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that we shall have the opportunity to deal with the more general items when, in the near future, we have a Labour Government.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda said in his intervention, the Bill involves a massive public investment in my constituency. If the money is not spent in that way, it will not be spent elsewhere in Wales. Instead, it will remain in the coffers of the Treasury. I wish that my hon. Friends would allow the investment to take place in my constituency. It will do so much for the housing, the environment, the jobs and the well-being of my constituents. Surely that is the basis of our debate. I remind my hon. Friends, as they seek to debate important issues, that the benefits to which I have referred will be at stake at the conclusion of our debates.

Dr. Marek: In principle, I do not dissent from that, although I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda is shaking his head. if we can get the Bill right, I would not be against the redevelopment of this part of Cardiff. I have been round the area, although not on an official tour. I have carried out research and I believe that the Bill contains much that could be put right.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth will believe that I approach this debate constructively. I am not speaking just for the sake of it. I should like answers to my questions and in the absence of satisfactory answers, there will have to be a vote. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth needs 100 hon. Members to force the closure and he and the Government cannot achieve that. I believe that I have raised serious points and if they can be answered I will willingly finish my remarks.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham is asking my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to answer his points and those answers are not forthcoming from my hon. Friend or from the Government Front Bench. Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham and give him one of the answers that he seeks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that huge sums of public money had been invested in his constituency. That is true. However, one would have thought that he would have asked for a return on that money. The returns do not arise from extra building land or land for houses. If we consider the matter

carefully, we see that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth would be adversely affected.

The direction of the profits on the public money is revealed in a report of a consultant employed by the Cardiff bay development corporation. The report states that the projected land value in the area with no barrage, simply with regard to business space, is £130 million. However, with the barrage, the consultant expects the same building space to be worth more than £1 billion. It is worth £900 million in land values alone. With respect to the total of business space, industrial space, retail space, residential and leisure space, the land value in the area as a result of the massive investment of public money to the company will rise from £211 million to £1,300 million. That is where the profit on the public money is going. That is one of the answers that my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham was seeking and he was unlikely to receive such an answer from the Dispatch Box. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is more interested in his constituents than in the money-grabbing people involved in the venture——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) will confine himself to the new clauses.

Dr. Marek: I am sure that we shall be able to discuss the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda later. I will not dwell on the point now, but the point is significant and it should be considered. If large profits are to be made, they should go to the people of Cardiff and not be siphoned off somewhere else. That point should be answered, preferably by the Minister.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) appears to have described a strange new Government strategy. It seems that public money is being used to generate inflation. Is not that a strange departure? I know that there has been a change of leadership in the Conservative party and the Conservatives do not know which way they are going, but this is a strange philosphy.

Dr. Marek: It might generate inflation, although I do not suppose that it would generate inflation if it went to Majorca.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda was led away because he looked at the returns. My point is that the returns on public investment should relate to housing, jobs, the environment and the economy. The environmental issues that we are debating in this group of amendments are very important, but they are satisfied by the provisions in the existing clauses. Therefore, the amendments are unnecessary.

4.45 am

Job creation is not just in the interests of the city of Cardiff; it is also in the interests of the rest of south Wales, including the constituents of many hon. Members who object to the Bill. Their constituents come now and in future will come in larger numbers to work in the city. I do not begrudge such a benefit to local communities and economies.

Dr. Marek: I do not intend to deal with the economy, which is the subject of a later group of amendments. My hon. Friend maintains that the new clauses are otiose because these matters are already included in the Bill. New clause 8 states, as do the other new clauses:

"Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to the sewer outfalls discharging directly into the inland bay or into the waters of the rivers discharging into the Bay or the tributaries thereof".

Does the Bill contain a provision that states that before any work starts a plan shall be produced showing the sewer outfalls discharging into the area? If the Bill contains such a provision, I can dispense immediately with that part of my speech. If, however, it contains no such provision, it cannot be wrong to include a clause that would give to the people of Cardiff the right to know exactly how many sewers are pumping sewage into the rivers and surrounding areas. They ought to have that information.

The second half of new clause 8 says that a plan shall be published

"showing the proposed means of removal, relocation or improvement thereof and the agreement of the owner of each outfall to such removal, relocation or improvement."

If the Bill already provides for that, I hope that someone will point to the page and line of the Bill that says so. If it does not say that, what is wrong with adding the new clause to the Bill? It is a simple question and it demands an answer. I am sorry to say that at this stage the Minister, hiding behind his secret letters, intends to say nothing. If my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth can say something about it, I shall be grateful.

Mr. Michael: The point is that diversion of sewer outfalls upstream of the barrage must be a matter for Welsh Water and the National Rivers Authority. It does not arise directly from the creation of the barrage. We have already undertaken to divert the sewers that feed into Cardiff bay. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham was here when we debated that matter at an earlier stage. Had he been here he would have heard that that is not a matter of dispute between local Members of Parliament. The new clause goes way beyond what is appropriate for inclusion in the Bill. It deals with matters that we should all like to see resolved, but they ought not to be loaded on to the back of this Bill.

Dr. Marek: I am reassured to some extent. At least something will be done in the area of the bay. As I am not an expert in water treatment, and as there seems to be no objection from any of my hon. Friends, I am quite happy to take my hon. Friend's word in respect of that amendment.

New Clause 6 says:

"Before constructing the Barrage, the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate-stripping of the waters of the rivers entering the inland bay and their tributaries in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay."

The second part of the provision is simply an explanation of the need for the first part; it does not demand any action. Let me repeat the words from the first part:

"the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate-stripping".

Can my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth tell me why there should not be published a plan indicating what provision has been made for these activities?

Mr. Michael: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to stretch your patience by repeating points that I made earlier, but my hon. Friend almost demands that I do so. Currently, Welsh Water and NRA do not consider that phosphate stripping and nitrate stripping are required from the outset to achieve the necessary water quality. However, as I said earlier, paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* of clause 69(13) cover that situation where works are required upstream of the inland bay. The undertakers are required to meet the cost of any works that are necessary, over a period of 20 years, to satisfy water quality standards. This provision could include phosphate stripping if the water quality standards so required. The point, which has been well made by my hon. Friend, is covered in the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend will be reassured by that, too.

Dr. Marek: It is a reassurance to a certain extent. However, there is no absolute guarantee of phosphate stripping and nitrate stripping in any of the waters coming in from the head waters.

Mr. Morgan: If phosphate stripping and nitrate stripping become necessary within the first 20 years, the development corporation, as co-promoters, will have to pay Welsh Water and the NRA to do the job. A great fear is that if that responsibility can be dodged for the first 20 years, it will be dodged. There may be arguments about variations in climate conditions, the appropriate technology, the compulsory acquisition of land, and the location of phosphate stripping and nitrate stripping plants. Are the plants to be located at the sewage works as add-on components or will the people concerned do the much more ambitious, but possibly necessary, job of locating them where the waters actually enter the bay so that all possible sources are covered?

Nineteen years could easily elapse before a plan is agreed. With a little delay, the 20 years could be gone. In that event, who would pick up the tab? It seems that that is left completely in the air. Will the Cardiff city council, as the legatee body, pick up the bill or will the NRA, as the monitoring body, be responsible? The NRA will not have the necessary capital funds for a scheme costing £50 million. Or will Welsh Water—a private business—have to meet the cost? If so, its shareholders will not be very pleased. This fear has been expressed to me by very senior people in the NRA in Wales.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. I shall read carefully what my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said. He mentioned complying with standards. Will he say that those standards will be complied with on time and not 20 years later, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West suggests?

Mr. Michael: I assure my hon. Friend that I intend to be around for more than 20 years, during which time I shall ensure that compliance is not dodged. It is in the interests of my constituents that I ensure that it is not. I hope that the NRA will pursue vigorously the requirements of the Bill and that future environmental legislation will make the requirements more stringent and will insist on timeous compliance with them. The Bill offers a series of tight and testing requirements—they have been described as draconian—and I and others who have supported the Bill will ensure that they are enforced.

Dr. Marek: I shall weigh those remarks carefully when deciding how to vote on the new clause.

New clause 5 provides:

"Before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to sources of leachate in contact with the waters . . . and its proposals for removing, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate."

There may be no proposals for the removal, relocation or improvement of such sources, but what is wrong with producing and publishing a plan pertaining to the sources of leachate? I am sure that the citizens of Cardiff would like such information at their fingertips. Has my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth any helpful comments to make on that?

Mr. Michael: I hope that all my comments are helpful—they are certainly intended to be. My hon. Friend has misread the Bill. The Bill requires outfalls from Ferry road tip, Cowslip, Cogan and Penarth dock to be removed, relocated or diverted, to the satisfaction of the National Rivers Authority. There is a requirement on the developers to satisfy, by one or other of those means, the requirements of the NRA.

I do not want to go into detail on the drafting of new clause 5, but there are deficiencies as it asks for a report. It is not clear what is meant by sources of

"groundwater in hydraulic contact . . . and proposals for removal, relocation or improvement."

The Bill is quite clear.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West could perhaps enlighten us on the meaning of that phrase. Before I invite him to do so, may I say that if my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is right and there are only three sources of leachate, we already have half the answer to the question raised in the new clause. If the NRA were to publish its proposals for the removal, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate, the new clause would be otiose. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West seek to intervene?

5 am

Mr. Morgan: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said that he did not understand the wording that I had drafted in the new clause about hydraulic contact with the barrage. It is simple. The structure on which low-lying Cardiff is built used to be drained by artificial drainage ditches, rather like the Dutch polders which I am sure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have seen on your trips to the tulip fields. Those have been built over and cannot be seen, but there is water flowing under the ground from the rivers when the tide is in.

If we retained a high water level, water would flow back and forth permanently along the old drainage ditches and under people's houses. Therefore, all the time there would be washing out of any pollutants from a tip or any other chemicals which might drain down from the clinker which was used as a standard building material to provide foundations over the 100 years or so when there was massive use of coal. Clinker, of course, contains all manner of polluting trace elements which will drain down into the ground water in the old drainage ditches with the impounded water in the lake.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful for that explanation. I will bear carefully in mind the statements of my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West and for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

The conditions of new clause 17 may well be satisfied. In any case, I do not see any reason why the new clause should not be added to the Bill. It is similar to new clause 5. It says:

"Before commencement of impounding by means of the barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish proposals for the sealing of the Ferry Road tip to the satisfaction of the rivers authority and the Environmental Health Officer of the city council that no material risk of infiltration of the inland bay or of groundwater by leachate from the tip will occur."

I should have thought that that was an important new clause and that every citizen of Cardiff would wish to be satisfied that that would happen. If it is anywhere in the Bill, I hope that the Minister will tell me where it is, and I will be delighted to say no more about it. It is a sensible provision. I am sure that citizens of Cardiff will want to be satisfied that there is no material risk of infiltration. The new clause does not ask for the impossible. There could be immaterial risks of infiltration because there is no such thing as 100 per cent. success in such matters. I commend the new clause to the House and hope that it will be passed in due course.

New clause 19, which deals with algal scum, says:

"Before the commencement of impounding, the undertakers shall commission and publish proposals for the proper disposal of algal scum arising in the inland bay that are consistent with the preservation and maintenance of good water quality standards at the site of disposal and in adjoining waters."

That is probably the most difficult of the new clauses. It certainly asks for no more than that the commission should publish proposals for proper disposal—but exactly what does "proper disposal" mean? It can mean different things to different people.

When the clause says that the proposals must be

"consistent with the preservation and maintenance of good water quality standards at the site of disposal",

that is also open to interpretation. That new clause is perhaps a little too loose and I would have made it tighter. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall listen carefully to see whether he can illuminate the matter for me.

I wish to bring to the attention of the House the book first referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) entitled "Toxic Blue-Green Algae". It is a report by the National Rivers Authority published in September 1990. On page 79 it states:

"Knowledge of the environmental affects of the toxins"—produced by the algae—

"is largely based on circumstantial evidence."

If the document is to be believed—and I think that it should be because it is a scientific paper:

"Toxic blue-green algae have been recorded from UK lakes for many years, although no major ecological perturbations have been attributed directly to the effects of the toxins. Their potential for causing problems is well documented. Toxicity data obtained by intra-peritanial injection indicate that toxins produced by blue-green algae rank amongst the most toxic compounds of biological origin."

The next statement is important;

"The main uses of water which are most affected are those of general amenity, recreation and livestock watering."

I am concerned that a scientific paper states, first, that evidence about the environmental effects is based largely on circumstantial evidence and, secondly, that the main uses of water most affected are those of general amenity and recreation. That is precisely what water in the barrage will be used for. I think it right—and I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will also think it right—that those matters should be raised. It would be, not a terrible calamity, but very sad if the Cardiff barrage were built merely to increase the capital value of the land by £900 million—as my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said—and it was then discovered, with hindsight, that nobody would have built it because of the environmental and toxic effects of the algae that could develop in the lake.

It is difficult to prove the case. All that we can do is listen to the arguments—I have done so—and make up our minds at the end of the debate about which way we should vote.

Paragraph 12.16 on page 81 states:

"The clear message, however, is that there are no easy options and many of the control methods currently available are not likely to be effective in the short term. The possible exceptions to this are whether there is sufficient depth for destratification to be effective."

I do not expect my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth to be able to give us the answers all the time, but I should like to hear that there is sufficient depth for destratification to be effective. However, listening to my hon. Friends' speeches, there seemed to be much concern about whether the control options that are being proposed—certainly as described by them—will be effective. It would be wrong to build the barrage and then have to say with hindsight, "Sorry, we did the wrong thing. We shouldn't have built it." That is the crunch question.

Of course that area of Cardiff has to be developed. Let me pay tribute to the Government. On occasions they have recognised that there is problem there and that the area needs developing. I do not think that that is at issue in the House this morning. What is at issue is, have we got it right, are we going about it the right way? There are serious questions about the barrage and the problems of controlling algae and they have not so far been dispelled to my satisfaction.

One issue that pertains to the new clause regards the management of the lagoon, which is important. We are talking about pollution in the lagoon and ensuring that it is clean, healthy and contains good water. I should like to compare two Bills, as there have been more than one. I have here what I hope is a copy of the latest Bill. The trouble is that it does not say which one it is—it would be a lot easier if it had a date on it so that we knew which copy was which. I also have a copy of a previous Bill. The only way that I can identify it is that on the new copy, on the second page, underneath the heading "Cardiff Bay Barrage [H.L.] Arrangements of Sections", "50/3" is printed and "50/2" on the old Bill. Therefore the "50/2" Bill must be an earlier version than the "50/3" Bill, but I am sorry that I have not been able to find out precisely how early.

Clause 54 of the old Bill——

Mr. Michael: I am trying to follow what my hon. Friend is saying, but he has thrown me a little with his references to the lagoon, which is not dealt with in the new clauses before us at present. If I am wrong, perhaps my hon. Friend would draw my attention to the part of the new clauses that he is referring to. I have a feeling that I am missing an important point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was getting slightly worried when the hon. Gentleman seemed to be dealing in some detail with the lagoon. I think that it would be more appropriate to discuss that when we come to amendment No. 115 and those grouped with it, which specifically deal with the lagoon.

Dr. Marek: We shall certainly come to that consideration, and I understand that it is different. I shall explain this in detail later as there is a significant change in the management of the lagoon in the old Bill when compared to what is stated in the new Bill.

Mr. Michael: There may be some mistake. Would my hon. Friend tell us what he means by "the lagoon"?

Dr. Marek: I mean precisely what it says in the Bill —not the lake and the waters coming from the Taff. I do not want to dwell on it at this stage, because, as Mr. Deputy Speaker says, it would be more appropriate to discuss it later. The lagoon affects cleanliness and the environment, which is why I have raised the matter at this stage.

There are significant differences between the old and new Bills. Although I shall not do so now, I had intended to seek to develop an argument in relation to the new clauses on the waters and leachates from the Taff and the Ely, to see whether the development corporation has made any other changes in its philosophy towards fulfilling its functions under this Bill, compared with what it was seeking to do under the older Bill. I suspect that there is plenty of time left in the debate and that we can return to that matter, which I shall certainly do at the appropriate time.

5.15 am

My next point was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda, who talked about money and about who would benefit from the development. I should like the people of Cardiff to benefit from it—but I must be careful not to stray from the scope of the new clauses. I hope—I am sure—that there will be an opportunity later to discuss this matter when we take a quick look at the clauses on land acquisition. If my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda is correct, a large sum will flow from the building of the barrage, so money should be put back into the scheme to make it absolutely clear to everybody that there will be no leachates and no build-up of nitrates and phosphates, that all the SSOs will be dealt with and, especially, that algae will be dealt with effectively. That is a difficult issue. I know that the Bill contains proposals on dealing with algae, and that that is a matter for conjecture, but other aspects of the Bill are not the subject of conjecture.

If money is to be available because of an increase in land values, I should like to know where the money will go. Will it be siphoned off, perhaps by a few wealthy people who probably do not or will not live in the Cardiff area? Will there be any return to the Welsh Office? If so, we should know. If the Welsh Office is to have some return, perhaps it should spend some money to make absolutely sure of these points and to satisfy the people of Cardiff on them.

If the return is to go to the development corporation —I do not know its term of reference although I have asked—who will have the money? Where will it be distributed? Is the local authority to have any money? Will South Glamorgan county council get any money out of the development? It should, if £900 million is to result from the development. Whoever gets the return, a decent amount of money should be spent to make absolutely sure that the people of Cardiff are satisfied that they will have a top-class environment.

Mr. Michael: I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would leave the satisfaction of the people of Cardiff to those who represent them. I am sure that he will agree that principles are important, not just sums of money, so may I ask him for the assurance that he will ask the list of questions that he has just asked about any public investment in his constituency and that he will look forward with interest to all of us asking such questions with equal stringency before any money from the public purse is spent in his constituency in the future?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend misunderstands me. I am not criticising the spending of money. I do not criticise anything. I am asking a question. Some £900 million is to be created by this development. I repeat for the third time that whether there should be development in the area is not at issue. I give my full backing to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and I want development to go ahead in the area.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Marek: May I finish this point?

I do not criticise the spending of money. I welcome any advice that my hon. Friend has to give me at any time. There is no problem about that. But if a lot of money is to be made, who will make it and will the people of Cardiff benefit?

Mr. Michael: I understand my hon. Friend's difficulty in answering a straight question. If a road is built in his or any other constituency which creates access to land or if infrastructure works are undertaken, value is created. My hon. Friend asks stringent questions about this proposal, but will he apply the same stringency to each item of public expenditure in his area? Did he apply such stringency to the building of roads in his constituency in the past? Consistency would certainly require it. I have always sought to ensure that public money is used to good advantage and bring development to the area. My hon. Friend asks a series of specific and demanding questions, it seems with greater stringency in relation to my constituency than I suspect that he would do in his own.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend does me a disservice. Few matters, certainly under local government administration should be secret and confidential. Of course, personal information and certain commercial information has to be confidential, but nothing on the strategic scale of who is going to make money out of a development, how much and where it is to go should be kept confidential.

In Wrexham I have difficulty obtaining answers for many of my constituents about what local government undertakes there. I do not say that in any pejorative way. Unfortunately, it is a habit of administrators from John o'Groats to Lands End to keep matters confidential to avoid unnecessary questions and trouble.

Mr. Michael: We are not talking about confidentiality. In the past I have had responsibilities on Cardiff city council as chairman of finance, chairman of economic development, chairman of planning and deputy chairman

of the central area development committee, which dealt with a project of major importance, indeed the most important project in the city. If one is to boost an economy and create success in the area, an element of opening up possibilities is required. Infrastructure has to be built. Roads that open up sites, create access and allow things to happen have to be built. Sometimes it is necessary to invest in the future without seeing exactly the shape of that future.

For example, in Wentloog not far from the areas that we are discussing, originally it was hoped to bring in a single major employer. Clearly, such large investment does not arrive very easily. So now the same area, with some infrastructure works completed, is being considered for development in a more piecemeal manner. I assure my hon. Friend that one cannot say that this person or that person will benefit from a development. But we can ensure that the result has a pretty good likelihood of bringing a return to the whole community in jobs and improvements to the economy of the area.

By moving forward over time one can see the development of an economy. That is what we have succeeded in doing in Cardiff to build the economy of the city to the point at which it can sustain the tremendous development that is now taking place in south Cardiff where the city has been brought back into its heartland. I ask my hon. Friend to understand that those issues are basic to the development proposed in the Bill. They are not matters to which we come lightly. That is why I feel that some of the questions that my hon. Friend is asking are a trifle naive and that he might not ask them when he seeks to promote development in his own area.

Dr. Marek: I shall not enter into an argument about our respective experiences. I have simply been asking one question. If my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda is right that the barrage will result in added value of £900 million, it is not naive to ask where that sum is going, who will get it and will the people of Cardiff benefit. The people of Cardiff will want answers to those questions. Of course they will see benefits from the development in many of its facets. It will provide more housing, jobs and infrastructure. It will give a general impetus to Cardiff. I must not bore the House by repeating myself for a fourth time, but there is no issue between us on that. We all see that. I hope that my hon. Friend will not doubt me any more on that. But it is right and proper in a legislature performing a scrutiny role for us to be able to see exactly what is going on. Such things should not be confidential, nor should they be brushed aside. People should not be told that the NRA knows best and that they need not worry. I have always fought for the public to have the right to know.

Mr. Michael: Who has said any of those things?

Dr. Marek: That is the interpretation that I put on some of the discussions that we have had on the new clauses. For example, my hon. Friend said that the requirements of one of the new clauses would be met since any conditions would have to satisfy the NRA. Leaving something to the requirements of the NRA at some time in the future might be acceptable, but it is not as good as spelling it out straight away.

Mr. Michael: I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that his remarks were a pretty comprehensive misrepresentation of what I have said at various stages in the debate. At present, the NRA has statutory responsibility in these matters and the Bill places power in the hands of the NRA to require certain standards to be met. That has certain consequences for the undertakers.

As I agreed earlier with my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), there might be a number of improvements in the way in which environmental matters are dealt with and enforced in Britain and the way in which water quality is dealt with, and which we look forward to enacting in due course. But the arrangements in the Bill are appropriate to the present circumstances and it is a trifle unfair for my hon. Friend to ask for something which goes way beyond the general requirements of the law and becomes a burden on Cardiff and the developments that the people of Cardiff see in prospect. Many of the arrangements in the Bill go ahead of what is currently in legislation and that is certainly the case in many of the agreements that underpin the Bill. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to be a trifle more generous to the care with which we have pursued these matters in reaching this point in the legislative process.

Dr. Marek: I am sure that in the course of time I have misrepresented my hon. Friend because my memory is not word perfect, but I have not done so wilfully. Any misrepresentation has been simply because of my inability to remember precisely what he said.

We have reached the crux of the argument between us. I am sure that the Cardiff Bay development corporation and my hon. Friend have considered the matter carefully, but how far do we go? My hon. Friend believes that it is sufficient to accept the Bill, and that that should satisfy the people of Cardiff and hon. Members. I believe that we should go further by accepting the new clauses, which make it clear that the people of Cardiff have nothing to fear because the environment will not be harmed as a result of any works undertaken should the Bill be enacted.

5.30 am

New clause 17 referred to sealing the Ferry road tip to the satisfaction of the NRA and the environmental health officer. I should prefer that obligation to be spelt out in the Bill, but I understand the other view.

We should know how much money will be involved and where it will come from. We should know how much money will be created and what will be spent and where. Every person in Cardiff has a legitimate interest in those answers, as does every hon. Member, as we have the important function of scrutinising public finance. Those questions are not naive and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda can enlighten the House about them later.

We have had an interesting debate, but there are still a few more speakers to come. There is much agreement between the two sides about the development of the city of Cardiff. There is also much agreement on the new clauses. Hon. Members may place a different emphasis on different items. The Secretary of State spoke about undertaking "one of the most exciting urban regeneration projects in Europe".

I should be pleased if every storm sewer overflow were considered in a similar spirit and either removed, relocated

or improved. If the proposed barrage is the most exciting in Europe, that should be spelt out so that every storm sewer overflow is attended to.

The people of Wales have put up for years with the pollution of their rivers; it is time that it stopped. It could stop because of the biggest and best project of urban regeneration in Europe. Can we have a statement from the Minister or the promoters of the Bill to say that there is enough money to clean all the rivers? A commitment to that effect would receive three cheers from everyone in Cardiff, Wales and the rest of the country. If a start were made in Cardiff, it would not be long before other areas demanded similar improvements.

Mr. Michael: The cleaning of the sewage outfalls into the Cardiff bay will happen as a result of the development of that bay, which is a positive improvement. I should not have been a whit surprised to hear hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd say that the knock-on from that development should be the clean-up of the sewage outfalls in his area. I am sure that my hon. Friend would press the Government for that. Then there would be no difference between us.

The difference between us in the present debate arises from the fact that those who support the new clauses seem to wish to place excessively onerous requirements on those undertaking the project. They seem to take a beggar-my-neighbour approach and to say, "You cannot have improvements in Cardiff unless we have improvements in our area"—even though that has nothing to do with the barrage. My hon. Friend asks that positive developments in Cardiff should have a knock-on effect elsewhere. I think that that is already happening.

Dr. Marek: Then let us see it happening. Let us have a cast-iron promise that every SSO will be attended to.

There is a difference between Cardiff and places further up the valleys and in north Wales. In Cardiff, there is the possibility of regeneration and the ability to create wealth and income through the construction of shops. The money created could be spent on environmental benefits. That will not be possible in Pontypridd. It is a pity that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd has gone out to get a cup of tea. I am sure that he seeks for his area the benefits that I seek for Wrexham, but we shall not get those benefits because there is never enough money to go round to allow one to do immediately everything that one would wish. The Cardiff scheme is unique because it will release money to achieve such aims. I am concerned that a decent proportion of the money thus released should go towards environmental benefits and improving the quality of life for the people of Cardiff and the surrounding area. One does not get the impression from the Bill that all the money —or anything like all of it—will be spent for the benefit of the people of Cardiff.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend must look further than the requirements of this one Bill, to the developments worked up in co-operation between the local authorities and the development corporation and with the statutory undertakings. He must look at requirements in the Bill that have developed, following agreement, as the process has evolved, in an attempt to ensure that positive environmental and other benefits ensue in the area. My hon. Friend is a little unkind not only to the development corporation but to the local authorities and other bodies that have sought ways to achieve positive improvements, and incremental as well as direct benefits, from the changes. Many of us have taken part in that process, which is happening around the Bill. The results of the process are contained in the Bill and I have already referred to some of them.

Dr. Marek: I thank my hon. Friend.

The problem is that the development is taking place at a time when we have a Tory Administration. My hon. Friend is right that councils wish to serve their areas. They are always on the look-out for ways to find jobs for their people, for ways to develop and for ways to build houses. Under the present Administration, that has been very difficult. We started with a recession in 1980-81; we are in a recession now, in 1990-91. We have learnt nothing in 10 years. Meanwhile, local authorities do not have any money and cannot build houses, and that brings us back to the Bill, because I am told—certainly my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda voiced this supposition some hours ago—that the barrage is required if houses are to be built and sold at a good enough price, to people from I know not where, to make money for the scheme to go ahead —and, presumably, for the £900 million to be realised. There may be sense in that, if the Bill is held up for a few months; perhaps only until June, when there may well be a Labour Government. There must be a general election by July 1992.

Mr. Michael: If my hon. Friend has read the documentation that I sent him and other hon. Members some time ago, he will have noted that the economic benefits will become that much greater with the barrage. He is, of course, right to hope for the return of a Labour Government, but we want the barrage to be built so that Cardiff can benefit as quickly as possible from the improvement in the economy that will accompany that Government. I am surprised that my hon. Friend is not willing to support us on that basis, if on no other.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend must not say that I am not willing to support him. As I have said, I support the regeneration of Cardiff. It is really a question of getting it right. I do not know the time scale; it could well take a year for it to get out of the House of Commons and progress towards the statute book.

Life would be much easier under a Labour Government. No doubt, the Minister has pricked up his ears at that. I do not want to be misrepresented. No Labour Government would suddenly rush off to the Minister at Llantrisant and say, "Print us another £100 million; we want to help Cardiff and the barrage." However, local authorities would have more freedom to spend their capital housing receipts and would therefore have a greater input on the type of housing that would be available. I am not an expert and I have not examined the details, but I hope that by and large the housing provided would benefit the people of Wales in general and those of Cardiff in particular.

Mr. Michael: The resale price of properties in the bay area shows that that is happening. Furthermore having spoken last weekend to people living in a development in the area, I note that there are many local people there. It is not a yuppie paradise, as some of my hon. Friends have regrettably suggested.

The support of the local authorities, and the leading role of South Glamorgan county council, resulted from

their appreciation of the benefits, such as economic development and the regeneration of the area, that will result. The environment will not be disregarded, however, as the new clauses make clear.

I remind my hon. Friend that those matters have been dealt with and negotiated. Interesting, constructive and complimentary though some of his remarks may be, and much as both of us may look forward to the advent of a Labour Government, they basically have nothing to do with the new clauses or, indeed, with the Bill.

Dr. Marek: I beg to differ with my hon. Friend on that. The new clauses critically concern the barrage. The questions are: has the development corporation got it right, so that the barrage can be built without all the problems caused by algae, phosphates or nitrates, or by flooding? Will the people of Cardiff be happy with it, and not regret it? Is there a case for waiting before going ahead with the whole development? My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West raised many concerns in his long speech.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman mentions a long speech. He has been speaking for well over an hour and it is now 16 minutes to 6 o'clock. He challenged me to comment on the Bill. He said that he was trying to improve the Bill. Is not he trying to block it? I have listened to him on and off during the night and I am sure that he is participating in a blocking exercise.

5.45 am

Dr. Marek: No. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth for excelling himself in answering my questions. He has reassured me on many issues, although not on all.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend spoke about the clearance of algae. Such matters should be kept in perspective. We all know that algae can cause problems and that research and management are required. Can my hon. Friend give an example of public demand for a stretch of water on which the problem has arisen to be drained?

Dr. Marek: The Rutland Water incident springs to mind, but the simple answer is that I do not know of an example. I am reluctant to say that algae bloom is common, but it has certainly become more common in the past 20 years. I do not have expert advice or evidence before me, but I think that it is likely that the problem will increase unless we are able to diagnose exactly how to control it. The National Rivers Authority document deals with control options and states on page 81 that the clear message is that there are no easy options.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend seems to accept that algae occur in nature, and that they need to be investigated, tackled and managed. I agree with my hon. Friend on that reasonable approach. The Bill places responsibility for management and its financing on those who will manage the stretch of water. That is entirely reasonable and I am sure that my hon. Friend and I can agree to dispose of that little point and of the others that we have explored successfully in the last hour.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I shall finish soon because my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is itching to speak. As I have said, the occurrence of algae is increasing.

Mr. Morgan: It is.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West agrees. That increase means that we have to be extremely careful. Should we go ahead with the development? Is there any profit in accepting the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) that properly cleaned mud banks are attractive? Perhaps they would be more attractive than the barrage. It is up to hon. Members to decide.

Mr. Morgan: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Marek: I shall do so for the last time because I want to finish my speech.

Mr. Morgan: It was precisely for that reason that in February I circulated to members of the Cabinet a photograph of, and a letter about, the exposed mud banks. We could clean up about 99 per cent. of the sewage and leave the mud banks as a feature. They would be covered twice a day and then uncovered for 15 to 20 hours, depending on where they are. The purpose of my sending the photograph and letter—they were referred to much earlier in the debate by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), was to draw attention to what would be covered for ever. In effect, I was saying, "You may have heard that the mud banks are awful. Here is a photograph of them at low tide when they are supposed to look awful. The photograph shows what would be covered up permanently."

The hon. Member for Cardiff, North implied that my letter and photograph had a status equal to that of the letter of the Secretary of State. There was a Pavlovian reaction from the Under-Secretary of State, who produced that wonderful laugh of his. He seemed to forget that my letter does not carry authority and was not able to bring the payroll vote into the Chamber. The Secretary of State for Wales thought that he had that authority, but in the middle of the night it became clear that he did not. The sole purpose of my circulating the photograph and the letter was to produce evidence to members of the Cabinet. I took the view that they probably did not visit Cardiff bay at low tide and that they did not know what it looked like, it being a characteristic of the camera that it does not lie.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael: I know that my hon. Friend has an eye for these things. Does he agree that many photographs show beauty in industrial dereliction and other aspects of misery? A photograph can be a form of misrepresentation in the same way as any other form of documentation, unless one takes the context as a whole, including the environment in which the photograph was taken, and has regard to the appropriate filters and other devices that are used to ensure that the result is as attractive as possible.

Dr. Marek: I take that as a riposte to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). There is a subjective element. We must reach decisions as individuals. If we are allowed to divide the House on some of the new clauses that are before us, I shall vote for them. I should make it clear, however, that I would vote against some other new clauses.

The crucial decision is whether we can go ahead with the barrage. Are we sure that we would not be making a mistake by so doing? I ask the question on the basis that the decision would not be made on the ground of being

[Dr. Marek]

able to sell houses around the foreshore. Alternatively, should we say that, because of the uncertainties that have arisen during the debate, we should hold back from building the barrage but go ahead with the rest of the development? There may be other ways to improve the river and make it desirable, so that it becomes a magnet and a centre for a regenerated part of urban Cardiff that we all wish to see.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The debate on the new clauses has continued for eight hours. I have been in the Chamber for more than seven of those hours, waiting patiently to be called to contribute. In the past 40 minutes I began to wonder more and more whether I would be able to slip out of the Chamber to have a shave and avoid appearing on television with rather more than a 7 o'clock shadow at almost 6 o'clock in the morning. I was reminded of another valiant, stimulating and informative effort that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) during my days in the European Parliament and its Committees.

I recall that speeches in the European Parliament had specific time limits and I am sure that some hon. Members would have liked such limits on speeches in our debates today. However, in Committees in the European Parliament Members could speak virtually for as long as they liked. I recall our Italian friends saying—in various ways—that they were concluding their speeches at least half a dozen times over a period of 40 minutes or more.

Having sat through our eight hours of debate, I have found the contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) and for Wrexham most stimulating and informative.

I need not dwell too long on the new clauses. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West has done a signal service to the House in the way in which he has prepared the brief, concise and effective new clauses which, if accepted, would considerably strengthen the environment of the area being redeveloped in Cardiff.

The new clauses highlight important and specific problems about the sources of leaching. They also refer to phosphate and nitrate stripping, the difficulties relating to sewer outflows, the way in which the Ferry road tip will have to be dealt with and the proper disposal of algal scum.

New clause 19 states:

"'Before the commencement of impounding the undertakers shall commission and publish proposals for the proper disposal of algal scum arising in the inland bay that are consistent with the preservation and maintenance of good water quality standards at the site of disposal and in adjoining waters.'."

Several hon. Members have referred to the fact that the developers have raised that issue and have properly identified it as a problem. In fairness to the Bill's proponents, there has been an effort to deal with the serious environmental problems arising from the proposal to build a barrage.

We believe that the proposals are not adequate and that they need to be tightened up and sharpened to make them truly effective. However, the Bill contains a reference to algal scum about which no mention has been made so far. That part of the Bill highlights a serious problem.

Clause 70(9) states:

"If it reasonably appears to the City Council that amounts of algal scum are present in the waters of the inland bay, or there is infestation by vermin or pests in or about the inland bay then, upon the City Council giving notice in writing on any such occasion to the undertakers, the undertakers shall on each such occasion with all reasonable despatch take such steps as are reasonably required at their own expense to remove and properly to dispose of the same."

6 am

It may be said that that would deal with the problem, but we should look at it again. The subsection seems to imply that such events will occur regularly—that frequently during the summer algal scum will be present in the water and that there will be infestation by vermin or pests with almost monotonous regularity. Our amendments would ensure that the spectre raised in clause 70(9) was dealt with much more effectively.

New clause 17 provides that

"before commencement of impounding by means of the barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish proposals for the sealing of the Ferry Road tip to the satisfaction of the rivers authority and the Environmental Health Officer of the city council that no material risk of infiltration of the inland bay or of groundwater by leachate from the tip will occur."

That is related to new clause 5, which provides that

"before the commencement of impounding by means of the Barrage the undertakers shall produce and publish a plan pertaining to sources of leachate in contact with the waters of the inland bay or of the groundwater in hydraulic contact with the waters of the inland bay and its proposals for removal, relocation or improvement of such sources of leachate."

Standards are changing and improving all the time. That is well illustrated by the guidance issued by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution during the past few years on landfill gas. Guidance was issued at the beginning of 1989. In January 1991, about two years later, HMIP found it necessary to issue revised guidelines for dealing with landfill gas.

Last October, in Eastbourne, there was an important conference on issues relating to refuse tips and landfill gas. At that conference, Mr. John Nicholson, principal inspector of pollution, pointed out that environmental protection legislation will prevent landfill operators from surrendering their site licence at any time, by requiring them first to obtain a certificate of completion from a waste regulation authority after demonstrating that their landfills have stabilised and no longer pose a hazard to the environment or to human health. Mr. Nicholson suggested that landfill site operators are likely to have a continuing commitment to their sites for 15 to 50 years after closure. The Ferry road tip is still in use. It has seven years of life left. At this stage in the legislative process we are still not certain what will happen to it.

Mr. Morgan: This matter has a close connection with something which, at one time, I thought of including in my contribution. In the end I did not include it, but, with my hon. Friend's permission, I should like to expand on the point that he has made.

Obviously, Cardiff city council is extremely anxious to get the development corporation to decide whether to acquire the Ferry road tip. If the tip is acquired by the corporation, will it be leased back to the council for landfill use, or will it be removed, or treated and sealed? If the city council retains it, up to £12 million will have to be spent to seal it and remove the methane permanently. All the methane will have to be captured, and the by-products of

organic decomposition will have to be prevented from causing damage elsewhere. If the bay authorities buy the tip, the city council will not have a landfill tipping site. In that case, the bay authorities will be obliged to make good, and the city council will have the monitoring role. That is precisely the decision that the city council wants. Indeed, it has been waiting for more than 12 months to find out what the co-promoters will do about Ferry road. There has been no decision yet.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank my hon. Friend for his invaluable background information, which underlines my observations about the management of landfill sites. In the case of Ferry road, will tipping be carried on for another seven years? We heard that 2 million cu m of decaying wreckage could be transported.

Just before my hon. Friend's invaluable intervention, I referred to Mr. Nicholson's comment that landfill sites will require 15 to 50 years of after-care to ensure that the gases being emitted are safe and that the leachate problem and all the other problems associated with a completed site are dealt with successfully. He pointed out that those requirements will have significant implications for the design and maintenance of gas controls and for post-closure site management.

On the period between site closure and the issuing of a certificate of completion, Mr. Nicholson said:

"Access to the control system will be essential for monitoring, adjustment of valves and maintenance, the gas wells, pipelines and the necessary enclosure for the pump and flare stack will therefore restrict land usage. Around the site, access will be necessary to all monitoring bore holes and any monitoring points within services or buildings for most of the time that the site is actively gassing. However, it will be impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy how long the monitoring outside the wastes will be necessary, and one should therefore be pessimistic in quantifying any time scale."

He also said that control systems may need replacement every 10 to 15 years. Indeed, some controls have failed and have had to be replaced within five to 10 years.

The revised guidance includes advice on maintenance of control systems and on landfill settlement, which has proved to be a major cause of problems in maintaining the efficiency of the control measures.

The revised paper, which has now been issued, will encourage landfill operators and waste regulation authorities to adopt standard gas monitoring regimes so that comparable results are obtained. A minimum temperature of 600 deg C for gas flares was suggested in the 1989 paper, but a higher temperature has been recommended. More detailed advice will be given on gas monitoring in buildings and on sampling from bore holes and wells.

The advice deals with the properties of landfill gas, gas protection and measurement and monitoring techniques. When a landfill site has reached the end of its useful life, quality standards for its management are likely to rise, but the Ferry road site could be under post-completion management for up to 50 years. The monitoring procedures will mean not only that the site will be sterilised but that tests will have to be carried out on land around the site to ensure that it is safe.

Research has recently been carried out on landfill gas sites to extend our knowledge of health and odour nuisance risks. Those studies were sponsored by the Department of the Environment. The information I have comes from ENDS report No. 180 of January 1990. The findings are such that all hon. Members should be aware of them. We are told that measurements of trace gas emissions from landfill sites by Harwell laboratory suggest that workers may be exposed to concentrations of toxic substances which exceed occupational exposure limits.

6.15 am

Mr. Michael: I do not want to disturb the flow of my hon. Friend's contribution, but I have been following his argument with interest, and I am not sure to which new clause he is referring or which one addresses the specific point that he is making.

Mr. Griffiths: Obviously, my hon. Friend was not listening to me earlier, when I said specifically that my comments relate to the publishing of proposals under new clause 17 for the sealing of the Ferry road tip to the satisfaction of the rivers authority and the environmental health officer of the city council, and also to new clause 5, which deals with the publication of a plan about sources of leachate in inland water. I will speak about the leachate problem later.

My comments relate to the safety of the management of the Ferry road tip or any tip while in operation and following closure. The study to which I was referring was sponsored by the Department of the Environment and was carried out by the prestigious Harwell laboratory. It showed that there was a danger to workers on site. The study also revealed that the dilution of landfill gases may be several orders of magnitude too small to prevent odour nuisance beyond landfill site boundaries. Of course, that has important implications——

Mr. Michael: I have been listening to my hon. Friend. He has referred to new clause 17 and to new clause 5. They deal with leachates in ground water. He is talking about research on the gas emissions risk resulting from tipping. I agree that it is an important issue which has wide and general application, as shown by the research to which he referred, but how do the two new clauses deal with it?

Mr. Griffiths: There are two aspects to new clause 17. First, it contains a proposal to seal the Ferry road tip, which leads to the question of the proper management of the tip when its working life is completed; secondly, it addresses the issue of the risk of infiltration of the inland bay or of ground water by leachate from the tip.

The study is concerned with a tip not only during its operation but when it closed, because the odours from the gases which are released are shown to be of such power that they would constitute a serious nuisance beyond the boundary of the tip.

Mr. Flynn: I am sure that my hon. Friend is not deliberately misleading the House, but new clause 17 refers to

"the sealing of the Ferry Road tip to the satisfaction of the rivers authority".

That does not suggest that it can be wrapped up in a cellophane bag in order to stop emissions of methane gas. The only way to control methane gas is to vent it. That has nothing to do with the rivers authority, whose sole interest is leachate.

Mr. Griffiths: My hon. Friend has failed to read the rest of the new clause because the sealing is done not merely to the satisfaction of the National Rivers Authority, but of the environmental health officer of the city council who, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, has a wide

[Mr. Griffiths]

range of duties relating to landfill sites and their management while they are being worked and after they are closed. It is not just a matter of venting the methane gas when the tip is closed, because other gases can be emitted from such a site.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Griffiths: No, I shall not, because I think that the point has been sufficiently explored in interventions. I now feel that an attempt is being made to filibuster, so I shall continue with the serious findings of the study sponsored by the Department of the Environment.

The findings were presented at a conference in London in January last year by Dr. Philip Scott. We are told that they have significant implications for landfill operators. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 impose a duty to demonstrate that gases evolved from decaying refuse do not pose a significant health risk to site workers. That will apply to workers managing the site after it has been filled when post-site management work is being done.

Harwell identified a total of 136 trace gases present immediately below the surface of the landfills, of which 109 were common on all three sites where the investigations were carried out. The relative abundance of different groups of gases varies markedly between the sites and, following changes in operating regimes, at individual sites. I can only lament the fact that the Ferry road tip was not one of those at which the Harwell laboratory conducted its studies. Harwell also followed a procedure recommended by the Health and Safety Executive——

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Griffiths: Not now, but when I have completed this point I shall certainly do so.

The procedure assessed the impact of mixtures of toxic substances that exist when the site is operated and when it is closed and there are post-management problems. That showed that workers would be exposed to health risks for up to 1,000 days following the deposit of refuse, when trace gas emissions are at their most hazardous.

The Ferry road tip could be hazardous and in the immediate future—the three years after its closure—it may be a distinctly hazardous place for those workers managing the site on its completion. I can only say "may", because the Ferry road tip was not one of those investigated—I only wish that it had been.

Mr. Michael: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend has referred to the wide powers of environmental health officers, the dangers to employees and gases below landfill tips, but the new clauses to which he is speaking are specifically limited to the requirement that

"no material risk of infiltration of the inland bay or of groundwater by leachate from the tip will occur."

In order to understand his point, I have asked my hon. Friend to show how his remarks relate to the new clauses, but I cannot see how they do.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman is not challenging his hon. Friend but is, in a way, attempting to challenge the Chair. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) is in order. However, I understand that he is bringing his comments to a close.

Mr. Griffiths: I was a little surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth was trying to gag me on this important matter. *[Laughter.]* It is nothing to laugh about. It is an important matter and concerns a health risk to workers on the site when it is in operation and in the three years after its closure. Also, there is the less dangerous but unpleasant nuisance of odour detected in these studies for people living in the vicinity of the site both during its operation and after its closure.

Mr. Flynn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Griffiths: I shall not give way on this issue any more. I want to deal with it and move on to the proposed European Community directive on the management of landfill sites when they have finished their useful life.

The report continues to say that at the three sites studied, a dilution of the order of 435 times sufficed to reduce gas concentrations below the hazard threshold and that such dilution generally appears within one metre of the surface. Sampling to measure the exposure of site operators is nevertheless required under the 1988 regulations and Harwell is now working with a leading landfill operator and a toxicologist to develop suitable monitoring techniques.

At two of the study sites, between 39 and 64 per cent. of the compounds detected were present at levels exceeding odour thresholds. The most prominent of these were methanethiol and ethyl butanoate. I am sure that everyone is familiar with those two gases.

According to Dr. Scott, a dilution factor of 100 million would be needed at the periphery of the study sites to reduce the concentration of these compounds below the odour threshold. In practice, that was never attained. Dilutions of 1 million were often observed, but 100 million is needed. In several instances, the dilution factor was as small as 60,000, so the odour was really bad.

Those figures demonstrate a substantial potential to cause odour nuisance—a conclusion confirmed by a recent Harwell analysis of public complaints about landfill sites in Essex, which show that complaints about odours are by far the most common. I have received many complaints from constituents about the odours from one of the landfill sites at Stormy Down. These complaints come from villages up to two miles as the crow flies away from the site, which shows how unpleasant the smell can be. Those dilutions were never obtained, and so the smell was bad, and that has been confirmed by further research in Essex.

Associated research by Harwell has shown that certain cover materials, notably pulverised fuel ash, can remove a large proportion of odorous compounds from the landfill gas. Absorption and microbiodegradation are thought to be responsible, but Harwell is hoping that Department of the Environment funding will be forthcoming to advance our understanding of the processes involved.

Mr. Flynn: I understand the case that my hon. Friend is trying to make, but he has quoted a report from Harwell, and, stripping away the gobbledegook and the language in which it is presented, the report reaches the devastating conclusion that rubbish tips smell. Could he relate that in some way to Ferry road? Rubbish tips smell when they are

new and when they are a few years old. They smell when they are covered and they hardly smell at all if they are ancient tips in an exposed area where there are strong winds. Could he tell us how the Ferry road tip matches the ones described in the Harlow report?

Mr. Griffiths: I am surprised that my hon. Friend has not managed to grasp the seriousness of the situation that was revealed in the Harwell studies. For his elucidation, I repeat that they show that for three years—1,000 days—after a site has been closed, there is a danger of the gases being toxic to the workers and managers on the site. If my hon. Friend feels that that is inconsequential, I am sorry that that is his interpretation. In addition, terrible smells emanate from the sites—but not for as long as three years, as far as I can gather, although the studies do not go into details about the longevity of the lingering smells. The point is that the smells constitute a nuisance to the people living in the neighbourhood. From my own experience, those smells can result in complaints from people living up to two miles away, which I should have thought sufficient——

6.30 am

Mr. Rogers: I have great sympathy with the way in which my hon. Friend is trying to present his argument on a difficult report, with technical terms. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) has adopted a cheap way to participate in the debate, which is to pick on specific sentences in my hon. Friend's speech. He has now interrupted him at least half a dozen times. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) now proceed with the report? I am sure that if my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West rises, he will catch the eye of the Chair and be able to present his counter-argument. Some of us would welcome my hon. Friend's positive contribution to the debate. Some of us are also interested in the exposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend and are trying to follow his argument closely. I wish that he would now proceed with it.

Mr. Griffiths: I shall not be diverted again from the issues that I am raising. I shall now deal with the issues relating to the management of a landfill site, especially when it has been completed and sealed, which gives rise to problems that can last from 15 to 50 years.

As I said at the outset, standards are changing all the time. Let us consider the European Community proposal for a landfill directive, which is a most instructive example. I have the fifth and sixth drafts of the proposal with me. If I were seriously interested in holding up our proceedings, I could discuss at length the way in which the two directives have been developed to deal with landfill sites when they have been completed and sealed off and the leachate problem is being tackled. However, I shall not do so, because I wish to concentrate on the sixth draft, on what we know about it and on the way in which it might affect the management of the Ferry road tip when its useful life has ended.

The sixth draft directive proposes a ban on the landfilling of liquid waste, and lays down extremely stringent permeability standards, which are important when dealing with the issue of leachates and penetration through the substrata into the underground water, and uniform limits on the hazards of waste components that are permitted within landfill sites.

The draft could also require that charges on landfill waste sites be paid into a special environmental clean-up fund. I am not sure how the fund would work, but money from such a fund might become available to the Cardiff Bay development corporation to buy the land at the site and manage it in the last few years of the life of the site, or, if it decided to close it, to take the necessary management steps to make the site safe and deal with the leachate problem in particular.

The proposal for a special environmental clean-up fund might be of some benefit to the corporation, but if it continued to operate the site for a few years, there would be a special levy on the refuse taken to the site. In effect, the corporation might find that the people using the site, such as Cardiff city council and others wishing to dispose of refuse, had to pay much more to enable the valuable and essential work of cleaning up the environment of the completed Ferry road site to be completed when that stage is reached.

It is still possible that the European Community landfill directive will be amended. Of course, the Government may have their own ideas about what needs to be done. It would be interesting to hear from Ministers the Government's view of the draft directive and how they feel that it might impact on the Ferry road site when it is completed. Obviously, that has some bearing on the way in which the site and the general area will be developed.

At this stage, the draft directive is couched in general terms but key selections of it will have a major impact on current landfill engineering standards in the United Kingdom and significantly restrict the range of wastes accepted into United Kingdom landfills. That may well be useful in coping with the leachate problem referred to in both new clause 17 and new clause 5. By introducing restrictions, the proposal could take out those substances which cause most difficulties when attempting to seal a site to ensure that the leachate problem does not occur and that potentially hazardous substances and gases do not mix with the groundwater and cause who knows what environmental damage. We hardly want to dwell on the possible consequences of such substances leaking into the Rivers Taff and Ely.

The general intention of the proposal is to harmonise technical standards for landfilling in anticipation of opening the Community's internal frontiers in 1992. The Commission even envisages cross-border movement of waste, although we do not need to dwell on that.

We have not had a statement from the Government in the House on this matter. The press seems to be their favourite way to communicate policy. They do not like to bring it to the House. We had a prime example this evening. The Secretary of State could have been here backing and explaining the Bill and responding to our amendments because he considers the barrage such an exciting prospect for both Cardiff and the whole of Wales. Instead, he was speaking in the Lobby to the *Western Mail* Lobby correspondent. It is only a pity that the Secretary of State could not have come in and shared his thoughts with us here, either yesterday evening or this morning.

From what I can gather, the United Kingdom Government and the waste disposal industry is likely to argue that the Commission is taking its proposals too far in many respects, although it can be expected to insist that the Commission should not concern itself so closely with what goes into landfill sites and to leave room for the variable technical standards which take account of the

[Mr. Griffiths]

different hydro-geological and environmental circumstances within and between member states. To a certain extent, that is self-evident, because each site has its own particular hydro-geological properties, and the management engineering in sealing the sites will need to be adapted to each place depending on the permeability of the rocks and soil in the area.

That line of argument would clash with certain aspects of the Commission's approach. Therefore, there must be some doubt whether the United Kingdom will succeed in having the basic thrust of the proposal amended. Those closely involved in the environmental issues seem to feel that the United Kingdom's approach to the problem might not be the one to win the day. The current draft is based on article 100A of the European Community treaty and therefore would be open to adoption by a qualified majority vote of the Environmental Council. There would be no question of the Government being able to use a veto in that case. They would have to bow to the majority.

The draft text would therefore lay down certain basic engineering and operational standards for all types of landfill. Therefore, the general requirements for sealing the tips relating to the fencing of the site, nuisance prevention, important water ingress in the light of the leachate problem and the presence on site of a suitably qualified person responsible for the operation of the site, would be laid down.

On some issues, the draft is more specific. There are measures to control landfill gas and leachates. The draft directive on landfill gas insists that it must be collected and properly treated or used. It is not clear whether that would permit gas migration control measures such as passive vents or barriers, or whether it would require an active pumping system. Similarly, water and leachate would have to be collected under the terms of the draft directive. Therefore, that has some significance to the management of the site when it is finished.

I will not dwell on what is a suitable location because we are dealing in Ferry road with a tip which is already there. The draft directive would set up uniform numerical standards for the permeability of the non-saturated geological formations below the base and on the sides of the landfill. This is relevant to ensuring that the tip is efficiently sealed when work there has been completed.

The values for both hazardous and municipal waste landfills are set at 10 to the power of minus nine metres per second for a sub-stratum thickness of 3 m being measured under saturated conditions. The Ferry road site is likely to have such saturated conditions because it is located in a low-lying area and given its proximity to the rivers Taff and Ely.

The draft directive has outlined the values that would be required to manage the site and to cope with the problems of sealing it and dealing with the subsequent leachates. Those values would have to engineered on those sites where they do not occur naturally. I am sure that such standards occur naturally in the Ferry road site, but I should be interested to learn from any hon. Gentleman present whether the value of 10 to the power of minus nine metres per second for a sub-stratum thickness of 3 m measured under saturated conditions pertains to that site.

6.45 am

Mr. Rogers: I assure my hon. Friend that it does.

Mr. Griffiths: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I had hoped that the sponsors of the Bill would have such information at their fingertips.

The permeability co-efficient is 10 to the power of minus nine metres per second and it is exceedingly tight. I am no expert on such matters; I just take the advice of experts. It is so tight that it might allow landfilling only on an exceptional basis. I wonder whether any hon. Gentleman knows whether the Ferry road site meets the permeability co-efficient. If it does, it makes that much easier the task of sealing the site and dealing with the leachates once that site has completed its useful life.

Natural lining materials, such as heavy clay, often have a permeability of 10 to the power of minus eight metres. If that was not the case at the Ferry road site, an artificial lining system would have to be introduced to meet the desired standard.

I have already said that the draft directive will exclude waste from the landfill site, but it is important to study the annex to the directive. It contains a series of values and concentration thresholds that must be met before a particular waste can be deposited in a landfill. Two fixed parameters relate to those values. One concerns the weight loss of the waste when it is heated to 900 deg C in the dry state—that should not exceed 10 per cent. The other parameter is that the waste should not contain more than 4 per cent. by weight of lipophilic substances. That is important when dealing with the problem of sealing a site.

Wastes would also be subject to a shake test based on the 1984 west German din method. Effluent containing concentrations of contaminants in excess of those in a table that I have before me will be subject to certain conditions. I hardly dare read that table, as it is so technical, but I may feel compelled to do so later depending on how I feel the argument is developing. There are exceptions allowed for inorganic waste. The table also refers to hazardous waste. As far as we know, the Ferry road tip does not contain a great deal of hazardous waste. I have heard—I do not know whether it is true—that part of the tip may contain asbestos. If that is so, all of it was properly contained before being put into the tip. Perhaps hon. Members will be able to tell us that there are definitely no hazardous wastes involved, in which case the problems of leachates and of sealing the tip will be made that much easier to solve.

You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will probably be delighted to know that I do not feel bound to read out the inert waste standards for 20 or so different types of waste.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am delighted to hear it, and I should be even more delighted if the hon. Gentleman would make a more determined effort to relate his remarks to the new clauses before us. I have been listening carefully to what he has had to say.

Mr. Griffiths: My point, Madam Deputy Speaker, was that the European Community is to introduce a proposal relating to the management of landfill waste sites. An important part of that process involves the management of a site after it has been filled in. New clauses 5 and 17 make particular reference to the need both to seal the site to the

satisfaction of the National Rivers Authority and the environmental health officer of Cardiff city council and to deal specifically with the leachate problem.

Those matters are dealt with in the European Community draft proposals on the management of landfill sites, and although those proposals are not yet law, they could become law before the Bill completes its passage through the House and are very likely to be law before the Cardiff bay barrage is built. That makes the new clauses requiring the developers to bring forward proposals to deal with sealing the site and with the problem of leachates even more important.

The monitoring of the site after it has been completed is most important. As I said earlier, Mr. Nicholson, the principal pollution inspector of HMIP, said that the site would need management for from anything between 15 and 50 years. The EC proposals suggest that the management period should be 30 years, and we must bear that in mind.

The monitoring proposals specified in the text include daily checks on a range of meteorological parameters and of leachate volumes and regular measurements of leachate and surface water composition and gas emissions, when the site is in the operational phase, with less frequent measurements being required in the aftercare phase with which the new clauses are principally concerned.

Ground water levels and composition would also have to be checked, at least every six months, using at least three boreholes on the site. That gives some idea of the scale of the work that will be necessary. For ground waters used or usable as a source of drinking water—this will probably not apply, although we can never tell how ground waters get into the system from which we ultimately take our water—the draft directive requires that concentration of substances on the so-called grey list in the 1980 EC directive on ground water protection should not exceed the maximum admissible concentrations laid down in the 1980 directive on drinking water quality. The precise implications are not yet clear, because the draft does not specify at which point in groundwater below a landfill the limits must be observed.

The directive has important implications for the management of the site. I should dearly love a response either from the Bill's sponsors or from the Government Front Benchers who have made it clear that they back the Bill to the hilt, in words if not in terms of strength: they have dismally failed to persuade Conservative Members to stay.

I should like at least to know—not just in the context of our new clauses, but in the context of what the sponsors propose—how they think that the European draft directive will affect issues relating to the sealing of the site after it has completed its useful life, and what they consider to be its implications for dealing with the leachate problem. Those who harried me when I was speaking about important safety aspects for workers on the site do not appear to be prepared to make any useful comments about something that I thought might have already been drawn to their attention.

New clause 17 refers specifically to closure procedures, which are dealt with in the draft proposal. We are told that, before a closure, there must be a report on the condition of the site, together with proposals for monitoring and control of leachate and gas emissions. They would have to be submitted by the operators to the authorities. That is exactly what we are asking for in new clause 17. I hope that the sponsors will say that, as this will appear in European Community law in the next couple of years, it would make a good deal of sense at least to accept new clause 17.

That is a positive note on which to end my speech. I am anxious not to take up too much time, although I assure the House that I could talk for at least another 15 minutes about the European Community proposal, because it is so important. I will not detain the House, because I know that other hon. Members are keen to speak; I hope that the sponsors are among them.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have listened closely to the hon. Gentleman's speech. He has spoken for well over an hour, and I understand that he has supported new clause 6.

Mr. Griffiths: No; I have been supporting new clause 17 in particular.

Mr. Jones: I understood that the hon. Gentleman was also supporting new clause 6.

Mr. Griffiths: No—new clause 5.

Mr. Jones: May I draw the hon. Gentleman out on new clause 6?

Mr. Griffiths: I have not supported it.

Mr. Jones: I am seeking some information. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can help me. He seems to be distancing himself from new clause 6; let me read it to him:

"Before constructing the Barrage, the undertakers and the water company shall produce and publish a plan indicating where and what provision they have made for phosphate-stripping and nitrate-stripping of the waters of the rivers entering the inland bay and their tributaries in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay."

The main point appears to be the "event" referred to at the end. That is the point on which I seek information. What event might come about? What are the quality objectives and who would set them? I urge the hon. Gentleman to go further into new clause 6 to help me to understand it before we enter upon serious debate on it.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) has been present for most of the debate. I do not know whether he was in the Chamber when I started my speech, when I did so I referred generally to all the new clauses. I said that I wanted to spend most of my time dealing with two issues. They were algae scum, which I dealt with briefly, and new clauses 5 and 17, on which I spoke at greater length. I did not want to speak to new clause 6 because it was dealt with at length by other hon. Members. The *Official Report* will contain a great deal about new clause 6.

7 am

Mr. Rogers: I understand the problems encountered by the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). However, it is implicit in all that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) has said that there is to be an EC directive on these issues. At the end of new clause 6 is the phrase:

"in the event of such provision becoming necessary for compliance with future water quality objectives in the inland bay."

The meaning of that is self-evident. As a result of Parliament's decisions, the future control of pollution will

[Mr. Rogers]

rest with the European Community. The hon. Member for Cardiff, North should have been provided with the information that we have been able to obtain.

The chief executive of Cardiff city council has prepared a report and, out of common courtesy, that should have been given to the hon. Gentleman to enable him to check on the problems that have been mentioned. Page 7 of the report states:

"Current leaching and landfill gas problems at the existing site need to be remedied under the provisions of draft landfill directives being proposed by the European Economic Community."

That is the basis of the new clause, which should be adopted by the promoters. It is a constructive amendment to the Bill.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Member for Cardiff, North should recognise the growing role of the European Community in environmental matters, and that draft Commission proposals are likely to continue to have a major impact on the control and management of landfill sites, such as that at Ferry road.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the debate be now adjourned.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): I deplore the fact that we are where we are in the debate. It underlines the difficulty of launching legislation such as the Bill under the private Bill procedure. Some hon. Members have sought to wreck a measure that is designed for the public good. The Bill is for the good of Cardiff, and of Wales as a whole, and, as the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) said, it is designed to shine in Europe as a whole. Some Opposition Members have deliberately sought to wreck the measure and their weasel words about the Bill carried little weight with most of us. They have also caused embarrassment to their hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

I congratulate the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth on his extraordinarily hard work over a long time in the interests of his constituents and his city. He has been tireless in his efforts—as tireless as some have been slipshod in their attacks on the work that he has represented. The amendments have been carelessly framed. They have been ignorant and destructive. At the very least they have been obstructive, and designed to be so. Everybody has known it. This public Bill——

Mr. Rowlands: It is not a public Bill.

Mr. Grist: All right—it is a private Bill that has been brought forward for the public good. It has Government support. It has been supported by a Labour-controlled county council, by most Labour councillors on Cardiff city council, and by the Liberal party. It is a generally accepted and widely welcomed measure. The Bill has given enormous publicity to south Wales and Cardiff in the media throughout the world. Against that background, windbaggery has threatened to damage the good name of Cardiff as well as the good name of Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the hon. Gentleman support the motion that has been proposed by the Chairman of Ways and Means?

Mr. Grist: I am discussing the motion.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the hon. Gentleman support it?

Mr. Grist: Most certainly. I would not dare to do otherwise when a motion is proposed by the Chairman of Ways and Means, he being an old acquaintance and friend.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I ask my hon. Friend, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether we are debating the motion of the Chairman of Ways and Means. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, are in the Chair, and there can be only one person in the Chair at any given moment. Surely the Chairman moved the motion merely as the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), just another Member of this place.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The motion was moved by the Chairman of Ways and Means, and it was in order for him to do so. The motion was, That the debate be now adjourned. It was a dilatory motion, and it is open for debate.

Mr. Grist: The actions that we have witnessed have been extremely short-sighted. As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, the money which has been made available by the Bill for Cardiff bay is not available elsewhere. It is not as though the envious glances from Merthyr or wherever in the Rhymney valley will lead to the money being redistributed. Instead, it will return to the Treasury. That may be thought to be a smart move by certain people in south Wales, but I cannot imagine why.

Some Members who represent English constituencies would say, "Why is all this money going to Wales? Why is it going to Cardiff?" They would not necessarily be sorry to see us lose it. It is so short-sighted of Opposition Members to look a gift horse in the mouth. Have they not considered that the name of the proposed development has spread through the business world, through our European partners and further afield to north America and Japan? Yet they try to trip it up at this stage.

Do they believe that the development of the bay without the barrage would be half the animal that it would be with it? Are they not aware of the economic studies that have shown that for every £1 that is put in in the absence of the barrage will generate £3 of private money, whereas £7 will be generated with the barrage? Do they not understand and accept that form of arithmetic? It would be one of the best possible returns on the investment of public money. I say to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that it would be a much better investment than the urban aid moneys that we rightly direct to his constituency and the valley community generally. The valleys initiative is taking about £800 million. That is the answer to those who think that the Government have overlooked the valleys.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is making extremely cheap political points. He knows—*[Interruption.]* Unlike his hon. Friends who are cackling, at least he has been in his place to listen to the debate. He will have heard Members say that they support all aspects of the Bill, including investment for the industrial regeneration of the Cardiff docklands area. We do not deny the fact that the money is going to that area for development——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) is making a very long intervention. He might catch my eye in due course, but will he now bring his intervention to a close?

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) referred to my constituency. He knows that we object only to the construction of a barrage. Some of us have yet to be convinced of the worth of investing hundreds of millions of pounds of Government money in the construction of the barrage when the results might be dubious.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Member for Rhondda must have overlooked or missed what I said about the difference in the financial returns with the barrage as opposed to without it. That point has been tested on several occasions with different economic possibilities, taking into account the higher interest rates and slower economic growth of the past two years. That consideration has revealed the tremendous return available from the waterside development. Indeed, it is so exciting and interesting because it is a waterside development, and one need only visit Swansea to see the value of a waterside development and what it can do to an area.

If the support of the hon. Member for Rhondda for the proposal is as pristine as he makes out, he must have been a little naive. The amendments and new clauses would have wrecked the powers of the Cardiff bay development corporation to take steps in certain circumstances. Powers of compulsory purchase and other powers that he supported earlier would have damaged the corporation's capacity to operate. He tried to interfere with the planning process that has been working extremely well between the corporation and the two planning authorities that the corporation covers.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) spoke for two hours and 48 minutes. His speech was intended to obstruct and damage the Bill, and that was not in the interests of the hon. Gentleman's constituents. The growth of Cardiff, in particular south Cardiff and the more deprived areas, much of which he and I represent, depends on the rebirth and growth of the derelict areas which grew up with the port in the last century and which have been looking for a role ever since.

Hon. Members who refer to the mud flats as a centre of beauty have not lived beside them. I am sure that they would not choose to do that. We can all see beauty——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glandford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Member for Glandford and Scunthope (Mr. Morley) is very interested in birds, but I doubt whether he would choose to live by the mud flats unless he was particularly wedded to the bird scene.

Mr. Morley: I have been in the Chamber for most of the night, but I did not wish to interfere in matters that concerned Cardiff. However, there are local, national and international concerns about the ecological effects of the barrage. Does the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) accept that many local people in Cardiff appreciate the value of the mud flats and many business people are investing their money in the regeneration of Cardiff? Firms such as Tarmac Homes have argued that the mud flats would not deter them from investing in the area or in the regeneration that everyone wants. The mud flats can be an integral part of that without the barrage.

Mr. Grist: Tarmac Homes is building homes on developments that are nowhere near the mud flats. The homes are near the Bute East dock and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth explained—although no one paid any attention to him—that the water in that dock is the kind of water that would be behind the barrage. It may not be the kind of water we would want to swim in or swallow, but it is perfectly good for fish, for birds and for water sports and boating, all of which take place on the Bute East dock. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) painted a picture of the nature of the water that was a travesty of the truth. He painted it in the most lurid colours for headline purposes in order to scare people and put them off. It was neither an objective nor an honest approach.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Through you, Mr. Speaker, may I suggest to my hon. Friend that one consequence of adjourning the debate at this stage will be that we shall be prevented from hearing more from the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who is the most noted expert in the House on birdlife in this country. I had the privilege of visiting the Falkland Islands in his company. He made my visit much more instructive and memorable by taking me on a conducted tour of birdlife in the Falkland Islands. The House ought to hear more about the birdlife before it continues its debate on the Bill.

7.15 am

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend surprises me by expressing that interest. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe must have been a very engaging companion. I hope that we can look forward to a slide show in the Grand Committee Room to underline the point. I think that the hon. Gentleman will accept that his hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly is also a noted supporter of both bird and other forms of wildlife. We accept him on that basis. Therefore, we should have respected him more had he sought more clearly to express his opposition to the development along those lines. At the end of the day I should still have thought his opposition wrong, since the promoters have gone out of their way to try to find an answer—a most ingenious one at that—to the problem. They have approached the effect of the scheme on both fish and birdlife with the greatest seriousness.

Hon. Members may not be aware of the fact that the promoters have considered the amendments most carefully—in my view, with more care and seriousness than they deserve. When we continue the debate, they will find that the promoters are ready to accept many of the amendments. Had we proceeded, we might have found that that fact led to slightly faster progress through the Amendment Paper, though I accept that it is open to any hon. Member to jigger it up, if he or she wants to do so.

The concerns expressed in the amendments need to be aired and will be aired. I hope that Opposition Members will adopt a more constructive approach and will stop obstructing the scheme, thereby damaging the good name of Wales and Cardiff. They should say plainly why they dislike the proposal. They ought to stop scaring quite unnecessarily both their own and other people's constituents.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Is not the most grievous lesson to be learned from all this the Labour party's divisions in Wales? As the Leader of the Opposition is a Welsh Member, does it not surprise my hon. Friend that he is not here to listen to and to contribute to the debate? Does it not show the lack of firm leadership for the good of Wales that my hon. Friend so eloquently provides?

Mr. Grist: I was seeking not to embarrass my right honourable neighbour in Cardiff and my other neighbours in south Wales. However, his absence underlines the manifest split in the Labour party that my hon. Friend has underlined, though it underlines itself. I am sorry that the Leader of the Opposition has not given some sign of his support for the proposal. I am sure that my disappointment is shared in other quarters.

Locally, the Labour party has supported the proposal, which is all to its credit. It understood that this is an unparalleled opportunity for a rundown area in a great city to be improved. Cardiff was one of the greatest coal ports in the world at the turn of the century. However, during the past 30 or 40 years the area has declined and rotted. At last we have been given the chance to rebuild. It will be a modern, pretty and exciting development that will provide plenty of work. It is estimated that this development will result in the creation of about 30,000 jobs and in the building of about 6,000 houses, a quarter of which will be housing association and public authority dwellings. The Cardiff Bay development corporation has tried to involve the people of Tiger bay. It has tried to promote training and to involve people in the rebuilding of their area. It has given life back to the area by all sorts of means, such as painting railway bridges and cleaning up places. Involving local people has all too often been an uphill task.

What does the corporation get from the Opposition? It gets suspicion and a refusal to recognise that certain powers are required. It is sniffed at when it requests investment. What happens in the capital city is reflected in the valleys, and sends a beacon out to the whole of south Wales. Following a previous failed city centre development project in the 1960s, we now have a great concert hall in Cardiff. I defy Opposition Members not to be proud of St. David's hall. Performances there are broadcast frequently. It is one of the finest concert halls in the country. Music performed there is broadcast throughout Europe and is carried by the BBC World Service. The same will apply to this development if only hon. Members will take the blinkers off, stop scaring people, and contribute constructively to the debate.

Mr. Michael: Perhaps I can be a little kinder to my hon. Friends than the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist)—my neighbour—has been. At this stage, I speak more in sadness than in anger.

Some of my hon. Friends do not understand the danger in which they have placed the future of my constituents, the future of the city of Cardiff, and an imaginative future for south Wales. Some have shown a degree of sympathy. Some may have hoped to exercise their right of criticism to the full, but that in the end their attempts to prevent the Bill's progress would be voted down. In view of the kind way in which the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central has referred to these matters, I shall say no more about them.

However, in view of the numbers of Government Members who voted in this debate, Conservatives are not in a position to make remarks about divisions among Opposition Members. The absence of support for the Secretary of State for Wales is an indication of a sad lack of confidence in the very positive development that this Bill represents. I hope that all hon. Members will reflect on the dangers that will be created by the delay in the Bill's progress that is now proposed.

I thank the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central for his kind remarks. I am grateful to all hon. Members who have supported the Bill at all its stages. In particular, I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West was born in Grangetown and appreciates more than most the precise effects that the barrage could have on the creation of a positive future for people in the area, including his own neighbours and friends of earlier days.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore, who represents a valley constituency, and Members from Newport and Swansea do not see this opportunity for my constituency—indeed, for the city of Cardiff—as an alternative to development in their own areas. They see it not as a price that they have to pay, but as a positive development, in which they, too, should delight.

It is sad that we have not made more progress. The new clauses and amendments that we have considered were either unreasonable or were already covered by the Bill. I did not support the Bill without giving deep thought to its implications, and I think that my hon. Friends will accept that that has been my position. I ask other hon. Members deeply to consider their objections to the Bill and the way in which they have sought to use up much time by placing obstacles in its way, and allow it to proceed, for the benefit of my constituency and the wider area.

Opponents of the Bill have referred to the excitement about the Cardiff bay development. The development depends on the barrage to attract investment and secure the future of the city. Many of us have considered the type of city that Cardiff will become in the future. We do not want ribbon development until the city meets Newport, West on the one hand and Bridgend and Barry on the other, or goes north until it meets Caerphilly. For years, those on local authorities looked southwards to the land that was owned by the British docks board and sought to bring Cardiff back to its old heartlands and to bring back new life and communities to the south Cardiff area. That is the purpose of the Bill.

The development of the city has continued apace in recent years, not accidentally but because local authorities, and the people who represent the people of Cardiff on those local authorities, have sought redevelopment of the city. I am proud to have played a small part in the development of the city centure. At one time, people left south Wales to shop in Bristol and other places, but now people from the other side of the Bristol channel come to us.

The capital city of Wales is a place of which the people not only of Cardiff but of south Wales can be proud. I still believe that the barrage will help us to ensure its future.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about this matter. I served with him on Cardiff city council for more years than we care to remember. We served on the central area committee and

the finance committee. Since the failure of the central area development, through the development of St. David's hall and of south Cardiff, there has been steady progress and a bipartisan approach by responsible members of the community. If the Bill were frustrated, it would be the greatest tragedy, a dire frustration and a dreadful betrayal of our city.

Mr. Michael: I agree. We have been fortunate in our representatives on local authorities. They sought to develop Cardiff airport and attract new investment to the area from Bosch and other firms. Those local authority representatives had the vision to see that the development of Cardiff bay and of the barrage would take the future of Cardiff into a new dimension that would not be available without it, as St. David's hall gave Cardiff a new cultural dimension and the development of the city centre changed Cardiff from a rundown older city into one that has been fittingly described as the youngest capital in Europe.

We know there that are firms waiting in the wings to see whether the barrage proposal goes through and, if so, to bring jobs and economic development to the city. That development will bring about a growing capital city in the heart of a resurgent economy in south Wales. It will bring my constituents positive developments in the environment by replacing the old and derelict heart of the city with new, living communities. It will bring housing to areas where it is desperately needed. It will bring jobs back to the deprived communities in the south of Cardiff. Having worked in those communities before election to the House, I have seen a good deal of the misery of unemployment which far too often has been concentrated in those areas of the city.

7.30 am

Before this and earlier debates, I circulated hon. Members with information on a number of occasions. Many right hon. and hon. Members are fed up hearing about the Cardiff bay development and are tempted to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and myself, "A plague on both your houses."

I do not seek division with colleagues within the city and certainly not with members of the same party, but I cannot stand back and see massive public investment for my constituency and my city being put at risk. I state again, lest any of my hon. Friends is in doubt, that if that public investment, which would bring after it private investment in the heart of the capital city of Wales, does not go ahead, that money will not go to other Welsh constituents but will go back to the Treasury and will be lost to Wales.

I tell my hon. Friends that I will not take the same approach to developments in their constituencies when the opportunity arises. I will seek to bring investment to my constituency, but I will also seek to do what I can to bring investment to the valleys of south Wales, to the rural areas of Gwent and Gwynedd, and to the communities in every part of Wales that need investment. I do not believe that stopping development in another constituency can possibly be for the benefit of my constituency. I invite my hon. Friends who have sought to take so much time on the Bill today to reflect on that and to consider whether they really want to stop such vital development for the city of Cardiff.

My constituents will ask why the investment and their future may be put at risk by the procedures of the House. I think that on one thing at least we can all agree: that the procedures of the House in relation to private Bills need a drastic overhaul and need to be dragged into the 19th century, if not into the 20th century. That is no criticism of yourself, Mr. Speaker, or of the occupants of the Chair who have had to preside over the sitting. They have had to operate within the system, as I, as the sponsor of the Bill, and other hon. Members have had to operate within the system that currently applies. I plead with the House not to be slow in bringing about changes and more logical ways of dealing with these matters.

However, we have to deal with the procedures of the House as they stand. The promoters of the Bill had to go through the private Bill procedure in order to make the progress that we all wanted. The opponents came prepared to debate through the night and the following day. Their dedication to opposing the Bill, which I am sure is sincere, was strong enough for them to do that. I came prepared to debate through last night and today, and tomorrow night and the following day, if necessary, to complete consideration of the the Bill. I am sad that it appears that we will not now have that opportunity on this occasion, but there will be a future occasion.

I make a plea to all hon. Members to remember that this little Bill, which has been a great irritant to so many hon. Members, carries with it the key to the future for my constituency, my city and—as I say to other hon. Members—our city. I make that plea not just to those who represent Cardiff constituencies but to all who represent Welsh constituencies and, indeed, to English and Scottish Members who also have shown an interest in and support for the development.

It is a sad point to reach but I hope that what we have now is a temporary setback that may give people the opportunity to reflect on their opposition to the Bill and the barrage. I hope that the Bill will go ahead, and do so with the united support of the House. I am certain that it is the right measure for the city and the future, so I leave the House with that plea for support.

Mr. Cwilym Jones: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate immediately after my respected colleague and neighbour, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael).

This is the first time that I have spoken on a dilatory motion of this sort. I am not familiar with such a motion. I was surprised when the motion came; I thought that it had been moved by the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), but Madam Deputy Chairman, who was in the Chair before you, Mr. Speaker, corrected me on that point and explained that it had been moved by the Chairman of Ways and Means. I was surprised at that because, earlier this morning, I had been looking through "Erskine May" and found, on page 333, that:

> "Furthermore, the Speaker has power under Standing Order No. 34, if he believes that any dilatory motion is an abuse of the rules of the House, to decline to propose the question on it to the House".

It struck me as odd that the occupant of the Chair could put forward such a dilatory motion while seemingly having the power to exercise a veto over that motion. I could not immediately see how a separation of the functions could be achieved between the Chairman of Ways and Means proposing the motion, although not from the Chair but from the Treasury Bench——

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I may help. The Chairman of Ways and Means is in charge of private business and it is his decision. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not criticising that decision.

Mr. Jones: Far be it from me, Sir. I would not want to criticise that and I hope that you will draw me to order immediately, if necessary. I only plead my lack of familiarity with this motion, which I have never debated before. I would have appreciated it if it had been in order —perhaps it would not have been—if the Chairman of Ways and Means could have explained why he brought the motion before the House. Perhaps he is allowed to say only as much as he did.

Whenever I try to debate a motion, I am always concerned about why we should adjourn. I feel a great frustration now, which I think is shared by other hon. Members, not least those from the capital city of Wales. There will be frustration in that city, and throughout south Wales, if it is thought that we are unnecessarily frustrating the progress of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. I should like to know why it is felt that we should adjourn.

I have sat here patiently for almost the entire time since 7 pm last night, and have been wanting to speak on the Bill. However, I felt frustrated that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) so eloquently put it, we have been subjected to a filibuster since 7 pm last night. That filibuster has prevented me from speaking on the Bill, because I knew that, if I spoke needlessly, I would only contribute to that filibuster. I so wanted the Bill to progress that I resisted, almost entirely, the temptation and confined myself to one or two pertinent interventions to try to bring the debate to a much more appropriate stage.

This most regrettable and inappropriate filibuster should never have happened. We have been debating the Bill since 7 o'clock last night—about twelve and half hours. I seem to remember that the last debate on the second group of new clauses began at 9.53 pm. There were two closure motions during that debate, moved by different sides of the House. There was a will to make progress.

Unfortunately, the House has rules that are not always readily understood outside it. We believe that all our rules are good and try to observe them, but many people will think that there was something wrong when the first closure motion was carried by 97 votes to approximately 20, but we still could not make progress because we were a mere three votes short of the minimum required for a closure.

Mr. Rowlands: I am following the hon. Gentleman's speech with interest. He is referring to the length of speeches. May I remind him that there are a number of interesting precedents? One was the four-hour speech made by the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), the present Secretary of State for Wales, in a debate on the Mersey Passenger Transport Bill, a private Bill. It is a precedent that many hon. Members have followed.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has reminded me that, as this is a private Bill, there is no set rule that speeches have to be only 10 or 15 minutes. On occasion, something longer than 15 minutes can well be justified.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) will recall that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) spoke in the debate on a private Member's Bill, and the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill is a private Bill. The circumstances are different, and I thought it would be appropriate for my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) to set the record straight.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful for that intervention, which sets the record straight. We can only reflect on the almost complete lack of progress that we have made, although all those hon. Members stayed up throughout the night for a twelve and a half hour debate. What have we succeeded in doing? We have disposed of one out of 25 groups of new clauses and amendments. We were only on the second group, although the debate began at seven minutes to 10 o'clock, and we still have not concluded them even though there were two closure motions.

We have already commented on one closure motion, when there was a slight technical hitch because it was three votes short of the minimum required to achieve a closure. There was an even more remarkable closure motion in the early hours of this morning, which, if I remember rightly, was moved by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who must have changed his mind more than once about wanting to make progress on this Bill, because he moved that motion and could get even fewer of his hon. Friends into the Lobby.

Mr. Ron Davies: As the hon. Gentleman has referred to me directly, I think that it is appropriate that I explain to him precisely why I moved that motion in the early hours. It was our belief that the Secretary of State had failed to gather the support that he was seeking from the Government. We know that the Secretary of State wrote to every member of the Cabinet urging every Minister, junior Minister and Parliamentary Private Secretary to stay present through the night. We were aware that the Secretary of State had failed in that endeavour.

We knew from the previous vote on the closure that the supporters of the Bill did not have 100 Members present to achieve the closure. We believed that, during the later part of the night, there were not 40 members present to achieve a quorum in the event of a Division. Therefore, I moved the motion. My hon. Friends deliberately stayed out of the Lobby to ensure that we could identify precisely those members of the Government and the few Opposition Members who were supporting the measure, and test whether the House was quorate. There were just over 40 hon. Members, not quite 50, so we were nearly successful in our endeavour.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful for that intervention. The hon. Gentleman is a candid Member of this House, and at least he has frankly explained that the closure motion was nothing more than another procedural device to try to sabotage the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill—if he could not filibuster it out, he would try to wreck it by finding out whether we were without a quorum. Again, that was not a positive contribution to the debate, despite some of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues trying to claim that they were being positive.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is it not also true that that Division took up another 15 minutes and that although only 52 hon. Members took part in it, of whom my hon.

Friend and myself were numbers 51 and 52, that 15-minute Division was another method of stalling for time? It was purely a procedural play to spin out time.

7.45 am

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

In response to what the hon. Member for Caerphilly said about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I advise the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend was not whipping the Bill. It is not his job to do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about his letter?"] Anyone can write to anyone. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) wrote to me and to many other hon. Members to encourage me to stay in the House throughout the evening to support the Bill. I know full well that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth also wrote to hon. Members, as did the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) who wrote a round robin to Cabinet members. Perhaps that was the original, because the hon. Gentleman wrote that letter in February, so my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may be guilty of copying him when trying to put the record straight.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): May I assure my hon. Friend that I have been here all night, largely because—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where?"] The Palace of Westminster is multi-roomed, and I have been here all night because of my hon. Friend's request for support for a Bill which I believe to be of great importance. That has nothing to do with other letters. It is simply due to the admirable work of my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, Central and for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) to ensure that the Bill, which is so important to Cardiff, has a chance of going through.

Mr. Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention.

I should like to make another point about the intervention of the hon. Member for Caerphilly. I am sorry that he is no longer in his place—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, West will doubtless pass on what I am saying to his hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman added confusion to confusion because, having voted against a closure motion at about 1 am, he then proposed a closure motion between 3 and 4 am, and proceeded to vote against it. How many times can he stand on his head amid all the procedural devices that he tries to implement?

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene, and I shall not now seek to make a speech in my own right. However, I must draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Secretary of State for Wales is now behind Mr. Speaker's Chair. He has not entered the Chamber during our debates on the Bill, but he is alive and well and able to issue a press release to the Press Association, criticising Labour Members and telling it exactly what has been happening here. I repeat that the right hon. Gentleman has not been in the Chamber.

Will the hon. Gentleman please go to see his right hon. Friend and the Ministers? We would have made a lot more progress if, just for once, Ministers could answer some of our questions, such as what is happening to the £900 million, and of about the environmental considerations. If they had answered a single question, we could have made some progress, and I say that in all sincerity. Can the hon. Gentleman please use his influence?

Mr. Jones: I do not need to go to see either my right hon. Friend or my hon. Friends the Ministers in the interest of making progress on this Bill. Instead, I direct the charge back to the hon. Member for Wrexham, who made a not-short contribution during the past twelve and a half or 13 hours on the Bill. If the hon. Gentleman had been much more succinct and to the point with his words, we could certainly have made progress. The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) had a 20-minute slot immediately after the first closure motion that did not succeed, just after 1 am.

The hon. Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and certainly for Cardiff, West went on at some length. Naturally I would not wish to leave out the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who also spoke. Compared to some of his hon. Friends, he was a model of brevity. At one point, he confined one of his speeches to a mere one minute. If more of his hon. Friends had emulated the hon. Member for Rhondda, we could have made progress. I am glad that he has come back into the Chamber.

I also include in the catalogue the hon. Member for Caerphilly, who felt it necessary to speak at some length, as did several of his hon. Friends. In all fairness, I should not do as the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) suggests and see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friends the Ministers in the Welsh Office. Instead, I should address my remarks to Opposition Members and the hon. Gentlemen who filibustered, spoke for far longer than necessary, repeated themselves time after time and dealt with the irrelevant and extraneous and all sorts of material, as well as material that floated down the river.

I must also include the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), whom I see standing behind me. He made a lengthy contribution to the debate last night. All those hon. Gentlemen will find that what they have done is a great disappointment in south Wales, not only in the capital city but much further afield in their constituencies. I am sure that their constituents will ask why they frustrated—or tried to frustrate—such a positive development and the best prospect for the whole of south Wales.

There certainly was a filibuster. On many occasions, the Chair had to try to bring Opposition Members to order and ask them to relate their remarks much more closely to the matters under debate. The last remonstrance was by Madam Deputy Speaker with the hon. Member for Bridgend towards the conclusion of his speech. She sought to bring him back to order. The *Hansard* record will show that, so wide of the mark were some of the speeches made, that, even with the gentle patience that the Chair traditionally displays, Madam Deputy Speaker and the other Deputy Speakers were moved to seek to bring Opposition Members to order.

I have looked at the timings involved. The hon. Member for Pontypridd might like to know that he contributed one hour 26 minutes to our proceedings. The hon. Member for Caerphilly took one hour and four minutes. The hon. Member for Wrexham took one hour and 49 minutes, but the record holder was the hon. Member for Cardiff, West. I wondered in the early hours of this morning whether the hon. Gentleman was trying to exceed the record held by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) for the longest speech, which he made in the last Parliament in the

[Mr. Jones]

fluoride debate. That was another all-night debate through which I sat on these Benches. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West tailed off after a total contribution of two hours and 48 minutes. He has spent 168 minutes out of the past 13 hours frustrating, filibustering and stopping the progress of this excellent and important Bill.

In the vote on the closure motion moved by the hon. Member for Caerphilly, only eight hon. Members voted against. That was the weight of the opposition. Eight hon. Members have kept the House up all night long. We have been at it for almost 13 hours. We had 25 groups of amendments to debate on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill and we have reached only the second group. We have been stuck on the second group since 9.53 pm yesterday.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Having gone through the catechism of the time spent on the Bill over the night, does not my hon. Friend agree that, after investing so much time it might be as well to continue the job, let the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) put his questions, listen to the answers and try again to make progress on the Bill?

Mr. Jones: I am trying to explore my thoughts on that. I am inclined to agree with my hon. Friend because I, too, have a sense of frustration about not making progress tonight. As we have made the effort to sit all the way through the night debating the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill and as I have not had the opportunity to hear why the Chairman of Ways and Means moved this dilatory motion —he may have good reasons which I do not readily understand having not debated such motions before—my inclination is to press on and reach Third Reading. That is what the capital city of Wales and the people of south Wales deserve.

Already, as I think Opposition Members have said, the Bill has spent too long going through the House. Granted, we must give it the best proper examination. We should not be guilty of leaving stones unturned and we should examine the Bill as well as possible. But there comes a practical reasonable limit, and we have exceeded that. My desire to see progress is shared by others. Unless I am persuaded otherwise, I am inclined to believe that we should carry on debating this morning, this afternoon and this evening, and throughout the night if necessary, so important do I think the Bill for my constituency. It is not directly within the development corporation's area, but the Bill will be very much to my constituency's advantage, as it is to the rest of the capital city of Wales and to all the other constituencies of south Wales. Instead, we are at this point now because eight hon. Members have chosen to hold us up and use every delaying tactic in the book.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth back in his place. He obviously had important business outside to attend to. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central in congratulating the hon. Gentleman on the way in which he has handled the Bill. He has worked fantastically hard in mastering the Bill. He has a complete mastery of it and he fully understands it. If only some of his hon. Friends had listened to him closely they would have understood that he was able to reassure them fully on all their points, so deeply has he studied the matter.

I know that that is typical of the hard work that the hon. Gentleman does, not just since he has been in this place since 1987, but all those years previously when he served on Cardiff city council. He is a dedicated Labour politician from his fingertips to his boots. He cares more passionately and more sincerely about his party than most other Opposition Members. But at the same time he has the broadest common feeling for anything that need not be treated in a party political fashion. He has been the first to extend a hand in the interests of making progress for our capital city. He is very much a credit to his party and I am sure that all his hon. Friends wish to emulate him in that.

In conclusion, if it is not too late, I appeal to the eight Labour Members and a few others who have spent far too long delaying our proceedings by indulging in a filibuster since 7 o'clock last night, to raise their sights higher and to eschew the petty, the jealousies and the mean-minded things that can surely be the only reason for their attempt to frustrate this important Bill for the redevelopment of south Cardiff, the benefits of which will spread so far beyond. We have a tremendous opportunity in the House. Perhaps we could achieve that before the day is out. We clearly should achieve it. I appeal to Labour Members to put aside those petty things and let us join hands and go forward together.

Mr. Rogers: I join Conservative Members in praising my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for his diligence in pursuing the Bill. He has done remarkably well. I would not impute any motive to my hon. Friend other than his desire to achieve the best for his constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has also been motivated by his constituents' interests. It would be mean and petty-minded for any hon. Member for impute unworthy motives to my hon. Friend. He does not have a large majority so he cannot relax and do things without remembering his constituents' interests. He has served those interests well in the manner in which he has approached the Bill.

Things have gone wrong since we began discussing the motion to adjourn because of a polarisation of attitudes. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) for saying that I spoke briefly during the night. I did not make a set speech during our 12 hours of deliberation. It is important for the hon. Gentleman to know that the motives of those of us who represent the valleys are just as sincere as those who represent Cardiff. We are not saying that we want the money spent not in Cardiff but in the valleys——

Mr. John M. Taylor (Vice-Chamberlain to Her Majesty's Household): Oh, yes you are.

8 am

Mr. Rogers: That is not true and the hon. Gentleman knows nothing about it. The hon. Gentleman is worthy of other things than such casual remarks. If he had listened to the debate he would have heard things to the contrary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth knows that I would support the total expenditure of the money allocated in the Bill on the redevelopment of the docks. In common with the valleys, those docks have been desperately deprived of industrial development in the past. They are in desperate need of regeneration. We do not dispute that, but the fact is that £150 million of public

money will be spent on a barrage that will not add one single square foot of land available for industrial development, housing or leisure activities in the Cardiff bay area.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) made a mean speech and said that the barrage represented a multiplying factor in terms of the land development of Cardiff bay. I accept that that factor exists, but it will not benefit the local people, including the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. The Cardiff Bay development corporation has already admitted in its report, however, that the projected land values in the area will multiply—that is the multiplying factor to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

There will be no return on the public investment in the area. Any profit accruing from that public investment will go to private companies. The corporation has already said that, once the barrage is built, projected land values will go up from £200 million to £1·5 billion. I do not believe that those enhanced land values will benefit the people of Cardiff, or the people of south Wales.

If the promoters came up with an amended scheme, the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central could have his Swansea waterfront development. There were proposals for a mini-barrage and the development of a water landscape on the east side of the estuary. That would enhance any development, but, for some peculiar reason, some people say that the only waterfront that can be developed is that by the lagoon behind the barrage. Many of us do not accept that. We accept the sincere motives of others on the Bill and I wish that they would accept that we have similarly sincere motives.

The valleys communities have put a lot into development in the Cardiff area. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth referred to the airport. I remember the history of the airport perhaps as well as the hon. Gentleman does. The reason why the airport took off —*[Laughter]*—was that it was situated in the old Glamorgan county council area. The main proponent of the airport was not Cardiff city council but Glamorgan county council. It cannot be claimed that the airport belongs to Cardiff alone.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has had his turn. He referred to developments in the area and he was right. I do not understand why such praise is not carried through into pride in the activities of the city council and South Glamorgan county council, which have done, and will continue to do, a good job in the interests of the area.

We do not oppose the Bill in a nihilistic way. If the promoters came up with an amended Bill that did not require a full barrage across the estuaries of the Ely and the Taff rivers at the point at which they enter the Bristol channel, I would give it my wholehearted support. The only item in the Bill that I oppose—all my hon. Friends seem to oppose it, too—is the full-scale barrage. We are certainly not against the development of the Cardiff docklands area and anyone who suggests that we are is being less than just. We have participated in the debate from a point of view just as sincere as that of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Finally, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West for the way in which he participated in the debate on his constituents' behalf.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I too have been here all night. I attended tonight's debates because I had listened carefully to previous debates about this imaginative proposal. We have heard from my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) the details of the proposals which are expected to bring about the rejuvenation of Cardiff and bring more jobs, housing and businesses and an improved environment in the city.

We eventually reached only the second group of new clauses out of a long list and did not even finish that. What this whole sorry episode has proved beyond a shadow of a doubt is that windbags are not confined to Islwyn. What has happened tonight is disgraceful. We have been treated to schoolboy tactics—to a debating society approach to these important matters. We have been treated to dead horses floating about and to blue-green algae. It has even been suggested that water treatment is about nothing more than gargling. Such discourses went on for hours of the debate—if "debate" is the right word.

I wonder whether Wales will be proud of what has happened tonight. It is clear that the Labour party does not have a clue what it wants for Wales. Were it not for a few Labour Members—notably the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—the Opposition would attract nothing but shame for what they have done in the face of the imaginative proposal that has been before the House.

Mr. Morgan: I am glad to have this opportunity to speak at the conclusion of our proceedings. I wanted to be offered the chance simply to say on my constituents' behalf that there will be many smiling faces in Cardiff, West this morning. There will also be an overwhelming sense of relief. The message that hon. Members—all of us with five o'clock shadows—should take from our proceedings tonight is that Bills such as this should try to achieve their development objectives without damaging other objectives.

I say this primarily to the other Cardiff Members who are here today. If we have derelict areas—which we do in Cardiff—we must find ways of developing them that do not damage the housing areas in my constituency and the others that lie on the plains near the Taff and the Ely. I hope that the barrage obsession that the development corporation inherited from the Secretary of State of 1979-87 will go out of the window, and another form of docklands development will be adopted that does not damage the houses in my constituency——

Mr. Grist *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

8.10 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may be for the convenience of the House if I explain now how the Government intend

[Mr. John MacGregor]

to react to the failure of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill to make progress during the night, after prolonged earlier consideration.

In view of the time spent on debating the first two new clauses, the large number of groups of amendments still to be debated and the limited remaining opportunities at this stage in the Session for the Bill to be considered as opposed private business, I wish to announce now that the Government will be introducing their own Bill to permit the construction of the Cardiff bay barrage. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be consulting on its contents as soon as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Leader of the House has not raised a point of order; he has made a statement.

Mr. Morgan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to such appalling sleight of hand on the part of the Leader of the House. The truth is now out: this was always a Government Bill, masquerading under a false prospectus. The Serious Fraud Office would have intervened had it been a commercial matter.

The Leader of the House has revealed the truth behind the Bill. It has been rigged by the private Bill procedure. An honest version would have involved the Government's using the proper public Bill procedure from the beginning, and would have avoided the waste of time over four parliamentary Sessions in two Houses. That disgraceful waste of time can now be laid firmly at the door of this incompetent and dilatory Government.

Mr. MacGregor: As you have described what I said as a statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I can respond.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If that was a statement, we now have the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader of the House. If it was a point of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I said that it was not a point of order for the Chair; it was a statement. I thinkit right to allow a brief period of questioning, which must be confined to that point.

Mr. MacGregor: In view of the ruling that you have just made, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make it clear that that is not the case. We should have much preferred the Bill to go through as a public Bill, which would have ensured that the Cardiff bay barrage procedures came in much more quickly. It was, however, a local issue initiated and supported by local interests, and we consider it entirely right for those interests to promote it through the private Bill procedure. Many other local developments have been handled in this way.

As I have said, there is now little opportunity for the Bill to make progress in the current Session. That is why we thought it right to make an announcement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What my right hon. Friend has just announced will be warmly welcomed in the capital of Wales, and throughout south Wales. May I urge the Government to produce their legislation at the earliest possible opportunity so that there is as little further delay as possible? The only reason the Bill has already been delayed so much is the obstructionist filibustering tactics of Labour Members.

Mr. Michael: The Leader of the House said that the Bill was initiated and supported by local interests. An enormous amount of time was spent on consultation and discussion and, at times, people leaned over backwards to satisfy some of the objectors. Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that the interests of the area and those of my constituents will be carefully considered in formulating the Bill that the Government intend to introduce? In the light of the spirit of the discussions over the past couple of years with local authorities, the development corporation and the Welsh Office, will the Government seek the consensus of those who wish to see Cardiff's future guaranteed? I hope that we shall see a positive development on the lines of the conclusion that I sought in the debate.

Mr. MacGregor: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) for their contributions. I assure the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth that all the work that has gone into the preparation of the private Bill and the debates on it will be valuable in developing the Government's Bill. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will consult and will, of course, take account of all that has gone before. He will hope to introduce his Bill as soon as possible.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My right hon. Friend's announcement is welcome, especially by my hon. Friends who have worked so hard in the interests of the Bill, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) who in a former capacity was a candidate for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Those of us who have been in the House all night to support the measure are frustrated about the lack of leadership in the Labour party. The Leader of the Opposition represents a Welsh seat, and it is absolutely absurd that he cannot instil some sense into his Welsh colleagues. He has not been here for the debate, has shown no leadership in the matter, and has given no indication of his interest as a Welsh Member. That has caused disreputable behaviour in the House. I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to comment on that. I hope that we shall not see such behaviour when the Government introduce their Bill.

Mr. MacGregor: All of us who have been here through the night would have liked to see the Bill make progress and be accepted in its present form. That would have been greatly in the interests of people in Cardiff and south Wales, but, as it was not possible, we have decided on the course that I have announced. That will be greatly in the interests of most hon. Members and of the area.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Leader of the House remind his hon. Friends that we were debating a private Bill and that it would have been quite inappropriate for the Leader of the Opposition or any Opposition Member to try to influence or dragoon hon. Members into voting against their wishes?

How long does the Leader of the House intend to consult about the preparation of the Bill? Will he undertake to consult such reputable bodies as the Royal

Society for the Protection of Birds, the National Rivers Authority and the new Countryside Council for Wales? Will he take seriously their environmental reservations?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will make it clear how he intends to consult and he will, of course, consult widely.

Mr. [illegible] Griffiths: Where does the announcement leave the environmental assessment procedure which can be applied to major planning developments? Will bodies such as the National Rivers Authority now get opportunities that they did not have under the private Bill procedure because they were not set up in a way that allowed them to object to or comment upon a private Bill? Will the slate be wiped completely clean in terms of participation by the House of Lords in the original Bill? Will the start be from scratch?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman had better await my right hon. Friend's announcement. We recently had to take a decision on the matter. My right hon. Friend has heard the hon. Gentleman's comments about consultation.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he is engaged in framing the new Bill, to consider the alternative mini-barrage, which was proposed and discussed as part of the original thoughts of the development corporation some time ago? Will he take on board the statement of the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist), which was made in a disgraceful speech, criticising the Opposition for tabling so-called frivolous amendments?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a post-mortem on the debate. I have asked the House to confine itself to questions on the statement made by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Rogers: You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central said during an Adjournment debate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House does not have responsibility for that speech.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman said that the promoters were prepared to accept many of the constructive amendments that had been tabled by the Opposition. I ask the Leader of the House to ask the Secretary of State for Wales to take on board what the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central said, and to accept some of our constructive amendments in framing the Bill that he will bring to the House. Can the Leader of the House tell us when he will introduce the guillotine?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman's final point does not arise.

Obviously, in the consultation my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will take account of what has been said during the progress of the Bill. That will include consideration at least of some of the amendments that might have been moved. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend. We shall introduce a Government Bill to achieve the main objective of the private Bill, which a few opponents have frustrated by preventing it from making progress.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Those of us who have been voting on the Bill throughout the night and who have seen our endeavours to ensure that the Bill makes progress frustrated are gratified by my right hon. Friend's statement. Is he aware that we have noticed throughout the night the absence of the Leader of the Opposition, who is a Welsh Member, and the lack of interest that he has taken in the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is at least a gross discourtesy. It is an irrelevant and needless discourtesy.

Mr. Gale: I think that there are some in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who consider it a gross discourtesy that the Leader of the Opposition, who is a Welsh Member, has not been in the Chamber for at least part of the night.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should so blatantly disregard the advice that I offered him. He will have regard to the guidance that I have given.

Mr. Gale: If I am guilty of a grave discourtesy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologise.

The Opposition have suggested that the statement of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is a move to come out of a disguise to pick up what was a private Bill. May I say to my right hon. Friend that many of us who have heard the arguments advanced by the promoter of the Bill and by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) have been impressed by those arguments? It is clear that the Government have been impressed by them and have taken them up. I hope that the Government's Bill, and the project, will make rapid progress.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We would have much preferred the private Bill to pass through the House, and that was the process on which we embarked many hours ago.

Mr. Morgan: We?

Mr. MacGregor: That the House embarked on—that we in the House embarked on during the past year. Many of us have been present throughout the proceedings to demonstrate our position on the private Bill. We would have much preferred it to go the way that I have outlined, but as that was not possible we have taken the action of which I am glad my hon. Friend approves.

Mr. Rowlands: May I seek clarification of the time scale for the introduction of the new Bill? It is already mid-April, and I should like to know whether it is intended to introduce the Bill during this Session.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes.

Dr. Marek: Is the Leader of the House aware that none of the Ministers on the Treasury Bench spoke throughout the debate? Is he further aware that it is the barrage part of the Bill that causes the most argument? I suspect that there is general agreement on both sides of the House about the overwhelming majority of the other measures in the Bill, which could be carried over without any problems. When the new Bill is framed, I ask the right hon. Gentleman to consult widely and meaningfully on the barrage, for that is causing the problem.

Mr. MacGregor: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and, as I have already said, I am sure that he will be consulting.

Mr. Morley: Conservative Members' comments have shown what a sham and how corrupt is the private Bill procedure. At least the Government are being forced to show their hand. Having done that, will the Leader of the House assure us that the Government will comply fully with EC directives on conservation of important wetlands and SBA and potential SBA sites when they consider the issue?

Mr. MacGregor: I disagree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about the private Bill system, which provides an opportunity for opponents as part of a long-established procedure. However, it is equally right, where there is heavy public investment, for the Government to introduce their own Bill. I have already made it clear that we would much have preferred the Bill to proceed as a private measure.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Leader of the House accept that it is perfectly proper for hon. Members to exercise scrutiny over matters like the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill when important environmental issues are involved? It would have been a dereliction of duty if no amendments had been tabled and there had been no debates on the very important issues involved.

Now that the shabby conspiracy between the Secretary of State for Wales and the rest of the Cabinet has been revealed, it is time that the Leader of the House introduced the long-overdue changes to the private Bill procedure that the Government found convenient to delay because they have used that private Bill procedure as a way of pursuing Government policy. Today's events are the first honest developments that we have seen with regard to the private Bill procedure.

Mr. MacGregor: I reject the hon. Gentleman's final point. I have already made it clear that we would have preferred the Bill to have proceeded as a private Bill.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point about the right of hon. Members to scrutinise private Bills. However, it is clear that the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill has received long scrutiny in both Houses, and I have the details of that scrutiny before me. We hoped that the Bill would progress with greater speed, and if it had made faster progress during the night that would have saved prolonged further consideration.

I reject absolutely the claim that we are delaying the introduction of reforms to the private Bill procedure. I have already made an announcement to the House about that. Mr. Deputy Speaker has introduced changes to the Standing Orders that will take effect next Session, and I have made it clear that further announcements will be made shortly. We are pursuing reforms of the private Bill procedure.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why will not the Leader of the House admit that, throughout the night, as on previous occasions with regard to private Bills, the Government lost control? They have staggered from one crisis to another under John the ditherer. When the Leader of the House introduces the new private Bill procedure, will he bear in mind that we need not just some trimming at the edges but a system that allows private Bills to be introduced which are not tainted by the whatever party is in government, so that writs can be issued to Cabinet Ministers and PPSs and the private Bill procedure is what it says it is and does not involve Ministers shuffling into the Division Lobbies in their carpet slippers in the middle of the night to help the promoters who are making money hand over fist whenever private Bills are introduced?

Mr. MacGregor: Ignoring entirely the hon. Gentleman's final comments, let me say that all hon. Members are entitled to participate in votes on private Bills, and to some extent that happened during the night. I reject the hon. Gentleman's charge. We have concluded that it is right to introduce a Government Bill to promote the Cardiff bay barrage. It is clear from the response and voting in the House, as well as from the response in the local area, that this decision, taken by the Government in the light of events, will be widely welcomed.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announcement, but, when he prepares the Bill, will he bear in mind the remarks of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley)? Will he ensure that the title of the Bill is printed in very large letters? The hon. Gentleman spoke at length on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, but only recently when we considered the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill that affects his own constituency he——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are dealing not with that Bill but with the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

British Technology Group Bill

Postponed proceeding on Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *resumed*.

8.30 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): We return from the glorious heights of Government incompetence over private Bills to the more mundane level of Government incompetence over the privatisation of the British Technology Group. I am delighted that the Minister is still with us.

I do not intend to prolong the debate. I have lost the enthusiasm for my speech that I had 13 hours ago. Suffice it to say that we remain implacably opposed to the privatisation of the British Technology Group, for the reasons that we outlined at great length on Second Reading and in Committee. We think that privatisation will damage an essential part of the support structure for technology transfer in this country. Therefore, I give the Minister notice that we shall oppose the Bill on Third Reading.

8.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): It is my pleasure to wind up the Third Reading debate that began over 13 hours ago, with some interruptions since then. Neither in our debates on Third Reading, nor in our debates on Report, nor in our long debates in Standing Committee did the Opposition succeed in sustaining their case. The fact is that the British Technology Group is a commercially viable operation, with no loans or debts outstanding to the Government. Its niche is to exploit inventions that potentially are commercially viable. We believe that its rightful and proper place is in the private sector.

I am sorry that, after a good night's sleep, the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) has not decided to change his mind. Perhaps he has realised at the last moment that we intend to bury the old National Enterprise Board. It is abolished by the Bill. Thereby we shall prevent any putative Labour Government from implementing any plan to resurrect that disastrous creation of the Wilson and Callaghan years.

We should now proceed to a vote on the Third Reading of this excellent Bill, which will give a bright, new commercial future to the British Technology Group.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Legal Aid and Advice (Scotland)

8.32 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I intend to submit for consideration by the House a package of regulations to uprate the financial limits for legal aid, increase the fees paid to solicitors and advocates for legal aid work and improve the administration of legal aid in Scotland.

The regulations will, first, uprate the limits of income below which legal aid is available free and ensure that the most vulnerable sections of our community continue to have that reassurance and protection. Secondly, the level of financial authority delegated to the profession in respect of legal aid advice and assistance is to be increased, with consequent benefits in terms of speed and efficiency for the profession, clients and the Scottish Legal Aid Board. Thirdly, legal aid fees have been substantially increased, particularly fees for civil legal aid work.

The first two sets of regulations increase the income limits below which legal aid is available free of any contribution, so the Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 and the Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 increase the lower disposable income limit for civil legal aid from £2,645 to £2,860 a year and increase the weekly disposable income above which a person is required to pay a contribution for legal advice and assistance from £64 to £70.

The latter regulations also prescribe the scale of contributions to be paid where weekly disposable income exceeds £70 but does not exceed £135. These proposed changes represent an increase of around 8·1 per cent., which matches the uprating level of income-related social security benefits. These increases maintain consistency with the corresponding eligibility limits in England and Wales. The regulations will ensure that those members of the public who are most in need will continue automatically to qualify for free legal aid and for free advice and assistance.

We are not at present proposing to uprate the upper eligibility limits. The whole question of the provision of legal aid and the role of eligibility criteria is being addressed in the current review of legal aid. The first consultative paper is likely to be published shortly. We shall make certain that Scottish interests are fully consulted and that in the consideration of any proposals full account is taken of Scottish circumstances. Pending the outcome, the Government consider it appropriate to leave the upper eligibility limits unchanged. It is nevertheless important to ensure that the income threshold for free legal aid is uprated, and this is what is proposed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Are we to understand that there will be a separate review of Scottish legal aid, conducted in Scotland at the instigation of the Scottish Office, or is Scotland to be included in a United Kingdom consideration of these matters?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am very glad to confirm that that is indeed the case. [*Interruption.*] Like

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

me, the hon. and learned Gentleman is an advocate, and he knows that it is very important that I should provide correct information. As for the courts and this House, we believe in presenting nothing but the truth.

The third set of regulations is the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Regulations 1991 and its associate, the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Amendment Regulations 1991. These will substantially increase the financial authority delegated to solicitors to incur expenditure on legal advice and assistance without prior reference to the Scottish Legal Aid Board. Their purpose is to increase the financial limit from £60 to £80. This will give solicitors more discretion to proceed with their important and urgent work without having to wait for the board's formal clearance, and will be of benefit to solicitors, clients and the board. It will thereby speed up their service to their customers. All the foregoing proposals are intended to come into force on 30 April 1991.

With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall now explain the purposes of the regulations that have been prayed against. The following regulations, which came into force on 1 April 1991, increase the level of fees payable to solicitors and advocates for legal aid work: in the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1991; the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Amendment Regulations 1991; the Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Amendment Regulations 1991; and the Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees in Civil Proceedings) Amendment Regulations 1991.

In combination, these regulations increase from 1 April 1991 the level of legal aid fees by the equivalent of 9 per cent. in expenditure terms. In the case of advocates, an across-the-board increase of 9 per cent. in fees for civil and criminal work has been awarded. On the solicitors' side, the detailed civil legal aid fees have been increased by an average of about 12 per cent. By bringing the main detailed fees for civil work carried out by solicitors up to the levels available for criminal work, the regulations conclude a significant step in the rationalisation of legal aid fee structures. This work started in 1988, and has proceeded with the co-operation of the Law Society. I am particularly pleased to have achieved this objective. The work on simplification and further rationalisation will continue.

The fees for criminal legal aid work and for legal advice and assistance have been increased by 8·5 per cent. The fee for assistance by way of representation has been increased by 16·5 per cent.—from £60 to £70. I am sure that all hon. Members will see that those increases are significant and should help in the further improvement of the Scottish legal aid service. I draw the attention of Scottish Members in particular to the fact that both the Faculty of Advocates for Scotland and the Law Society of Scotland have accepted the increases and have urged their implementation as from 1 April.

Finally, I refer to the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1991. These are subject to the negative resolution procedure and should come into operation on 22 April 1991. Their purpose is to provide clarification as to certain aspects of legal aid administration.

I have referred to the Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991 and other proposals to revise legislation on legal aid in Scotland. They represent worthwhile improvements, and show our resolve to continue to maintain an effective legal aid service in Scotland and our willingness to respond to the changing needs of the service.

8.40 am

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I welcome the Secretary of State for Scotland to the Chamber. We are delighted to see him here at this time of the morning for a debate on an important but relatively minor issue. He could not find the time to attend the debate on national testing, which is such a major issue in Scotland.

I am not surprised that the Minister received the consent of the Law Society and the Faculty of Advocates to increase fees in line with or higher than the rate of inflation. It would have been surprising had they not given their full-hearted support. Many other workers are not receiving increases in line with inflation, and certainly not above it.

We welcome the uprating of the eligibility levels for legal aid, but the debate offers an opportunity to ask one or two questions about the failure to increase the upper levels of eligibility where a contribution must be made. The Lord Chancellor's working party is reviewing legal aid in the United Kingdom, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said. Separate legal aid regulations have always applied to Scotland because of the two different jurisdictions. I served on the Standing Committee that established the Scottish Legal Aid Board, quite separately from the rest of the United Kingdom. I am concerned that the regulations are being considered on a United Kingdom rather than a Scottish basis.

Concern is being expressed in Scotland because nobody knows who is on the Lord Chancellor's working party and because the legal profession in Scotland has not been consulted. The regulations appear to pre-empt decisions that have been taken by the working party. It is feared that there will be a major review of civil legal aid and that someone who is on a certain income, instead of having to pay a set amount, will have to pay between £2,000 or £3,000 towards the costs before applying for legal aid. That appears to be what the Lord Chancellor will do, and he is quoted in Law Society documents as saying exactly that.

Before legislation, or even a report from the Lord Chancellor's working party, regulations are being laid which, by refusing to uprate the upper levels of eligibility, appear to pre-empt that decision. There are questions which the Minister has to answer. The regulations mean that eligibility for legal aid will be reduced in Scotland. There will be people in Scotland who will no longer be eligible. We are entitled to know whether it is Government policy to reduce the number of people in Scotland who will be eligible for civil legal aid. If so, why? Is it simply an exercise to cut costs, or is it the first step towards changing the basis of legal aid?

What is the proportion of people in Scotland who are eligible for legal aid compared to the number in, say, 1979? The Law Society pointed out that that date was chosen not because of the general election in that year when the Government came into power, but simply because it represented a high point in regard to eligibility for legal aid.

I hope that the Minister can tell us exactly what Government policy is on legal aid. Will he promise that, instead of tinkering with the legal aid system he will try to find a means of making it more efficient and cheaper for ordinary members of the public to have recourse to legal assistance when they are in dispute over an issue rather than having to go through a costly and lengthy court procedure? Without that, the legal aid bills will continue to grow, and large numbers of ordinary people will not be able to go to the courts to settle genuine grievances. I hope that the Minister will make a statement on that.

8.46 am

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I should begin by declaring an interest in that I am still, in a limited way, a practising member of the Faculty of Advocates and at least one set of regulations which is sought to be approved would have some financial benefit for those who practise as advocates in Scotland.

I should also declare that before being elected to the House I was a member of the Scottish Legal Aid Board and before that of the Legal Aid Central Committee, and that since resigning from the Scottish Legal Aid Board upon election to the House I have from time to time been asked to provide professional opinions to it on matters of construction of either the principal Act or regulations made under it.

As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) pointed out, the legislation in Scotland is separate and distinct from that in England and Wales. Of course, to a large extent that springs from the separate legal tradition in Scotland in which there was established, I think as long ago as the 15th century, a system of legal assistance afforded by the legal profession to those who were impecunious.

In my judgment, the separate Scottish system justifies separate consideration in any review. For that reason, I am extremely disappointed to hear from the Minister that the review is being conducted on a United Kingdom basis. May we know how many persons, apart from the Lord Chancellor himself, with experience in the law of Scotland have been appointed to the review? May we know from what bodies and organisations in Scotland evidence is to be taken to ensure that proper conclusions are reached? Will evidence be sought from lay bodies as well as professional bodies, and will the interests of the consumer be taken into account?

Since the regulations are in part conditioned by the fact that the review is under way, the House should be given rather more detail about its terms, about those who are participating in it and about the extent to which the interests of those who either have recourse to legal aid or who are funded by it will be taken into account in Scotland.

The regulations do not expand on professional eligibility—in terms of the merits of a case—or financial eligibility. Do the regulations contain anything to remedy the problem that arose in the Granger case against the United Kingdom Government, about which I have written to the Minister? That case exposed that our procedure contained a defect in the arrangements for making legal aid available in some criminal trials for accused persons. That matter ultimately went to the European Court, and although some attempt has been made to meet the Court's criticism, it has not yet been enshrined in legislation. The regulations might have proved the proper opportunity for that important change in the system of eligibility for legal aid to be made.

The failure to uprate the higher income limits means that during the period of the review and perhaps afterwards, depending on its conclusions, some people will not be eligible for legal aid who would have been if the higher income limits had been uprated in accordance with the percentage by which the lower income limits are uprated. That means that some people will be denied the opportunity of legal aid. That cannot be seen as anything other than a policy decision by the Government.

I hope that the Minister will spend a little time, even at about 8.50 am to explain why it was thought necessary to embark upon that policy change in advance of the review. There might be an argument for saying that we will have a review and then change the policy, but to change the policy in advance of the review seems to deny the effectiveness of the review.

I do not wish to detain the House much longer. As has been said, these are modest upratings. They do not address the continuing gap between the extent of fees for private, non-legal aid cases and legal aid cases. In Scotland, there has never been any difficulty in persuading either branch of the legal profession to accept instructions on the basis of a legal aid fee. But there is growing evidence to suggest that, for many solicitors, the cost of maintaining practices and the overheads that they face are likely to make taking on legal aid work increasingly unprofitable—to the extent that, for some of them at least, it may represent a loss. There must be a limit to the extent to which the solicitors' branch of the profession can be expected to sustain that loss. That is a matter that the review should certainly address, because the gap between legal aid fees and private fees is known to be increasing all the time.

For those who practise the law in Scotland, the regulations will represent a modest increase in the fees that they are entitled to charge in accordance with the rate of inflation. Clearly it is no one's interests that the regulations should fail to gain the approval of the House, and I would not seek to suggest that for a moment. However, the regulations raise more questions than they answer and, in due course, the Government will have to come to the House with a comprehensive view of the future of legal aid and the extent to which they believe that it is still to be regarded as demand-led.

There is more than a little evidence to suggest that there are some people in the Government who believe that legal aid should be the subject of financial capping. Whereas previously people who were eligible were entitled to access to legal aid, there may be cash limits so that the amount of legal aid available will inevitably be determined by the number of people who apply in any one year. That would be wholly contrary to the terms of the original legislation. It would drive a horse and cart through the right of every citizen to have recourse to the law to vindicate any legal rights which he or she may have. It would be a serious departure from what many people view as a fundamental liberty of the subject in the United Kingdom, and the Government will in due course have to address it.

8.55 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I shall not detain the House, but I wish briefly to ask the Minister about a case involving the administration of legal aid—a

[Mr. James Wallace]

case in my constituency that has received considerable national prominence. It would certainly be improper to go into any question of the merits of the case of the alleged child abuse in Orkney, but the Minister is well aware that legal aid issues arise from it.

The House may be interested to know that two solicitors from local firms have been acting for two families each. The circumstances of this case have meant that they have taken telephone calls, sent out fax messages, and intimated notices of motions on behalf of each other's clients. I can confirm, from my own observations, that the solicitors involved have been working most hours of the day to pursue the interests of their clients.

The legal aid regulations do not neatly cover such circumstances, especially when it comes to feeing. The question that I ask the Minister to address—I have already put it to him in correspondence—is whether, with the fiat of the Secretary of State, and under the principal statute, the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986, a simplified method of feeing can be provided for in this case. The solicitors were heavily engaged in instructing counsel and in preparing for a proof before the sheriff; if they had had to follow the detailed regulations of the legal aid provisions, they would probably have spent most of their time filling in time sheets relating to every telephone call taken, every fax sent and every letter read or dictated, which would have detracted from the main purpose of what I think that every hon. Member would accept was a case of considerable concern and seriousness.

The other matter will be partly covered by the regulations that we are debating which increase the level of fees. It is my understanding that in a case such as the one in Orkney the sheriff is entitled to allow an uplift of the fees of up to 50 per cent. I understand that that has been accepted by the Scottish Legal Aid Board. However, even if one accepted the increase proposed in the fees, and an uplift of 50 per cent. granted by the sheriff, that would still fall considerably short of what their counterparts would have got in England and Wales for undertaking similar work. Some explanation is required as to why that difference has been allowed to occur.

I should emphasise that it is certainly no part of the solicitors' concern that these cases should be their great profit-making work for the year. They seek fair remuneration and the effort that they have shown has been in the best traditions of the legal assistance provided by the Scottish legal profession, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, for centuries. They have shown dedication to their clients that is consistent with that tradition.

Finally, in correspondence, the Minister has certainly acknowledged and praised the dedication with which those solicitors have set about their work. Although they acknowledge and accept the Minister's praise for their dedication, I think that they would prefer, or would seek to have in addition, simplified procedures for dealing with the feeing of this case and slightly more generosity than would appear to be possible even under these regulations.

8.58 am

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This has been a good debate, and I congratulate hon. Members on raising some extremely important and relevant questions.

In relation to the Orkney case, as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) suggested, the Scottish Legal Aid Board is in a position to make an increase. We believe that the existing arrangements are adequate to meet the needs of the case. The board has said that, following consideration of Sheriff David Kelbie's interlocutor, it is prepared to allow a 50 per cent. increase in the fees for work concerned with the proceedings coming before the sheriff for which a legal aid certificate has been granted. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and the solicitors involved will be advised accordingly if they have not already received that information. If they have not already done so, the lawyers involved should submit their accounts and fee notices to the Scottish Legal Aid Board for consideration so that all funds due to them can be paid as quickly as possible.

I should like to reflect on the points that have been made about simplified procedures and the discrepancy between that case and other comparable cases in Britain, and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman who raised that matter as quickly as possible.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I had hoped to be here for the start of the debate but was delayed. I sincerely apologise to the Minister for that and thank him for giving way. Are there any means by which a decision of the Scottish Legal Aid Board can be challenged? I ask that on behalf of a constituent, Mr. Edward Rodgers, who was seriously injured in a car accident and whose application was turned down on the grounds of probabilis——

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Probabilis causa litigandi.

Dr. Godman: Yes; one can see that I am not a lawyer——

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Probable cause.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

My constituent was seriously injured in a traffic accident and, as far as I am concerned, has every cause to seek legal and financial compensation for his injuries, but he received what I can describe only as a casually worded missive from the chairman of the board to the effect that, because of "probable cause", he cannot receive legal aid. Is there any means by which Mr. Rodgers can appeal against such an unchivalrous and uncivilised decision?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Given that the hon. Gentleman has made that appeal to me, I shall look into the case and correspond with him about it. "Probable cause" means a legal case that is capable of being proved. The criterion to be applied by the Scottish Legal Aid Board to any application is not whether the board feels that the proposed action would be successful but whether, on an assessment, the case looks on paper as though the applicant has shown that he has a case that could be proved. I give way to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who has been a member of the Scottish Legal Aid Board and whose questions I am anxious to answer.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I follow the point made by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). When the Minister considers that matter, perhaps he would also turn his attention to the question

whether such a decision raises questions of an unreasonable exercise of statutory discretion and might therefore give rise to the possibility of judicial review.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. and learned Gentleman has been a member of the Scottish Legal Aid Board and his concern on this issue carries some weight. I shall look into the points that he mentioned.

We have considered the terms of the court's judgment on the Granger case and, following consultations with the court authorities, arrangements have been made so that when the Appeal Court considers that the circumstances of a case require it, the court will adjourn the hearing and recommend that the decision to refuse legal aid should be reviewed by the Scottish Legal Aid Board. We consider that that provision will effectively ensure that cases similar to Granger do not arise in future.

I can reassure the House that legal aid is demand-led, and has increased enormously in recent years. In 1981-82, for example, it ran to £23 million in Scotland; by 1984, that had risen to £35 million and in 1989-90 it was £59 million. We have reason to believe that it will be about £64 million for 1990-91. The figure has therefore trebled in the past 10 years, which is an indication of the Government's good will on this issue.

We have increased the lower eligibility limit for civil legal aid and advice and assistance to ensure that those most in need will continue automatically to obtain free legal aid. We are currently reviewing the wider aspects of eligibility and a consultation paper will be issued in due course.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) asked about the upper limits. The present proposals will ensure that those most in need of legal aid will continue to get it free. The question of how legal aid should be provided in the future and the part to be played by any other form of eligibility test is being addressed by the review and will be resolved following consultation with interested bodies on the discussion paper.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East asked who will be on the working group. The group consists of officials from the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Legal Aid Board with advice from the Department of Social Security and elsewhere, as appropriate. The Scottish Office and the Scottish Legal Aid Board are participating fully in the group on questions of equal application in Scotland.

In addition, Scottish consultations will be undertaken at appropriate stages to make certain that Scottish needs and circumstances are fully catered for before any proposed changes are implemented. That is exactly what the hon. Member for Cathcart would wish.

The first consultation paper is likely to be published soon and we shall make certain that Scottish interests are taken into account throughout. Pending the outcome of the review, the Government consider it appropriate to leave the upper income limits unchanged.

Mr. Wallace: What the Minister has just said is important. We need some clarification. Is the Minister telling the House that Scottish Office and Legal Aid Board officials are not full working members of the group but will merely be consulted for their opinions? Are they full working members of the group and, if so, how many will there be compared with the number from the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Legal Aid Board in England and Wales?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I said that they will be fully participating members of the group. There is no question about that. My exact words were that the Scottish Office and Scottish Legal Aid Board were participating fully in the group on questions of equal application to Scotland. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members can be absolutely certain that anything relating to legal aid in Scotland will be fully and properly considered. I have not the slightest doubt that the Secretary of State and I will make absolutely certain of that. That would, indeed, be the wish of the hon. Gentleman.

Ultimately, a line has to be drawn somewhere. The review is considering bringing more flexibility into the criteria for legal aid, but of course we do not seek a contribution from those on income support.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I just answer the hon. Gentleman's point about narrowing the criteria?

The proportion of the population which may be eligible for legal aid at any time is not an appropriate measure of the performance of the system. We believe that the proposed uprating of the lower eligibility limits will continue for those most in need. One object of the review is to ensure that the resources that can be made available for legal aid are distributed reliably in accordance with need.

The hon. Member for Cathcart asked what proportion of the population was eligible for legal aid. I shall have to look at the statistics as he gave particular dates. More people were assisted in 1989-90. Some 261,991 accounts for legal aid, advice and assistance were paid, which is approximately 40 per cent. more that were paid five years ago. Since 1980 annual provision of Government grant for legal aid has risen from £15 million to £55 million in 1989-90. The indications are that the totals for this year will be about £64 million, which is a huge increase.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East asked about the decline in civil legal aid——

Mr. Maxton: I sought to intervene earlier when the Minister said that the Lord Chancellor's review was ongoing and that the working party would produce reports. But the regulations pre-empt that review by keeping down the upper levels of eligibility. Essentially, the regulations do exactly what the Lord Chancellor has made it clear in one or two public statements that the review is about. What is the point of having a review if the Lord Chancellor has already made up his mind exactly what is going to happen with legal aid and intends to implement it? What is the point of consulting anyone?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I made it clear in my original remarks that, pending the outcome, the Government considered it appropriate to leave the upper eligibility limits unchanged. But none the less, it is important to ensure that income thresholds for free legal aid are uprated. That is what is proposed.

We consider that legal aid should go to those most in need and that will certainly continue to be the case. Legal aid will continue to be non cash-limited. I hope that the debate has been helpful in demonstrating the importance

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

we attach to the provision of legal aid in Scotland and our determination to make certain that the Scottish legal aid service is effective and is efficiently administered.

We remain committed to funding those cases where applicants qualify. I stress once again our continuing commitment to an efficient and effective legal aid system. We appreciate the need in all this for the continuing co-operation of the Law Society of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates for Scotland, as well as the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

This has been an extremely useful debate. There is one last point that I should mention before I sit down. Hon. Members have asked for more effectiveness. One particular matter that is being considered under the current review of legal aid is whether legal aid service can be more effectively delivered through franchising whereby a number of firms in an area contract with the legal aid board to provide legal aid services. There would be full consultation on the proposals emerging from the review. If the Opposition have other suggestions, we will look at them with great care.

I commend the regulations to the House——

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I was coming to the end of my remarks, but I shall give way.

Mr. Campbell: I am grateful to the Minister, who shows his usual courtesy in these matters, even at this somewhat unusual hour.

I take the Minister back to the question of the constitution of the review. If I understand him correctly, he is telling us that there is a United Kingdom review, which appears to have been established at the instigation of the Lord Chancellor. The Scottish input to that review is reflected in representatives of the Scottish Legal Aid Board and of the Scottish Home Department. But the Minister's explanation revealed that the particular contribution of those two individuals is to questions that are raised regarding Scotland. It does not appear from what he said that those two individuals are participating in the United Kingdom review of the legal aid system. If that is true, does it not point up the fact that we should have two separate reviews: one for England and Wales and one for Scotland? That way we can all be assured that the Scottish interest will be properly taken into account.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. and learned Gentleman is not correct in his interpretation of what I said. This is a United Kingdom review. The Scottish Office will be fully represented. I would not necessarily accept the figure that he gave; it may be more. Obviously, Scotland's interests will be properly and fully considered at every stage with appropriate consultations in Scotland to take fully into account the Scottish circumstances. We all appreciate that Scotland has a different legal system the needs of which need to be particularly taken into account and they will be.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Regulations 1991, which were laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

Animal Welfare

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7214/90, relating to protection of animals during transport; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate satisfactory welfare safeguards consistent with maintaining conditions given effect by the Transit of Animals (Road and Rail) Order 1975, the Welfare of Poultry (Transport) Order 1988, section 40 of the Animal Health Act 1981 (c.22) and other related measures.

Equal Opportunities

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9908/90, relating to the third action programme on equal opportunities for men and women and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Employment on 19th December 1990 and its Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum of 11th March 1991 for a Council Resolution relating to the action programme; approves of the Government's support for the Programme's underlying principles; and endorses the Government's approach that any measures brought forward under the Programme must be considered on their merits taking account of their effect on national practices and policies, the extra burden likely to be placed on employers and the consequential impact on the level of employment.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Leasehold Reform

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

9.12 am

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): It is interesting that the subject of this debate is leasehold reform, because I am rather fortunate in that my London flat is within five minutes' walk of the House, so I have not been up all night waiting for this debate. That is one advantage of a leasehold in this area.

The Minister will be aware that the problem to which I wish to return is the 1,000-year lease with a low rent which is usually found in the north-west of England and nowhere else. I do not wish to bore the House again with this subject, but it will return and return until something is done to tidy up the leasehold reform legislation of 1967 and 1983.

On 8 March, we debated in the House a range of leasehold reform. On that occasion, the Minister's contribution showed that he had begun to recognise the now accepted leasehold problems in London and elsewhere and the distinct problem of long leases. I regret that on that occasion the Minister failed to give any commitment to new reform. He suggested recourse to the Landlord and Tenant Acts of 1927 and 1987 to deal with certain aspects of the problem, and I have no quarrel with that. However, since 8 March, events have shown that those statutes are capable of tackling only some of the minor issues that surround the problem. The main difficulties continue to exist and without a vigorous response from the House I am afraid that large-scale abuses will be committed by head leaseholders—on a greater scale than those abuses that I and other hon. Members have brought to the attention of successive Ministers.

Since 8 March, there have been a number of new developments that mainly involve the property companies that I named in my speech in March. The Minister will recall that I named 10 property companies that I believe are abusing the system. A couple of those firms have been undeterred in their activities, but I am glad to report that they have been rather panicky in their response to that March debate.

The perpetrators of the practices that the Minister condemned on 8 March are largely unrepentant, and I have no doubt that they will continue to practise their abuses. The latest and most serious development occurred on Friday. One of the companies that I named in March and of which I have had much experience in the past six years was seized by the milch cow principle of long leases to an extent that I previously thought impossible. It took 16 owner-occupiers to the county court to repossess their homes. I shall not go into the detail of the case, as it is still sub judice since the case was adjourned. I attended together with my colleague, Councillor Hazel Blears. She is a lawyer and is constantly surprised at the turn of events I have accounted in the past. She gave valuable support on Friday to people who were extremely worried.

Last Friday, I witnessed the worry that was caused by the actions of that sharp firm, and it came as a surprise to me. I should not have been surprised given my experience of such companies, but I understood the concern felt by those people. They bought their homes with the best will in the world. If they had bought those homes anywhere south of Watford—for example, in Hemel Hempstead—they would have had no problems. However, someone has now decided that there is a way in which to make money from long leases, and because those people bought their homes in the north-west, they now face the serious threat of losing those homes.

I hope that the Minister will take into account the experience of those people. People cannot understand why they must ask for permission to put a greenhouse in their gardens—and pay for that permission. That happens only in the north-west, and the House must address that disparity sooner or later as it is a growing problem.

Another firm, local to me, is a newcomer to the use of long leases. I have been in correspondence with the principals of the firm since the debate in March. I refer to a property company, Valerie Hawksworth Ltd. of Farnworth.

Suppose that a property company buys, inherits, or by some other means obtains, a head lease and then decides that there is money to be made by exploiting parts of the lease of which local solicitors have never even advised their clients over the years because of the localised nature of its provisions and because, in terms of the property's reverting, a 1,000-year lease is meaningless. Take my own house, built in 1961; 1,000 years on, I should be very surprised if anything were left standing on the site but a pile of rubble. Local solicitors may therefore feel that it is not worth their while advising owner-occupiers and purchasers of long leases of the covenants that might eventually involve them in the scam to which we are referring.

Let us return to our friend Valerie Hawksworth. A very simple case brought the company to my attention. It involved somebody buying a house, being advised by a solicitor, signing the lease, getting a mortgage, moving in and developing the house, as we all do. Imagine the surprise of that owner-occupier when he received a notification from the property management company saying, "We have not given you permission to build the porch on the front of your house." Correspondence passed back and forth. The owner-occupier said, "It was part of the house when I bought it. I did not know anything about needing permission for a porch. My solicitor did not advise me. It has nothing to do with me. What is the problem?" Valerie Hawksworth said, "Fine; we can make this right, but it will cost you £51·75 for retrospective consent and registration administration charges." That is typical, and it is just one of the ways in which property management companies extract money from ordinary people.

Owner-occupiers are being exploited but—more seriously, in my view—the property companies are frustrating the will of Parliament by circumventing the 1987 Act, which makes it clear that leases can be bought by the owner-occupier as of right under the right-to-buy provisions. The suggested cost is 10 times the annual rent, which is less than £200 in respect of many houses in the category to which I am referring.

The Act says nothing about the on-costs other than ordinary legal charges. That is fine, but it is a deliberate attempt to frustrate the will of Parliament for someone to ask for £51·75 for a letter saying, "Yes. You can add the porch provided that you have planning consent and building regulations consent if that is necessary." It is for Parliament to deal with the matter. I hope that the Minister will take all these matters on board again today. I serve notice that the matter will not go away; there is

[Mr. Terry Lewis]

absolutely no chance of our allowing it to go away. Unless and until the problem is tackled vigorously by the Minister, we shall debate this matter again and again.

9.23 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Timothy Yeo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) mot of all on his good fortune in choosing a flat located close enough to the Palace to have allowed him to get a good night's sleep but also on his good fortune in having the chance to raise this important subject once again—soon after our debate last month on leasehold reform, which arose on a private Member's motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and in which the hon. Gentleman took part.

During that debate, and again this morning, the hon. Gentleman concentrated on the problems associated with leasehold ownership of houses, particularly in the north-west—although I believe that the problem also arises in south Wales—and asked us to review the relevant legislation. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) is also extremely concerned about the matter. He has made his concern known to me in vigorous terms.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I am here at this early hour simply because a number of my constituents are outraged about the matter. Some two weeks ago I called a meeting, and we formed a residents' association to deal with one of the companies mentioned by the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis). I do not hesitate to name it; he has already done so. Munny Ltd. is—here I use the privilege of the House—a disgraceful and appalling landlord. My hon. Friend must deal with the problem as a matter of urgency. My constituents are entitled to quiet, peaceful enjoyment of their property, but they are not getting it, because the law is inadequate. I do not think that those whom I represent—and others throughout the north-west—should have to put up with it any longer.

Mr. Yeo: I note what my hon. Friend has said, and hope that some of what I shall say will be of some comfort to him. I know how vigorously he champions and defends his constituents' interests.

Before addressing the specific issue raised by the hon. Member for Worsley, let me explain that the Government are not at present engaged in a major review of the leasehold system as a way of owning property, despite speculation in the press. As I said on 8 March, in many instances the leasehold system works perfectly well, with no cause for dissatisfaction on the part of either landlord or leaseholder. It certainly works satisfactorily in the case of commercial property. I acknowledge, however, that in some instances things have gone wrong with some residential properties, and that there are particular problems with the leasehold ownership of houses. As the hon. Member for Worsley pointed out, that is a separate issue from the difficulties in relation to blocks of flats, which we hope to address in another way. I join the hon. Gentleman, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South in condemning the way in which some ground landlords choose to conduct their business.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are engaged in developing a new way of owning property called commonhold. It is primarily intended to overcome the problems associated with flats. Today, however, I shall concentrate on the hon. Gentleman's main interest, the freehold reversion of houses.

The freeholders of many leasehold houses in the north-west, and indeed in other parts of the country, sell their freehold reversionary interests, sometimes in packages and sometimes at auction. That may be the commonest way in which the unscrupulous landlords to whom the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend have referred become involved. There is nothing wrong with ground landlords selling their freehold interests, and I emphasise that new landlords do not require any additional rights or duties over and above those in the original lease or covenants. A lease is essentially a private contractual agreement that is freely entered into, and the respective rights and duties of both the ground landlord —or freeholder—and the leaseholder should be clearly set out in the terms of the lease. Leaseholders should be fully aware of the terms of the commitments that they are entering into when they first purchase their leases.

I am aware that some ground landlords choose to enforce conditions or exercise rights under the terms of a lease in a way that the previous landlord did not. That is what happens when an unscrupulous landlord acquires the freehold; he will start to do things that the leaseholder does not expect because they were not done by a previous, more benign, freeholder. I stress that the new landlord cannot enforce any rights or conditions that do not exist in the lease.

When we last debated the matter, hon. Members gave a number of examples, naming companies and individuals. They have done so again this morning. When I replied to the debate on 8 March, I deplored the examples quoted by hon. Members of some landlords seeking to enforce their obligations in an unpleasant or threatening manner. I am pleased to note that some landlords have been fined for harassing their tenants.

Under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, most long leaseholders of houses already have the right to buy their freehold if they wish. That probably applies to all the houses in the constituencies of the hon. Member for Worsley and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South. That right exists whether or not the landlord wishes to sell, provided that the leaseholder satisfies certain conditions. In the long term, the purchase of the freehold may well offer the best solution to the kind of difficulty about which the hon. Member for Worsley spoke. The purchase of the freehold gives leaseholders a way of freeing themselves from the terms of their leases, especially where a new landlord is choosing to enforce covenants which the leaseholder no longer finds acceptable and which perhaps were not so vigorously enforced by the previous landlord. Most covenants disappear on the acquisition of the freehold.

The Leasehold Reform Act sets out the basis for determining the value of the freehold, but the actual price payable is open to negotiation between the landlord and leaseholder. There is no set formula, such as 10 or 15 times the annual ground rent, and it would be impractical to attempt to introduce such a formula, because it would take no account of the multiplicity of particular circumstances

that exist for each property or of how long a lease has to run. Generally speaking, the longer the lease the lower the price of the freehold.

If the price cannot be agreed by negotiation, either party may ask the leasehold valuation tribunal to determine the price, and there is then a right of appeal to the Lands Tribunal. Under the Leasehold Reform Act, leaseholders of houses are able to purchase the freehold of their properties at a price which is significantly less than full market value. In most cases it excludes any assessment, which would be usual under normal valuation procedures, of the leaseholder's interest in acquiring the freehold.

In areas of the country such as those represented by the hon. Member for Worsley and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South the cost of the freehold should be no more than a few hundred pounds, a sum which I hope would be within the reach of the vast majority of leaseholders. Leaseholders must also pay the landlord's reasonable costs arising out of the tenant's notice to purchase. Here we enter the more difficult waters of the attitude of some new freeholders. Those reasonable costs include solicitors' fees for the conveyancing and valuer's fees, but they should not include a handling charge or management fee. Enfranchisement is not a service provided by the landlord and for which he can charge, but a right enjoyed by the leaseholder under the Act. Any disputes about what is or is not reasonable for a landlord to include as his costs can be referred to the leasehold valuation tribunal.

We have no precise information about how many leaseholders have enfranchised under the Leasehold Reform Act, but all the signs are that substantial numbers of leaseholders have over the years taken advantage of its provisions. Despite what the hon. Member for Worsley and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South have said, we have no evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with the law as it applies to leasehold houses—certainly nothing on the scale of the complaints voiced by leaseholders of flats. I acknowledge that there is a special problem in that area, but I am glad to say that it is not universal.

From time to time, it has been suggested that in practice leaseholders are deterred from using the statutory procedure for resolving disputes over the terms of enfranchisement because they fear the risk of having to pay costs if the landlord then appeals to the Lands Tribunal.

Three years ago, my Department and the Welsh Office, because it is believed that the problem also exists in Wales, undertook an extensive consultation exercise to establish whether such allegations could be substantiated. The consultation yielded no hard evidence on the issue, and it was concluded that there were no grounds for amending the existing procedure. At the time, the Government promised to keep the matter under review and I reiterate that we will not hesitate to act if there is clear evidence of abuse or signs that the system is not working as it should.

For those leaseholders who do not wish to exercise their right to purchase the freehold——

Mr. Lewis: Will the Minister take up the problem of enhancing on-costs through retrospective provision? If someone applies for the right to revert to freehold, he or she receives a letter asking for payment of a £25 handling charge or inspection fee. Then the man with the clipboard comes and ticks off all the improvements that the occupier has made to the property over, perhaps, 20 years. If those improvements build up to about £2,000 or £3,000, it may be beyond the capacity of the owner to pay such a sum. That is the frustration that ensues.

Mr. Yeo: I acknowledge that that practice may exist. As I said on 8 March, much can be done if leaseholders are fully aware of their rights. To that end, my Department has produced a leaflet—it is freely available—that sets out the rights of leaseholders. I shall reflect on what the hon. Gentleman has said and ascertain whether there is anything specific that we can do to overcome the difficulty.

As I was saying, leaseholders, in addition to the contractual rights already referred to, have a number of statutory safeguards available under the Landlord and Tenant Acts relating to matters such as service charges, repairs and insurance, the latter having been a matter of some concern. Before 1987, those rights applied only to the leaseholders of flats, but under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 we significantly strengthened those rights and for the first time extended them to leaseholders of houses.

In particular, the 1987 Act extended the service charge protections of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to the tenants and leaseholders of all dwellings, and gave leaseholders of houses new rights over insurance. While a court cannot take away the landlord's right to nominate an insurer where the lease provides for this, the leaseholder can challenge the choice of insurer if the cover available is unsatisfactory or the premiums payable are unreasonable. It is probably too early to be sure whether the 1987 Act is fully effective, but I hope that it is already a useful additional weapon on the side of the leaseholders in any dealings he has with the less scrupulous landlord.

Finally, it has also been suggested that leaseholders of houses should be freed from their obligations under the terms of a lease to seek the landlord's consent or permission to the carrying out of improvements to the property. Perhaps that is what the hon. Member for Worsley was looking for when he intervened. I think that that is more a matter of property law, which is one for my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, but I have difficulty in seeing why leaseholders should be relieved of obligations which they have freely entered into. As I said during the debate on 8 March, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1927 safeguards leaseholders against excessive charges for consent to alterations and extensions. I understand that consent cannot be unreasonably withheld. I should add that the Law of Property Act 1925 gives the Lands Tribunal the power to discharge or modify restrictive covenants in certain circumstances.

As I explained at the beginning of my speech, the Government's current initiative is in respect of commonhold and is not concerned with altering the general operation of existing leasehold law or the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. The only amendments to that Act which might arise in this context are ones which are strictly necessary for its satisfactory operation within a commonhold, and this is likely to be of limited interest in terms of the issues that we have been discussing this morning.

I recognise, however, that there may well be a continuing need to monitor the operation of both the Landlord and Tenant Acts and the Leasehold Reform Act to ascertain whether they need to be improved or amended, especially if commonhold is introduced. I have already promised, and I promise again, to consider again,

[Mr. Yeo]

once we have dealt with the commonhold legislation, the issues raised by the hon. Member for Worsley with a view to seeing whether there is any justification for reviewing the operation of the Leasehold Reform Act to deal with the problem of the ruthless or threatening freeholder. We have no intention of allowing such freeholders to get off the hook.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL [*Lords*]

Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILLS

Ordered,

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the London Underground Bill and the London Underground (No. 2) Bill, that they have the power, if they think fit, to consolidate the said Bills or any part or parts thereof into one Bill.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

1. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the reform of local government finance.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I announced our outline proposals on the reform of local government finance to the House on 21 March. We shall be issuing a consultation paper shortly.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the Secretary of State tell us his thoughts on who is to meet the cost of care in the community? That is something that the Secretary of State for the Environment did not mention in his statement on 21 March. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is a good deal of concern among local authorities about how the mentally handicapped and mentally ill patients coming out of institutions are to be cared for and paid for? I should like to know the position.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman has identified a subject of great importance, to which the Government have given a great deal of attention. He will be aware of our developing plans in that area. The consultation paper that is to be published and the statement that has been made are primarily concerned with the way in which local government finance is collected and the contributions made to it by local residents.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Secretary of State deal with the specific question asked by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the matter is of supreme importance, especially to regional and island authorities that have to deal with the problems of mentally ill and mentally handicapped people and their carers? Those authorities' budgets are being cut and they want to hear more from the Secretary of State today than they have heard to date.

Mr. Lang: I urge the hon. Gentleman to table a question on that subject. The question that I am answering is about the Government's consultation paper and the statement on the reform of local government finance. Our record on the funding of community care is second to none and substantial improvements in the handling of that matter are under way.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that finance and the structure of local government must go hand in hand? Does he accept that in the review of the structure of local government, the issues relevant to Strathclyde will be very different from those relevant to Dumfries and Galloway? I hope that he will be flexible in his arrangements so that we can find the best method for each region in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, with whom I agree that the funding and the structure of local government should be considered together. The Government propose to consult widely on possible developments for the structure of local government. When we bring forward proposals in due course, we shall take careful account of the varied and diverse nature of Scotland, and that will be reflected in the structure on which we decide.

Mr. Dewar: On the specific subject of local government finance, will the Secretary of State confirm that he now believes that a local government tax, essentially based on property and the rate poundage and paid by householders, is preferable to the poll tax? Can he explain why he greeted that very same proposal, when it was made by the Labour party, with scorn and contempt? He now appears to be prepared to endorse it.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to anticipate the publication of our consultation paper. He is not going to draw me on that, other than for me to repeat that in our statement we made it clear that we are proposing a new local tax. It will be a single tax with a property and personal element. I think that he will find that it is rather different from the Labour party's proposals. At the next election, the electorate will have a choice—our new, fair, local tax or a return to rates under Labour.

Health Boards

2. **Mrs. Irene Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the criteria used for the appointment of non-executive members of Scottish health boards.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The criteria for the appointment of non-executive members of Scottish health boards were that

they should have the qualities and abilities necessary to make an effective contribution, individually and collectively, to the boards' new role.

Mrs. Adams: Will the Minister admit that there is only one criterion for selection to health boards in Scotland: membership of or affiliation to the Conservative party? Does he realise that Renfrew district, the biggest centre of population in the Argyll and Clyde area, does not have a single representative on that area's health board? Is he telling us that there are no able Conservatives in that area? If so, I agree with him.

Mr. Forsyth: I suggest that the hon. Lady has a word with her hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), who suggested two members of health boards who were appointed by my right hon. Friend. I do not think that the criterion applied in their case was the one that the hon. Lady has in mind.

The hon. Lady is wrong to say that no one from Paisley is on the health board that covers her constituency. If she does her homework she will find that Mr. Bremner comes from Paisley.

Mr. Eadie: Does not the Minister realise that that answer is most unsatisfactory and does not fit the facts? The criteria for appointment of members to health boards are that people should be supporters of the Conservative party or card-carrying members of it. Does he not realise that his reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) was disgraceful?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I do not. The hon. Gentleman did not listen to my answer; I refer him, too, to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South. The criteria that have been applied are to establish whether people have the necessary qualities. Many members of health boards who are not members of the Conservative party and who work hard on behalf of the health service will take considerable offence at questions of the kind asked by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Galbraith: Why is it, then, that of the 15 chairmen of health boards, 11 represent either Conservative or business interests, two are from the National Farmers Union and only two do not fall into either category? Are not my hon. Friends correct to say that the only criterion for becoming a chairman of a health board or a non-executive member is to be a member of the Conservative party or a supporter of it?

Mr. Forsyth: I dare say that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will be astonished to hear the hon. Gentleman assuming that everyone with a business background is a supporter of the Conservative party—although to judge from what the Labour party produced yesterday I am sure that that will shortly be the case.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) has been mentioned, I call him.

Mr. Lambie: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on accepting the two nominations that I put forward on behalf of the Labour party and the trade union movement in Ayrshire. Those two representatives, Angela Dunbar and Joe Cahill, have served the Ayrshire and Arran health board well in the past and I am grateful that they have been re-elected.

Mr. Forsyth: I wish to make it absolutely clear that the reason why those two people were appointed had nothing to do with their support for or membership of the Labour party; it was simply because of their record of service on the board and the contribution that they can make to it.

Scottish Parliament

3. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange to meet representatives of the Scottish Constitutional Convention to discuss their proposals for a Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Lang: A meeting with the Scottish Constitutional Convention would serve no useful purpose since its proposals, which I have considered carefully, are irrelevant to the basic concerns of the Scottish people and unlikely to be of benefit to Scotland.

Mr. Canavan: Why is it that the Secretary of State for Wales is prepared to discuss the possibility of a Welsh Assembly and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is prepared to discuss the possibility of a Northern Ireland Parliament, yet the Secretary of State for Scotland refuses even to discuss with the convention its proposals for a Scottish Parliament? Does he not realise that unless he responds positively to the overwhelming wishes of the people of Scotland before the next general election, he may, after that election, join the likes of Mr. Graeme Souness looking for another job in England?

Mr. Lang: I am certain that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales would not contemplate a tax-raising Welsh assembly any more than I would contemplate a tax-raising Scottish assembly. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Scottish division of the Institute of Directors whose views have been characterised as:

"If such an assembly were set up with these powers, we would move company headquarters out of Scotland."

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having nothing to do with the Scottish Constitutional Convention? It is organised by church men and freaks who, if they had paid some attention to their calling, might not have empty churches. If Scotland were treated to the sort of things that they want, they would empty our nation of its people as they have emptied their churches of congregations.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend makes his point in his inimitable way. The Scottish Constitutional Convention is certainly a self-appointed and self-designated body and has been described as the Labour party at prayer. Certainly, the Liberal party went along for the ride and ended up being taken for a ride. The Scottish Constitutional Convention does not speak for Scotland and has produced nothing of any relevance to Scotland's future.

Mr. Salmond: If the constitutional convention were prepared to return to its founding document, "A claim of right" and put the matter of constitutional change directly to the Scottish people in a referendum, would the Secretary of State have the guts to put his proposals to the

people in the referendum? What is the argument against having a referendum putting the choice of independence, devolution and the status quo, and letting the Scottish people decide?

Mr. Lang: At least I have in common with the hon. Gentleman that neither he nor I have been interested in taking part in the Scottish Constitutional Convention—I, because I believe that it goes too far in nationalism, and he, presumably, because he believes that it does not go far enough. It is not a representative body, it has produced no realistic proposals and it has addressed none of the fundamental issues affecting the constitutional future of Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Scottish Constitutional Convention spent months talking, yet failed to address the Goschen Barnett formula, the West Lothian question and the number of Scottish Members of this Parliament? Because of that, any proposals from that source would have no hope whatever of getting through Parliament to be implemented and, therefore, they are fraudulent and flawed.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. All the proposals emerging from the Opposition for tax-raising Scottish assemblies would be immensely damaging to the future of Scotland. They would drive away inward investment, destroy investment at home, damage the future prospects of economic growth and destroy jobs.

Local Government Finance

4. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met COSLA to discuss the future of local government finance in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

15. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scotland Local Authorities to discuss the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Local Government and I met the convention on 8 April to discuss a number of local government finance issues, including the community charge.

I hope to meet the convention again once it is in a position to respond to our consultation paper on the proposed new local taxation system.

Mr. Ingram: Will the Secretary of State tell the House when he changed his mind, and what or who made him change his mind about the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that the Government have been considering the funding of local government finance for a long time. We have recognised that the community charge is not operating effectively and has not gained general acceptance in Scotland. Therefore, after a relatively short period of time and after very thorough and careful scrutiny of the options, we have decided on a new local tax which has been announced to the House as to its fundamentals and on which a consultation paper will appear shortly.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Given that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, can we now expect the Secretary of State for Scotland to evangelise Scotland for a property tax, and will he bring missionary zeal to that work?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman must wait and see what our new tax is all about. The Opposition are worried not that our new proposals will not work but that they will work.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: While I believe that it would be quite wrong for the Secretary of State to speculate in any way on what announcements may be made in the next week or so, does he accept that if we return to a form of property taxation, it is very important that the basis of valuation and revaluation of property is the same north and south of the border?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend makes an important point about valuation and revaluation. It is an issue which we have considered with great care and I hope that he will not be disappointed when the consultation paper is published.

Mr. Maxton: In view of the commitment to the poll tax shown by the hon. Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and of their long-standing opposition to any form of property tax, can the Secretary of State tell us whether the two of them will still be Ministers following the announcement next week? Can the Secretary of State guarantee that when he publishes the consultative document next week it will contain figures that I can take to my constituents to tell them exactly how much they will pay under the new tax? Or shall we have to print posters next week to put up around Scotland saying, "Ian, where's your figures?"

Mr. Lang: I am sure that my hon. Friends the Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) will be in the Government, not only next week but next year and the year after and the year after that. *[Interruption.]* And my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton).

The hon. Gentleman asked about figures, but he should consider those relating to the number of different varieties of policies suggested by the Opposition. At the last count there were 67—that makes H. J. Heinz look like a one-product company.

Higher Education

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the number of students in higher education in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of students in full-time higher education have increased by about one third to 90,000 since the Government took office. Part-time students have also increased by about one fifth.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer, which is good news for the people of Scotland and especially for the individuals involved. Does he agree that it demonstrates the Government's commitment to the cause of higher education and to the creation of an opportunity society?

Mr. Forsyth: Yes, indeed. When the Government took office, about one in six school leavers went on to higher

education. Today the figure is about one in four and by the end of our next decade in office, the figure will be one in three.

Mr. Ron Brown: I am sure that the Minister knows, but is forgetting, that many rejects from the public school system in England are given certain rights to come to Scotland—and especially to Edinburgh university—at the expense of ordinary, working-class individuals. That was exposed recently. What is he doing to ensure that there is equality of opportunity in Scotland for both English and Scottish working-class individuals and for youngsters who have every right to higher education? The Minister must know about that problem because it was highlighted in *The Scotsman* some months ago and he clearly reads that newspaper.

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman says that it appeared in *The Scotsman*, I suppose that it must be so. However, if he considers our record he will find that participation in higher education in Scotland has already gone beyond the target set for England by the end of the century. We have a participation rate of about 25 per cent. That is an excellent record, but we are not complacent about it. As I said, we have set ourselves high targets and the decisions taken on higher and further education will enable us to achieve our objectives.

Primary Schools

6. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current expenditure per pupil in 1989-90 has increased by 50 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation since 1979 in primary schools. The latest figure is £1,385 before taking account of the costs of local authority administration, school meals and transport, which are substantial.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend say how those figures square with claims that there have been cuts in primary education in Scotland during the past 12 years or even claims that there has been underfunding of primary school education?

Mr. Forsyth: The Opposition make those claims from time to time. The figures show that expenditure per pupil has increased by one half over and above price rises. Any talk of cuts is simply nonsense. The effects of that expenditure can be seen in the improved performance in our schools.

Dr. Reid: Will the Minister make similar comparisons of the expenditure per pupil in primary schools in 1978-79 and now on party political propaganda, such as that used to support the school boards and now to promote national testing? Nothing was squandered from the education budget on such propaganda 10 or 11 years ago, but now hundreds of thousands of pounds are spent ramming down the throats of pupils and parents in Scotland propaganda to support a system for which they have no sympathy—national testing. Would not it better to spend that money on much-needed learning support so that pupils benefit, rather than the Conservative party?

Mr. Forsyth: We have already made a commitment to find a way of channelling further resources into learning support. The hon. Gentleman mentioned school boards and party political propaganda. Strathclyde region spent more to promote school boards than the Government campaign overall. This aspect ceased to be a matter of difference between the parties only when the Labour party changed its position on school boards.

The Opposition should get their act together. Only a few months ago they criticised the Government for not having provided enough information to parents about national testing. We did not embark on our programme of leaflets and advertising until we had been requested by parents, organisations and the Opposition to do so.

Volunteer Fire Brigades

7. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many volunteer fire brigades are operated by local authorities in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): There are 140 volunteer fire units in Scotland, mostly in highland and islands areas.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister agree that volunteer fire units provide a vital service to island communities and remote areas? Is there any danger that substantial numbers of those units will be disbanded because of difficulties in applying the health and safety regulations in full? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that that was the reason given by Labour-controlled Northumberland county council for disbanding the Holy Island fire brigade, one of the few in England? Will that problem arise in Scotland or will the hon. Gentleman find a solution to it?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree that volunteer fire brigades have performed an extremely valuable role in Scotland. Volunteer units can render initial cover in advance of the arrival of full-time or retained fire-fighting crews. I envisage volunteer units in Scotland remaining an important part of the Scottish fire service, because volunteer units give confidence to people in remote areas and the islands in a way that is effective and provides value for money.

It is for each fire authority to consider what needs to be done within its area according to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman follows up this matter with the responsible home affairs Minister. I understand that the hon. Gentleman will have a meeting with him shortly.

Prosecutions

8. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to reduce delays in bringing prosecutions against people charged with offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate sets targets for the average time that should elapse between receipt of a police report by a procurator fiscal and the service of a complaint on an accused. Latest figures indicate that the overwhelming majority of procurator fiscal offices meet these targets.

Mr. Griffiths: Are not the targets woefully inadequate? Over the past year, people pleading and going to trial faced delays of up to 26 weeks in Scotland. That does nothing to help the morale of the police force, trading standards officers and others who enforce the law. Are not the Government's inaction and the lack of will to tackle these serious delays the reasons why we have a crime wave?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Steps have been and are being taken to speed up cases coming to court. A standard style of police report has been introduced which should reduce delays. A joint working group comprising the Crown Office and chief constables recommended that the fiscal should have a report within, at the latest, 28 days of the accused being cautioned and charged by the police. It is important that, both in sheriff and district courts, the target in non-custody cases between pleading and trial is 10 to 14 weeks. The number of permanent and temporary sheriffs in Scotland has been increased by 70 since 1983 and that, too, is important. We are also introducing more and more computer technology into the courts.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: God help us!

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: God help the criminals, because we shall have a more efficient system to deal with them. The fingerprint technology will bring many more of them to trial. A number of reviews are taking place and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall follow them through with vigour.

Dr. Godman: May I remind the Minister that delays in bringing prosecutions in cases involving allegations of child abuse or sexual abuse can be extremely distressing, affecting not only those charged with such offences but, more importantly, the victims of such crimes? Surely the utmost speed must be impressed upon those with authority in relation to such dreadful cases. The children involved must be treated humanely and compassionately and not subjected to unnecessary delays.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend the Minister of State will be speaking to social workers on that subject on Friday. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of the Lord Advocate, as I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern on this matter.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I remind Opposition Members that Scotland is unique in the world——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman should seek to remind the Minister or, better still ask a question.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I remind the Minister that Scotland is unique in the European Community because we have a system of justice that requires prosecution within statutory times and we achieve those statutory times with regularity and excellence. When I was a Law Officer, at a meeting of Ministers in Switzerland, the Ministers, most of whom were socialists, were happy to take the view that four years was quite a generous time for a prosecution and the mildest time to occur in any European state, so let us blow the trumpet on Scottish justice instead of blasting it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. and learned Friend was a prominent and distinguished Law Officer and I congratulate him on getting the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Bill through its Committee stage this morning. He has retained his interest and is absolutely right to praise the Scottish legal system. We have reason to be proud of the 110-day trial system, which is envied by many other countries. Trials must start within 12 months of an accused first appearing on petition in serious cases. We can be justifiably proud of Scotland's criminal justice system—it is the best in the world.

Grampian Health Board

9. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Grampian health board to discuss reorganisation of the health service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I hold regular meetings with health board representatives to discuss issues affecting the NHS in Scotland.

Mrs. Ewing: Is the Minister aware of the grave disquiet throughout the Grampian health board area about the handling of the Foresterhill opt-out, whereby overwhelming medical and public opinion was overruled by what appeared to be Stalinist tactics at St. Andrew's house? Can the Minister define for the House the importance that he attaches to democratic expression of opinion? This matter greatly concerns my constituents because West Grampian unit is also currently undergoing a consultation process and it seems clear from the Minister's previous actions that consultation is meaningless and that his own views count more than anyone else's.

Mr. Forsyth: I am sorry that the hon. Lady should seek to politicise the matter. The initiative to look at national health service trust status for Foresterhill has come from management and medical people who believe that there will be an opportunity to improve patient care. I understand that consideration is also being given to the possibility of trust status in the West Grampian district, although I have no detailed knowledge of that as the initiative comes from the local districts. Should an application come to my right hon. Friend, as I understand that we expect it will, a three-month period of consultation will be required. I hope that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and others will apply only one criterion in assessing the application—whether patient care will benefit—and that party politics will be set aside.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister not realise that the decision by the Grampian health board on 7 February to recommend that an opt-out application be made seriously prejudices the board's capacity to conduct the consultation period in an objective manner? If an application is submitted, how can the Minister ensure that the consultation period will be undertaken with the public confident that it will be neutral and that the facts will be properly and straightforwardly reported to the Minister so that he can follow his own criterion and apply a non-political judgment?

Mr. Forsyth: The decision will be taken not by Grampian health board, but by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who will do so after a period of consultation. I understand that the Labour party has plans to use the common good fund in Aberdeen to campaign against national health service trust status. It would seem that the common good of Aberdeen would best be met by people looking at proposals that have come from those

involved at the sharp end of health care provision with a view to considering them in the light of whether they satisfy patient care.

Foresterhill started out as a hospital run by a board of management in the NHS. It has served Aberdeen extremely well, and those who argue for local community organisation and running do so because they believe that it is in the interests of Aberdeen and the constituents of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes).

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister answer two simple questions? Many people in Grampian are asking why the status quo was not an option with regard to Foresterhill. How can the people of Grampian have confidence in a health board which initially said that it had no locus in determining the result, was neutral and relied on a proposal from the hospital, but, when that proposal was not forthcoming, stated that it would have welcomed it? It now says that it will objectively consult the people of Grampian. How can the people of Grampian have confidence that the health board will take account of their welfare?

Mr. Forsyth: I should have thought that if the hon. Gentleman were interested in obtaining a genuine consultation period he would realise that the sort of remarks that he has made would not be helpful towards achieving that. The board's responsibility is to look at the requirements for health care in Grampian and, to the best of its ability and within the resources available, to provide for that. If the board believes that the initiative from doctors and management for NHS trust status is in the interests of patient care, I should have thought that, as a Member of Parliament, the hon. Gentleman would give careful consideration to the arguments put forward by the board and do his best to ensure that the consultation process is not turned into a political farce.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that the criterion used to judge the success of the national health service is not the number of beds but the number of patients treated?

Mr. Forsyth: Indeed, I do. Some 900,000 extra patients are treated each year, compared with the number treated when the Government took power. Were NHS trust status —which is attracting interest in Grampian—to be forthcoming, it would mean that the hospital at Foresterhill would be able to take decisions at hospital level and those directly involved in the provision of care would have far more say in the decision-making process. It is ironic that those who argue for devolution on a political basis seem to be against it in the health service.

Local Government Finance

10. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is now the average cost of collecting the poll tax in Scotland including extra expenses for new staff needed and for the processing of rebate applications.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Overall, Scottish local authorities have budgeted to spend £43 million on the collection of the community charge this year.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that this has been the most disastrous and costly piece of legislation this century? Can he explain why the Minister of State and the Secretary of State for Scotland let the people of Scotland down so badly by failing to ask the Cabinet and the Secretary of State for the Environment to abolish the 20 per cent. rule? Why did he not raise, on behalf of the Scottish people, the fact that we were a year ahead of England? Why did he not ask for a £280 refund? Why did we have to pay £140 more?

Mr. Stewart: I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that we abolished rates in Scotland a year ahead of England. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the speech that I made during the debate on the 20 per cent. rule. I assure both the hon. Gentleman and the House that local authorities will be fully reimbursed for the cost of administering the additional assistance to charge payers that was announced by the Government.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister confirm that the cost of granting 100 per cent. poll tax relief to the poorest people in Scotland would be just £30 million? In all the circumstances with which we are familiar in our constituencies, how on earth can he justify the on-going campaign of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to retain this tax on poverty in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: The cost of collecting the community charge is about three quarters of 1 per cent. of total expenditure. If the hon. Gentleman is implying that local authorities should concentrate as a priority on pursuing those who are able to pay the full personal community charge but who are not doing so, I agree with him.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister referred us to his previous speech on the 20 per cent. rule. As he was a diehard supporter of the unjust principle that everyone, irrespective of means, including students and those on income support, should pay something towards local taxation, are we to take it from his remarks that the Government intend to stand by the 20 per cent. rule and that the new system to be announced will contain no reprieve? The Minister is known as the truest of blue supporters of the poll tax. Can he explain why he is now prepared to endorse a property tax? He will have heard the Secretary of State say a few minutes ago that the reason for the abolition of the poll tax is that it is not working well —yet only four or five months ago the Secretary of State for Scotland described it as a remarkable success story. What in the interim has changed the mind of the hon. Gentleman and his senior colleagues?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman recognises, I hope, that he will have to await the consultation paper on the future structure of the new system of local government finance. [HON. MEMBERS: "So will you."] I should point out that collection levels are very variable. To take an example at random—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] It is from Eastwood district—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"], so perhpaps not chosen wholly at random. The income raised in 1989 from Eastwood district was 103·4 per cent. of estimated income. That perhaps shows the wisdom of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) who asked the main question, in preferring to continue to live in Tory Eastwood rather than in socialist Glasgow with his constituents.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of people in work in Scotland and north Tayside in May 1979 and at the nearest date in 1991 for which figures are available.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In September 1990, there were 2·25 million people in the Scottish civilian work force in employment. This was 12,000 more than in June 1979. In September 1989, there were 22,600 people in employment in north Tayside—about 1,600 more than in September 1984. These are the earliest and latest dates for which constituency information is available.

Mr. Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that these figures show very clearly that a Conservative Government and Conservative Members of Parliament are good for Scotland, and certainly good for north Tayside? They show very clearly that the number of people in work is greater today than when I became a Member of Parliament, and those people are all better paid, making nonsense of the claims that people are not better off.

Mr. Stewart: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's general point and with his particular point about north Tayside. His reference to living standards is correct. The best measure is gross domestic product per head. Throughout Scotland, GDP is at an all-time high, having increased by about 30 per cent. in the past decade. That shows beyond any doubt the benefits that the people of Scotland have derived from Conservative government.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister is being rather selective. He will know, for instance, that the whole of Tayside has been shocked by the most recent job losses, which are a direct result of decisions made by his Government. I refer, for example, to the decision to instruct health boards to consider privatising some of their services. That was compounded by a decision of a sub-committee of the full health board, by a vote of three to two. The people who voted to make 380 people redundant were the chairman, who was appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland, and two self-nominated members of the Conservative party, one of whom has a relative on the Government side of the House.

Mr. Stewart: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was referring to one of my relatives—or, indeed which one as there are a very large number of them.

Contracting out has saved the health service hundreds of thousands of pounds, and the money saved is going into patient care, where is belongs. When talking about what has been lost to Tayside, the hon. Gentleman might have taken the opportunity to express regret at the way in which the big Ford investment was thrown away by the trade union movement.

Strathclyde Police

12. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present number of police officers currently serving in Strathclyde.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 31 December 1990, 6,804 officers were serving in Strathclyde police. This includes nine officers on secondment, 22 on central service, and 37 serving with the Scottish crime squad.

Mr. Martin: I thank the Minister for his reply. He will know that the chief constable of Strathclyde, Sir Andrew Sloan, complained in his most recent report that he was 210 police officers below strength, despite the fact that other forces throughout the United Kingdom had increased their numbers. The chief constable is alarmed that in some cases he will not be able to answer calls at peak times. Surely a Minister representing the party of law and order should do something about that.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for highlighting the matter. It is clear that Strathclyde regional council will not allocate sufficient funds to maintain the required establishment. Currently the force is 150 below strength. The Scottish Office, having approved the higher level, has properly budgeted for its share of the cost, so the problem lies wholly at the door of Strathclyde regional council. We have increased our payment from 50 to 51 per cent. The regional council's decision is extraordinary in view of the fact that theft and house-breaking have increased, as have drugs-related offences involving supply as well as those involving possession. I very much hope that the council will consider the matter again with a view to adopting a stronger law and order policy.

Mr. David Marshall: Will the Minister confirm that in many parts of Strathclyde only a handful of police officers are available in the evenings and at weekends to combat the activities of criminals? Is not that a charter for criminals? It is surely wrong for the Minister to lay the blame at the door of Strathclyde regional council in view of all the cuts that the council has suffered as a result of Government policies. Will the Minister give the council sufficient resources to enable it to do all that it can to combat crime?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have paid our share of the cost in grant and we have increased the grant from 50 to 51 per cent., as I mentioned. The responsibility lies firmly at the door of Strathclyde regional council. I hope that it will take seriously into account what the hon. Gentleman has said, bearing in mind that it is the only regional council in Scotland so far below the required establishment of police officers to do the job properly.

Mentally Handicapped People

13. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairmen of the local enterprise companies in order to discuss the number of people suffering from mental handicaps who require training places and the number of employment training places available to such people in 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Discussions with the chairmen of local enterprise companies about operational issues of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman refers are matters for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I am satisfied that the training resources available to Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies are sufficient to cater for the employment training aim and guarantee groups. Those groups include mentally handicapped people.

Dr. Godman: Is there not one Scottish Office Minister or official with an abiding commitment to the needs of those fellow citizens who suffer from mental handicap of

one kind or another? Surely the local enterprise companies should be told by the Minister and his officials that they have a responsibility to such citizens. Would it not be an honourable course of action for the LECs to ensure that two or three of every 10 training places go to people with mental handicaps? Why should such people always be at the end of the queue for training and employment?

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern, but he is not up to date with the position. Last year employment training starts for people with disabilities, including the mentally handicapped, represented 6·2 per cent. of the total. This year from 1 April for the first time the disabled, including the mentally handicapped, will be part of the aim group for employment training, which effectively ensures them places in employment training. Indeed, we have relaxed the normal unemployment eligibility requirement. In effect, therefore, eligibility will depend on an individual's fitness for employment once trained and not on resources.

Mr. Worthington: Given the Minister's assurances, why are 500 handicapped people who previously received a service from the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped no longer receiving that service after the employment training changes? Why has the Scottish Association for Mental Health had a cut of 140 places, and why are four or five centres to close? If there is genuinely a guarantee to the aim and guarantee group, which includes the handicapped, why has Lothian Enterprise given an instruction to all training managers that no more handicapped people or others in that group are to be taken on until further notice?

Mr. Stewart: May I reassure the hon. Gentleman completely that the mentally handicapped are part of the disabled category and part of the aim group? Therefore, their eligibility depends on fitness for employment once trained and not on resources. However, I should say that the purpose of employment training is to provide training directly; it is not to provide rehabilitation, which is a social work function. As to the Scottish Association for Mental Health, I launched Tayside Enterprise earlier this week. I asked about places for the SAMH and was told that it had contracted for 2,024 training weeks in 1991 and that the figure for 1991-92 is 2,600 weeks. That is not a cut—it is an increase.

Training

14. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the effect of the reduction in Government funding to local enterprise companies compared with their bids on the number of training places they are able to provide in the next financial year.

Mr. Lang: There is no uniform link between the funds available to local enterprise companies and the number of training places that they are able to provide. The maximum number of training places that could be provided by each local enterprise company will be significantly influenced by the use that they make of the increased flexibilities available to them and the unit costs that they negotiate.

Mr. Watson: The increased flexibilities of which the Secretary of State talks are certainly not matched by increased funding. If Scottish Enterprise had been funded at the level promised by the former Secretary of State when it was first mooted, it would have approximately £150 million extra available for local enterprise companies. That money could be spent on much needed training schemes, which are now having to be cut. What would the Secretary of State say to my constituents—trainees as well as trainers—whose training schemes were cut at the end of last month because of the underfunding of the Glasgow Development Agency?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman underrates the substantial sums now being invested in training in Scotland. The budget for youth training in the forthcoming year is £103 million and the budget for employment training is £115 million. Those sums are substantial. When one compares them with the small sums invested in training by the last Labour Government—about six times as much investment is now being made in training—it is clear that the Opposition have a lot to learn from the Conservative Government.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the £429 million allocated to Scottish Enterprise, plus the £15 million for the Training Agency, should enable most trainers and trainees to enjoy good facilities in the coming year? Does my right hon. Friend know whether there will be a drop in the number of people receiving training in the coming year?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend asks a sound question. The total amount of resources going into the Scottish Enterprise training budget and the Highlands and Islands training budget is more than £240 million. Provided that the local enteprise companies use the flexibilities open to them and take maximum advantage of their negotiating position, that money should enable them to provide a substantial number of training places and to meet the guarantees that the Government have given.

National Health Service Trusts

16. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for health trust status he has received; and if he will list them.

Mr. Forsyth: At this point formal applications have been received from the south Ayrshire unit and the Royal Scottish national hospital.

Mr. McKelvey: In view of the unsatisfactory answer that the Minister gave to other hon. Members who asked a similar question, and given the fact that the vast majority of well-informed local opinion is opposed to the application, will the Minister give a simple and honest guarantee to the House? First and foremost, will he undertake an objective consultative process? Secondly, will he undertake that the results of that process will be looked at fairly and impartially? Thirdly, if the majority of those involved are not in favour of opting out, will he abandon or reject the request?

Mr. Forsyth: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's questions is yes, yes and no.

Fishing

17. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will assess the prospects for the fishing industry in the north and north-western coastal waters around Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The prospects for the fishing industry in the north and north-west depend primarily on the health of fish stocks. The current poor state of the cod and haddock stocks in the North sea and off the west coast of Scotland is of particular concern. The Government therefore regard the conservation of those fishery resources as a major priority if we are to ensure the long-term prosperity of the fishing communities around our coasts.

Mr. Kennedy: The Secretary of State can surely be in no doubt as to the sense of utter chaos and demoralisation in the fishing industry and in the many communities served by and dependent on a healthy and viable fishing industry. Will he now acknowledge that schemes and devices such as the eight-day tie-up and all the problems that that is causing are no substitute for a proper, sensible and comprehensive decommissioning scheme? That is what the industry wants and it smacks of sense. Why have the Government turned their face against such a sensible development?

Mr. Lang: I certainly understand the anxiety that exists in the fishing community. I was able to find out more about that when I visited Peterhead recently. However, the industry also recognises the importance of conserving stocks because unless we do so in a responsible and sensible long-term manner there will be nothing left for the fishing community to fish for in the years to come.

The hon. Gentleman suggests that decommissioning might be the answer to all our problems, but that would be an extremely expensive scheme and, judging from precedents, there is no evidence to suggest that it would work effectively. It is significant that those countries that have decommissioning schemes also have other means of controlling their fishing efforts.

EC Directives

18. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what meetings have taken place between the Scottish Office and the European Commissioner for the Environment on compliance with EC directives.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office is in contact as necessary with the Commission over the whole range of environmental issues.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Government provide a supply of clean, wholesome drinking water for the Scottish population? Is not it disgraceful that millions of Scots are daily drinking water which fails to meet the basic minimum European standards for safety regarding materials such as aluminium and lead? Why were the Government willing to throw billions of pounds as a sweetener for water privatisation at one of the smaller English water boards when less than that amount would solve our problems and supply clean drinking water for the whole of Scotland? Why is the Minister discriminating against his own country?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, I must point out to the hon. Member that, unlike in England where water restructuring took place in advance of privatisation, that process is not taking place in Scotland, where the water service is in the public sector. We take seriously our determination to do everything possible to comply with the directives. We have increased expenditure on water and sewerage programmes to an all-time high of £620 million. The hon. Gentleman asked about aluminium and lead. As regards aluminium, most supplies will comply by 1994; as regards lead, only one of the treatment schemes remains to be completed after this year, and it is programmed for 1992.

As for our record of compliance, only three countries —Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—are expected to show fewer complaints pending against them. Of some 90 court cases launched by the Commission in the past 10 years, only two have been against the United Kingdom and they have been defended vigorously.

Kurds (Iraq)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a further statement about the relief of the suffering in Iraq.

On Monday I reported to the House on the plan put forward by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to establish temporary safe havens in Iraq for the refugees until they can return to their homes in safety. I said that we were pressing the plan vigorously. I can now report good progress.

Following my right hon. Friend's initiative, we continued intense discussions with our close allies, particularly the French and United States Governments, our partners in the European Community and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We warmly welcome the decision announced by President Bush late yesterday to establish, in conjunction with ourselves and the French, several encampments in northern Iraq where relief supplies for the refugees will be made available in large quantities and distributed in an orderly way. This is essential for the survival of the refugees. Security will be provided at these temporary sites by United States, British and French forces. The details are now, today, being worked out in close consultation with our allies and with the United Nations Secretary-General.

These proposals are to help provide emergency aid, as authorised by Security Council resolution 688. We regard these camps as temporary. They will provide first the emergency supplies and shelter needed to keep the refugees alive and, secondly, over time, the reassurance they need to move on in safety to their homes. This is an immediate measure designed to save lives. We shall be working closely with the United Nations. UN resolution 688 requires the Iraqi Government to co-operate, both with measures undertaken to ensure the implementation of that resolution and generally with the Secretary-General's efforts for the refugees.

Meanwhile, we shall continue our own additional relief effort. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave evidence on this to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs this morning. In addition to our contribution to the air aid bridge, we have contributed over £20 million to appeals by the United Nations and other agencies. We are supporting the efforts of our own non-governmental organisations, and our efforts are not confined to Turkey. My right hon. Friend will leave for Turkey and Iran tomorrow to help to ensure that the relief effort is being properly co-ordinated. Last week we sent 80 tonnes of relief supplies to Iran, and two additional flights, carrying a similar amount, will leave for Iran this week and more will follow.

The Iranian authorities and their Red Crescent are making strenuous efforts, but it is clear to me that a substantial build-up of the international effort to help the Kurds in Iran is essential and urgent.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The decision of the Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and France to send troops into Iraq to protect and help Kurdish refugees falls clearly and precisely within the authority of Security Council resolution 688 which was carried on 2 April.

Throughout the crisis the Labour party has given full support to all 14 Security Council resolutions and has supported all action taken in accordance with those resolutions and all action taken with the authority of those resolutions.

We therefore welcome and support the action announced yesterday by President Bush. We welcome the participation in the decision by the United Kingdom Government and we give our full support to the British troops who are involved in this action.

Can the right hon. Gentleman give the House more information about the number of troops involved and what their tasks will be? Can he explain their rules of engagement and in what circumstances they would be authorised to take military action against Iraqi forces?

Iraq, of course, is obliged under resolution 688 to co-operate with the work our forces are doing and if Iraqi forces were to interfere in any way with this mission they would be in breach of the resolution and it could be invoked.

Can the right hon. Gentleman give any indication of how long our troops will be needed for this assignment? Can he say what role is being played by the Secretary-General and by the Security Council, and whether the United Nations military staff committee has been involved or consulted?

Is it the intention of the countries involved to hand over this assignment of mercy to United Nations control and to United Nations forces? If so, when is that likely to be arranged?

Although this action is welcome and entirely proper, it does not, of course, deal comprehensively with the problem and does not claim to do so.

We on this side continue to regard the sums of money provided by the United Kingdom Government as nowhere near adequate to meet the scale of the need. Will the Government increase their contribution substantially and as soon as possible?

Has the right hon. Gentleman any reliable information about the reported negotiations between Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish leaders? Does he believe that any worthwhile outcome is likely if such negotiations are indeed taking place?

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and I have raised in the House recourse to the United Nations genocide convention. Can the right hon. Gentleman now tell the House that, as we recommend, the Government will speedily ask for a meeting of the Security Council at which the Secretary-General will be asked to send a mission to Iraq to investigate charges of genocide by Saddam Hussein against the Kurds and against others? Such a mission is clearly authorised under resolution 688 and it ought to be sent urgently.

Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what action the Government would support under the genocide convention and what action could be taken to deal with those responsible for genocide, should such charges be established?

Article 4 of the convention authorises punishment against persons committing genocide, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals. Of course, the meeting of European Community Ministers on Monday with the participation of the United Kingdom supported trying Saddam Hussein for war crimes.

Since it is impossible to deal with one aspect of the middle east crisis without considering other actions and developments in the crisis, will the right hon. Gentleman *—[Interruption.]* These are very important matters and the right hon. Gentleman volunteered a statement to which the House has a right to respond.

Will the right hon. Gentleman endorse the condemnation by President Bush of the establishment of a new illegal Israeli settlement on the occupied west bank? We welcome the condemnation of that settlement by the Israeli Minister of Health and we hope that the Government will join that condemnation. We believe that all action has to be taken to deal with the Kurdish crisis and the wider middle east crisis, because one more is more than enough and there must not be another crisis.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his support for my announcement. The job of our forces will be to protect the relief effort in the camps that have been announced. On Monday I set out in some detail why we believe that protection to ensure the safety of the relief effort and the helpers and the helped is an essential part of the relief. Obviously, the protecting forces will be as heavy as is required, but as light as possible. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said this morning, we reckon that our contribution is likely to be somewhat less than a brigade. It is not possible to answer the right hon. Gentleman's question about how long this effort will be needed, but we aim to hand over the function to the United Nations as soon as is practicable.

Last night my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister talked to the United Nations Secretary-General who made a general comment of welcome for the humanitarian purpose of this exercise. That is as far as I am able to go in answering that question by the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about money. The £21 million contribution announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister covers the immediate practicable requirements of relief. The relief effort is going ahead and our effort is being intensified in the way that my right hon. Friend described to the Select Committee this morning.

I have no particular knowledge of any discussions between the Kurdish leaders and the Iraqis. We believe that the aim and objective of the Kurdish leaders of autonomy with Iraq can be supported.

The right hon. Gentleman returned to the issue of genocide. He is correct to say that on 15 April the Community Foreign Ministers agreed that the Twelve should work towards Saddam Hussein's being held to account. They agreed to pursue that through the Secretary-General of the United Nations and that is being done. On Monday I set out the legal position of the 1948 convention. The practical position is that Saddam Hussein is not within our power.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will make a statement as soon as possible—I should think quite soon, within the next day or so—about the outcome of the detailed staff planning discussions now going on in Germany. He will be able to set out more clearly the nature of the British military contribution to that effort. It is clear that we are making a contribution and that it is a logical and necessary result of the initiative by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On the safe haven for the Kurds, is my right hon. Friend aware that we are all proud of the lead given by our country, our Government and our Prime Minister? Is he further aware that we are glad to have confirmation that there will be no let-up in the relief to the Kurds in the mountains and that we have every sympathy with the point of view of the Turks? To let Saddam Hussein stay on is similar to what would have happened at the end of the second world war if we had allowed Hitler, had he lived, to stay on to run Germany.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched this initiative and persevered with it for weeks during which many clever people were saying that it was washed up, had been discredited and would never come to fruition. My right hon. Friend persevered to success. That is not only a great achievement by my right hon. Friend and the Government but will save the lives of many people about whom the Government and the country are concerned.

The point on which my hon. Friend ended is one into which we went fairly thoroughly in the House on Monday. I simply say that most people feel that a change of regime in Iraq is highly desirable—not least the Iraqis themselves, including the Kurds. However, none of the allies believes that that is best brought about by allied troops.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): While I applaud the action that has at last been taken by the allies, may I ask the Foreign Secretary to say a little more about how he hopes to persuade the Kurdish people to remain within the northern Iraqi border, unless there are signs of longer-term guarantees for their safety? Will it be part of the peace settlement that there should be the creation of a secure homeland within the territory of Iraq, as the Kurdish leaders want? Will there be a similar operation on Iraq's south-eastern border with Iran?

Mr. Hurd: Our first thought was to save as many lives as possible, and the creation of the camps is designed to do that. As the right hon. Gentleman says, it does not solve the whole of the problem. I hope that it will lead to a willingness by the Kurds to return to their homes, but they will do so only if they are satisfied that those homes are secure. We believe that that involves the steady build-up of an international, United Nations presence in north Iraq. I hope that that will go ahead on the lines of Prince Sadruddin's mission to Iraq and his discussions there.

There are no plans for a similar exercise on Iraq's border with Iran. That is why I spent some time saying that I believe that the international relief effort in Iran, to which we are increasingly contributing, will need to build up quickly.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might help hon. Members if I say that I shall give precedence today to those who were not called on Monday.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): The measures that my right hon. Friend has announced are most welcome. Could he clarify the statement of the Secretary-General, after his meeting with President Mitterrand, that if allied troops deployed to protect the camps were to be under the auspices of the United Nations, that would have to be approved by another meeting of the United Nations Security Council? Will my right hon. Friend have regard to the potential of air cover,

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

because it is not just a question of protecting the camps; it is necessary to ensure that there is no further intimidation and harassment of the Kurds over a wider area.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right on both points. It is not intended that the British, American and French forces, which I have described in my statement, should be under United Nations command. I am advised that their presence is wholly consistent with Security Council resolution 688. We want their role to be taken over by the United Nations as soon as that is practicable.

My hon. Friend is right about air cover. President Bush was specific about that in his announcement yesterday, and my hon. Friend will have noted that he specifically repeated the warning that he had previously given about Iraqi air activities.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): May I gently put it to the Foreign Secretary—and I say it without any sense of satisfaction—that the Gulf war appears to be a rather less glorious enterprise today than it did a month ago? Whatever view one takes of that, there is no excuse for the triumphalism of some Conservative Members.

May I welcome the action that has been belatedly taken today, but point out to the Foreign Secretary that the immediate concern, which is widely acknowledged, is to get the Kurds off the mountains? That will require more co-operation from the Turks. Does the right hon. Gentleman share the widespread revulsion felt when we see on our television screens every night pictures of Turkish soldiers beating starving refugees to get them to go back up the mountains? Do we have any influence with the Turks? I am aware that the Turkish Prime Minister was in this country the other day. Are we using any influence that we might have, because, as yet, there is no sign that the Turks are co-operating on the scale that they should be?

Mr. Hurd: I simply do not understand the hon. Gentleman's first point. Is he saying, in some sense, that it would have been right to leave Kuwait under Saddam Hussein's mercy? Unless that is the implication of the hon. Gentleman's sentence, I do not see the point in saying it.

Of course we have been in close touch with the Turkish Government. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister talked to the Turkish Prime Minister, as the hon. Gentleman said, when he was here on Monday. Obviously the Turks have sensitivities, concerns and substantial difficulties. They are making a massive effort and, rather than pick on particular incidents when things may well have gone wrong, it would be sensible if the House concentrated on how we can help, not criticise, the Turks.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I congratulate the Government on their bold step of ensuring zones of safety for the Kurds which will prevent many thousands of them from dying on the mountain sides of the Iraq-Turkey border. Now that the principle of having troops inside northern Iraq under UN auspices has been established, does the Foreign Secretary see a role for the UN in future mediation between the Kurds and the Iraqi regime to establish permanent zones of safety and a constitution for them that will effectively guarantee their rights as citizens of Iraq?

Mr. Hurd: That is looking ahead. I certainly would not reject it. I believe that the Kurds are entitled to autonomy within Iraq. At the end of this story, the UN may well be helpful in bringing that about—I do not rule that out.

Mr, James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): May I congratulate the Prime Minister and his colleagues on the success of their efforts in persuading their allies to take this effective action? Given the implications of the course on which we are embarked, would not it be prudent to have a careful, calm look with our coalition partners at the mid-term prospects and at strategy, as opposed to the longer-term middle east conference?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with that. The immediate short-term step that I have announced today on behalf of the Government needs to be followed by medium-term thinking—and I have begun to sketch what that should be. That applies to the Kurdish problem, to the problem of a final settlement in Iraq and to the wider middle east question about which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) asked me.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): When the Prime Minister, out of a sense of deep compassion, put forward the idea of safe havens in Iraq, it was ridiculed by some and rejected by others, including the Government of the United States of America. So will the Foreign Secretary convey to the Prime Minister my thanks and those of the whole House for his decisive international leadership which may lead to the saving of tens of thousands of lives of Kurdish people?

Mr. Hurd: I will certainly convey the hon. Gentleman's thanks to my right hon. Friend. The United States did not reject the plan and has now decisively acted to put it into action.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am glad that the Prime Minister kept up his pressure for safe havens, because it seemed at one point that the President of the United States was going to wash his hands of his responsibilities, having perhaps achieved all that he wanted from the Gulf war. If one was writing a report on the Government it would read, "Could do better; could do more."

Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that, compared with the enormous efforts made in the Gulf war and the billions of pounds spent on it, £21 million—less than the cost of one jet aircraft—is a disproportionately small sum and that far more is needed? Are the Government prepared to spend far more; and what efforts are they making to encourage contributions from the Japanese, other EEC countries and Kuwait to pay for the costs of looking after the Kurds?

Mr. Hurd: The constraint is not a financial one at the moment. It is a matter of getting what is needed to where it is needed. If the hon. Gentleman knew the details of the relief effort, he would know that that was so. No doubt we shall return to talking about money, but at the moment the constraint is not financial. The hon. Gentleman's final point was quite right. Of course we must encourage not only our partners in the EC but the Japanese and the wealthier Arab states to help the relief effort. The Germans announced today quite a substantial airlift to Iran and the French have been extremely active and working closely with us particularly during the past few days.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I also welcome the great success of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's robust diplomacy which has given some hope of alleviating the plight of the Kurds. Does my right hon. Friend agree that no troops in the world match the adaptability of British troops to move from a conventional military operation to giving humanitarian aid to a civil population?

Mr. Hurd: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. In many places across the world our forces have shown exactly that quality and I am sure that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gives details of how it is intended that our forces should operate, my hon. Friend will find that that principle is at work.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In what circumstances can the House of Commons envisage British, American or United Nations troops ever being withdrawn from that place—will it be two years or 10 years? How does the Foreign Secretary contemplate the fact that we are creating a nightmare of a Northern Ireland in northern Iraq? Should not we at least try talking to Saddam Hussein, because, sooner or later, someone will have to talk to Baghdad, unpalatable though it may be?

Mr. Hurd: I really think that the comparison that the hon. Gentleman draws is very wide of the mark. I can see no similarities between the situations that he described.

If the Prime Minister had not put forward his initiative, if we had simply sat back, as the Opposition accused us of doing, if we had not pressed the United States or the European Community, or if yesterday we had refused to play our part, a great many more people who now have a chance of surviving would have died on the mountains. The hon. Gentleman has to accept that.

Of course I cannot tell the House today when this commitment will end. We shall try to bring it to an end in safety by handing over responsibility to the United Nations. There are precedents for that. I cannot say when it will be done, but it is a perfectly sensible method of proceeding. The United Nations has to keep in touch with whatever regime is in Baghdad. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not use his eloquence to criticise or undermine in any way the chances of this operation, of which this country can be proud.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is absolutely astonishing that, with only one exception, there has been not a single word of appreciation from the Opposition for what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has achieved? They seem to be more interested in whining and nit-picking about too little, too late, not enough and all the rest of it. Will he convey warm congratulations not only from me but from all my constituents on what the Prime Minister has achieved and emphasise that it is due to his tenacity and determination that a safe haven has been established for the Kurds?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course, the Opposition had a bit of an outing on Monday when I was not able to say what was going on behind the scenes and I was not able to prove that the Prime Minister's initiative would bear fruit. I simply said that we were pursuing it vigorously. That was taken as a pattern of speech and the Opposition had a field day complaining that we were doing nothing. Now they have been proved wrong and that rather inhibits them today. However, the right hon. Member for Gorton supported what we have announced and I am grateful to him.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that there will be widespread relief at the help now being given to the Kurds, particularly as probably 200,000 people have been killed in the area since the invasion of Kuwait and, in the opinion of many, the tragedy there is worse than it was when it began?

Is the safe haven a refugee camp? Does the Secretary of State recall that the Palestinians have been in refugee camps for many years? If there is military intervention to safeguard the camps, is not that a de facto partition? Do the Government accept the right of the Kurdish people throughout the area to self-determination? Will they be invited to the peace conference with the Palestinians? Without a long-term perspective, the aid—however welcome—will not go to the root of the problem.

Mr. Hurd: What we envisage is five or six refugee camps which will be protected by British, American and French forces. The camps will not be connected—it will not be a single territorial area but a number of camps. British, French and American troops will be equipped to protect themselves as well as others. The situation is not comparable to that on the west bank or the Gaza strip. I have set out what we believe to be a sensible attitude towards autonomy and we will support that claim. As I have already said, the United Nations may have a role to play in bringing that about, but we do not envisage a huge peace conference at which every issue involving the middle east will be considered.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): While paying tribute to the obvious compassion and thought that have gone into the programme, may I express my concern about the position of a brigade of British troops in a few days' time? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in the unexpected event of an ambush or attack, it will have no artillery or tanks with which to reply? How, in practice, will the brigade commander decide who is a displaced person and who is a freedom fighter? How will we stop the camps being used to store explosives and ammunition, bearing in mind that a vicious civil war is raging in that part of the world? The Government may find it easy to put a brigade of British troops into northern Iraq, but it will be hard to withdraw that brigade as long as Saddam Hussein and the Republican Guard remain in control of Iraq.

Mr. Hurd: That depends to a considerable extent on the exact location of the camps, which is being worked out at the moment. The answers to my hon. Friend's questions lie in the statement to be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence when matters have been further elaborated. As I have already said, when we send British troops—and other countries will feel the same about theirs—they must be able to protect themselves as well as others. That bears on the question of equipment, communications, reinforcement and back-up generally. Those issues are very much in the minds of my right hon. Friend, his advisers and our allies.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): How can we overcome the logistical problems of getting aid to the Kurds, which is causing great difficulty? People are collecting blankets, baby food and medical supplies to

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

assist the Kurds. A medical team—a burns unit—that has worked in Belfast is also going out to help. British organisations find it relatively easy to collect materials in this country, but they have great difficulty in shipping them over to the Kurds. Will help be given in that respect? I understand that Iran Air has to pay transit charges in this country when it is here on mercy missions to collect some of those materials. Is everything being done to ensure that the materials that people have collected are getting to where they are needed?

Mr. Hurd: We started with air drops because that was the quickest but not the best way, as we have seen. We are now moving to helicopter drops, and the extra British helicopters that have been allocated are now arriving and will participate in those drops. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. The Red Cross is well equipped in this country to gather material and to get it abroad. That organisation is in close touch with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. I suggest that individuals or groups who want to help should contact the Red Cross or my right hon. Friend's Department.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend contrast with the Government's response the entirely graceless and negative response of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the Labour party to this remarkable achievement? Does my right hon. Friend agree that this achievement represents a triumph for British diplomacy and again shows the importance of working with our European partners in dealing with difficult matters involving the Americans?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is being a little hard on the right hon. Member for Gorton, who began his intervention this afternoon by accepting what the Government did, just as he did on the radio this morning. The right hon. Gentleman does not seem to have had total influence on his hon. Friends, but we are obliged to him for his support.

I draw from this issue a lesson that I have had to draw before: in these matters, persistence is all-important. If one is discouraged by the first discouragements, one will never get anywhere. We have persisted in this basic idea and I am delighted that it has succeeded.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Like everyone else, I welcome this belated action to bring relief to the suffering of the Kurds, but I do not understand one point. Why did not the right hon. Gentleman and the coalition forces give immediate support to the uprising for democracy in Iraq, uniting the Kurds and the Shi'ites, which occurred immediately after the ceasefire? Why did we not give humanitarian and medical aid and political support then? If we had done so, Saddam Hussein would probably have gone by now and the Kurds would never have had to go up the mountains.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that historians will back the hon. Lady on that point. On Monday, we discussed whether the war was brought to an end at the right time. I do not believe that prolonging the fighting in the south for a day or two would have altered events for the Kurds. As soon as the extent of the humanitarian catastrophe became apparent—first in the areas around Turkey and now in the areas around Iran—the international community took the action that I described today and on Monday.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents share the admiration for the lead that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has given, which has been voiced on both sides of the House by all fair-minded Members? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Security Council resolution 688 insists on an immediate end to the repression of all minorities in Iraq, including the Kurds and the Shi'ites? What evidence is there so far that the Iraqi Government have in any way complied with that resolution? What steps do the Government intend taking to encourage them to do so?

Mr. Hurd: We know of no harassment by the Iraqis of the relief efforts. There is evidence of Iraqis continuing to attack Kurds south of the 36th parallel where the United States interdiction holds sway. We are waiting for the report of the Secretary-General's representative on the carrying out of resolution 688.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): The Foreign Secretary praised the Turkish Government for their work in dealing with the refugees. Will he also praise the Iranian Government for their work? They have done considerably more than the Turkish Government. Will refugees on the Iran-Iraq border be able to go to the enclaves? If not, why not? If they are allowed to go to those enclaves, how will they get there? Will the Kurdish refugees, the fighters and the guerrillas be allowed to take their guns and other weapons with them into the enclaves?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right on his first point. I referred in my statement to the strenuous efforts made by the Iranian authorities, including the Iranian Red Crescent, which I am told has done extraordinarily energetic and successful work in dealing with this disaster.

There will be no examination of people when they enter the camps about where they came from. In practice, it is unlikely that people will come from Iran or from the border with Iraq, but that will depend on where the sites are located, which is being worked out at present. I do not envisage the sites being allowed to be used by Kurds or anyone else carrying arms.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Iranian Government's action in allowing so many refugees to enter their territory is to be praised, as is their restraint in the face of provocation from Saddam Hussein? Does not that augur well for future relations with Iran and, perhaps, for the future of some of the hostages in Lebanon? As for the refugees in the south, particularly those in the demilitarised zone, is not it our responsibility to see that they are given safe passage to a safe place if no safe havens are to be created in southern Iraq?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend's remarks about the Iranian Government's policy. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will have an opportunity to discuss the subject with Dr. Velayati and others when she goes to Tehran on Saturday.

My hon. Friend's second point has exercised us, but is not a question which has arisen in the House before. It is extremely important that, before the Americans finally

leave the demilitarised zone, there should be more provision for the people who have taken refuge there. The best way is for them to be admitted to Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. Alternatively, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should take effective control of the places that they occupy. That means resisting any effort by Iraqi forces to move in on those people.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the Foreign Secretary accept that it is a welcome development, when there is a conflict of interest between not interfering in another nation's affairs and humanitarian intervention, that the balance of advantage has been adjudged on the side of humanitarian intervention? Nevertheless, can we have a clear statement as soon as possible from the Secretary of State for Defence about the command structure to be deployed and the rules of engagement?

May I press the Foreign Secretary a little on how he anticipates the real and eventual needs of the Kurdish people being realised at a peace conference? They want a clear understanding that their accredited representative will be present and able to speak on their behalf.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend's statement will deal with the hon. Gentleman's first two questions about command structures and rules of engagement. It is impossible to look too far ahead at the eventual position and settlement of the Kurdish people. I have set out what I believe it is reasonable for this country to support and aim at, and we shall continue to do that through the United Nations.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to subsequent business before the House. This is an Opposition day and there is another statement and a ten-minute Bill, so I shall call three more hon. Members from each side before we move on to the next statement.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is not it characteristic of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that he first recognised the humanitarian needs and desperate position of the Kurdish people and, secondly, recognised the real concerns of the British people? Undeterred by every legal and other formulation put forward by the Opposition in great chorus last Monday, he persisted and got the safe havens established. Is not it also essential that the Kurds do not stay in the safe havens for too long but that they be established where they belong, in their own homes and towns? They should be permitted, under United Nations authority and with the help of the international community, to live their lives in peace and security. Surely we must be prepared to back the United Nations force with armed might if necessary to defeat Saddam Hussein, who has turned them out of their homes.

Mr. Hurd: We have announced today our willingness to deploy our forces in support of the first task, which is to save lives. That has been almost universally welcomed in the House. The next step is that the United Nations must take responsibility for the camps now being set up and must find ways in which the Kurds can return to their homes in security. We do not want to establish, either in Turkey or northern Iraq, camps that start as temporary and end up as permanent. Clear responsibility rests on the United Nations and is already set out in resolution 688.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I welcome the statement on the safe haven, but may I ask a question of pure logistics? Thousands of these desperate people died in the trek into the mountains. We are all aware of the difficult mountainous conditions, the poor weather and the weakened medical condition of those who survived the trek in; now they have to get out. That will be as big a problem as looking after them when they get out. What consideration is being given to ways of getting them out of the mountains?

Mr. Hurd: That is indeed an important part of the planning. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has just told me, priority is to be given to getting women and children—the people who are most vulnerable—into places of safety first. That is already being planned and, to some extent, is already happening. The urgency of the matter is huge, which is why it seemed to us right that as soon as the American decision was cleared we should announce our acceptance of it and get on with detailed planning, while acknowledging that there are many basic questions that still have to be tackled.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the dogged determination with which the Prime Minister pursued the policy he put forward against the rubbishing by the press and some other world leaders, whom he persuaded to come round to his way of thinking, should be pointed out to the Iranian leadership so that they understand that when the British Prime Minister says something, he means it and when he says that we need freedom for our hostages, including John McCarthy, who today finishes five years in captivity, the British Government mean it? We will have good working relationships with Iran, but only when John McCarthy and the others are free.

Mr. Hurd: I have made this point to Dr. Velayati since the autumn. Mr. Cooper, who was held in prison in Tehran for a long time, has now been released, which is welcome. But Iranians know that, alongside the way in which we praise them for what they are doing in the Kurdish crisis, acknowledge the immense difficulties they face and do our best to help them, we cannot forget, any more than hon. Members wearing their yellow ribbons today forget, that held in desperate conditions in prisons in the Lebanon are people over whose captors we believe the Iranian Government have influence. We hope that they will use that humanitarian influence to the best effect and get those people out.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): While I am delighted with today's statement, I am deeply disappointed that the United Nations did not act a lot sooner to save the thousands of lives that have been lost in the mountains. I give this decent, sensible suggestion to the Secretary of State. During the Gulf war, contingency arrangements were made all over Europe for hospitals and other organisations. At present, there are thousands of people lying in the mountains who are desperately ill and in need of care and attention. Cannot helicopters fly them out and aeroplanes take them to Britain and Europe where they may be treated and restored to health? If the Government mean what they say, they should carry out that decent, sensible suggestion.

Mr. Hurd: There may well be such cases, but the essential need is to get medical help to where there are large

[Mr. Hurd]

numbers of people. As I said on Monday, we are talking not about elaborate surgical equipment but about the basics of medical care and disease prevention. Getting that care to where the people are is the priority.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of this country expect the same display of unity in defence of the Kurds as was shown by the House in defence of the Kuwaitis? The Prime Minister's leadership in this matter deserves the unambiguous support of the House in the same way that his leadership of the Gulf war deserved it. However, in this complex situation, no policy can be perfect. One possible side effect of the policy of the Government and the United States is that it could release some of the Republican Guards for repression elsewhere in the country, by virtue of the fact that part of Iraq will be effectively neutralised. That seems to bring us back once again to the source of the evil—Saddam Hussein. What is happening in the international sphere to reinforce existing sanctions and to bring new, internationally backed sanctions against Saddam Hussein, the source of the evil?

Mr. Hurd: The sanctions regime, put into effect by United Nations resolution 687, is extremely rigorous. If my hon. Friend studies its exact provisions and puts himself in the position of someone in Baghdad who wants to have a future for himself, as an Iraqi, and for his family, he will see, looking at the provisions of the United Nations resolution, that the obstacle to that future for himself and Iraq is Saddam Hussein. I believe that that realisation will, in the end, be his undoing.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, we welcome any relief that can be brought to refugees who are living in such terrible circumstances, but several questions remain. First, can the Foreign Secretary tell us the size of the tent cities that are to be erected on the Turkey-Iraq border, but not on the Iranian-Iraq border? As he knows, the major problem is the refugees in Iran who have crossed into Iran from Iraq. Many more refugees are crossing the Iranian border than the Turkish border.

Secondly, what means will be made available to the thousands of Iraqi Kurds who still remain in the major cities of Iraqi Kurdistan—Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk? No protection seems to have been made available to them, although battles continue in both cities, with a major battle taking place today in Sulaymaniyah.

Thirdly, is the Foreign Secretary aware of the conversation I had a few hours ago with Jalal Talabani in which he gave his views of the proposals? He said that the tent cities are only good for keeping the refugees alive and that the main problem is to prepare conditions so that they can be sent back to their villages and towns under United Nations protection.

Fourthly, is the Foreign Secretary also aware of the proposals that have been made to the Iraqi Kurds during the last few hours by Saddam Hussein? The proposals are almost unbelievable. He has made what Jalal Talabani said was a very attractive offer, and they are to meet tomorrow to decide how to deal with the offer. He also said that Saddam Hussein is offering autonomy to the Kurds in Iraq, as well as democracy and pluralism and an elected Parliament with Kurdish representatives. That is unbelievable to all of us. Since it was mentioned to me by the leader of the major Kurdish political party, who is also the leader of the Peshmerga, that they are considering the proposal seriously, will the Foreign Secretary tell us what credence he gives to the report? If they are realistic proposals, which I know it is very difficult for all of us to believe, does the Foreign Secretary agree that they cannot be considered unless international guarantees are given to the Kurds, together with a guarantee that the withdrawal of all hostile forces from Kurdistan is overseen by the United Nations?

Mr. Hurd: I would rather not comment on detailed offers of a few hours ago, from whatever source, but I suppose that the Kurdish leaders will not be impressed by verbal offers. They will want an assurance, not just from whatever regime there is in Baghdad, that what is on offer is going to happen.

As for the hon. Lady's other points, no, it is not possible at this stage to give an estimate of the size of each of these camps. They will be largish. Unless the five or six camps are largish they will not make a sizeable impression on the problem. The hon. Lady is perfectly right. As I said in my original statement, this move does not solve the problem along the Iranian border, which she visited. That is why it is important that we, and other members of the international community, should build up the effort there.

On the question of the Kurds—indeed, all kinds of Iraqis, including the Shi'ites in the south who are in towns and villages—it is the purpose of the Secretary-General's co-ordinator, Prince Sadruddin, to visit the area and to report on how exactly the problem could be tackled. Prince Sadruddin has visited the area and will be talking to the Secretary-General in Paris today. We look forward with intense interest to his recommendations.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to those hon. Members who have not been called to put questions on this statement that I shall bear them in mind next time, as I have borne in mind today those who rose on Monday but were not called.

Teachers' (Review Body)

4.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The Government have been considering the best approach to the settlement of teachers' pay and conditions in England and Wales in the light of other developments, including discussions during the Committee stage of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, the fourth report of the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions, and progress in implementing the education reforms.

As I made clear when I was appointed to my present office, I share my predecessor's concern that we should have a well qualified and well paid teaching force, dedicated to serving the needs of pupils. The Prime Minister has expressed his strong personal commitment to those same aims. He and I want to reinforce the professionalism of teachers, and we want to raise still further the esteem in which the teaching profession is held in our society.

The work of the interim advisory committee has, we believe, been of great importance in encouraging teachers' professionalism by avoiding conflict about the level of their pay. In practice, the operation of the committee has meant determining teachers' pay in much the same way as that of doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives in the national health service, who are similarly committed to the needs of their patients. We have decided that it would be better to continue this broad parity of treatment for these key professions rather than return teachers to collective bargaining, which has caused so much conflict in the past.

Previously, the Government took the view that a review body for teachers could not be established because of the emphasis teacher unions had placed on their ability to take industrial action. We believe that that situation has changed—indeed, changed substantially in the last few months. Teachers have worked with great professional commitment on the implementation of the 1988 reforms. The recommendations of the interim advisory committee, culminating in its fourth report earlier this year, have produced a more progressive and flexible salary structure which has won support across a very broad spectrum of teacher opinion. The public and the vast majority of teachers do not want to see any return to industrial action affecting the education of pupils. In my opinion, the reaction to the antics at the Easter conferences of one or two of the teacher unions underlined that only too clearly. I am confident that the public will welcome the Government's acknowledgement of the professional status of teachers, and our offer to them of the review body status reserved to certain key non-striking professions.

Accordingly, I now propose that teachers' pay and conditions should in future be determined by an independent review body reporting to the Prime Minister, alongside the review bodies for the health service, the armed forces, and senior civil servants and the judiciary. This proposal is made on the basis that teachers fully recognise and accept their professional responsibilities, and will not in future take industrial action about matters within the review body's ambit. The Government, for their part, will undertake, as in the case of the other review bodies, to implement the review body's recommendations unless there are clear and compelling reasons to the contrary. The recommendations will apply to teachers in maintained schools, except those grant-maintained schools that choose to make their own arrangements.

Teachers are not Government employees, and their pay is not directly financed from the Exchequer. So unlike the other review bodies, the schoolteachers' review body will have to be statutory. It will have to cover conditions as well as pay, as do both the present IAC arrangements and those in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill. The body will not be subject to a predetermined financial constraint, but, as with the IAC, I shall direct it each year as to considerations to which it is to have regard. These considerations will include, as now, the Government's view that school teachers' pay should be such as to recruit, retain and motivate sufficient staff of the appropriate calibre within what can be afforded, as expressed at present in the level of education standard spending set by the Government.

I attach particular importance to allowing schools the scope to tailor pay to their own needs in the light of local labour markets. Through the work of the interim advisory committee schools have recently acquired the freedom to choose from a wide menu of options within a national framework. I expect the review body to build on that approach. The grant-maintained schools will be able to make their own arrangements if they want to go further.

Like other review bodies, the teachers' review body will take evidence from all the parties concerned—in this case the teacher unions, the employers and the Government. Once the review body has made its recommendations, the decision on their implementation will rest, in the same way as applies to the other review bodies, with the Prime Minister.

Accordingly the Government are now withdrawing the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill. Instead I shall bring forward as soon as possible a new Bill to give effect to the decisions I have announced today. My intention is to secure Royal Assent in time for next year's settlement to be determined by the new body. I reiterate the Government's determination to give practical effect to our desire to enhance the professional standing of teachers. I confidently expect their whole-hearted co-operation with these new arrangements as an essential element in that process.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Secretary of State has just made a statement of which he and the Government should be thoroughly ashamed. By it he highlights the chaos, confusion and indecision into which the Government have descended, and displays contempt for the House and the grossest breach of faith with the teaching profession. Does the Secretary of State recall that, when teachers' negotiating rights were originally removed by the Government in 1987, their restoration was promised by 1990, that the Government reneged on that promise, and that, when the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, which partially was to restore those negotiating rights, was brought to the House only 16 weeks ago, this Secretary of State said:

"The Bill contains the agreed policy of this Government. I can certainly speak for two of the candidates for the position of Prime Minister who are committed to the Bill".—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 743.]

One of those candidates was the man who won the Tory party leadership.

Does the Secretary of State also acknowledge that day after day in Committee his Minister of State and

[Mr. Jack Straw]

Under-Secretary expressed their commitment to the Bill and their desire to see it on the statute book? If that was the agreed position of the Government 16 weeks ago, what has changed since? *[Interruption.]* I will come to that. Where is the explanation for the extraordinary about-turn —not in 16 weeks but in the 10 weeks since the Bill left Committee?

Will the Secretary of State explain what consultation there has been since the Bill left Committee about the new policy which he has just announced? Has there been consultation with the teacher unions which he prays in aid? Has there been consultation with the employers? Does not the Secretary of State recognise that he will do further damage to the already collapsed morale of the profession if he tries to railroad his proposals through without their consent and that of the employers? Does not he recall that the interim advisory committee, which reported last year and again this year that teachers' morale had never been lower, called for a restoration of negotiating rights?

No one in the House wants to see any industrial action in our schools. I think that the whole House will know that I have been quite outspoken against those proposing disruptive action in schools which cannot be justified. But that is a very different proposition from the unilateral removal of the right to strike which the statement implies. Will the Secretary of State explain how he intends to enforce the no-strike arrangement of the proposals? Does he intend to write it into law? Will he accept that if he does that he will be depriving teachers of human rights which are not denied——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): What about the rights of pupils?

Mr. Straw: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman, who fought for the right to strike in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, wants it to be taken away in this country unilaterally and without negotiation.

Will the Secretary of State accept that he will be depriving teachers of human rights not denied to any civilian group, apart from the police? Even nurses and doctors, who are subject to review bodies, are not denied the right to strike.

If the teacher unions refuse the proposals, what happens then? Are teachers to be denied a pay rise if they do not agree to withdraw any right to strike? Are they to be denied bargaining rights? Will the Bill be brought back, or will the Secretary of State simply continue with the 1987 system of imposing pay rises? If anyone reads the small print of what the Secretary of State said, it emerges that the proposed review body will be constrained on its global sum—as the right hon. and learned Gentleman admitted —in exactly the same way as the interim advisory committee. What extra will teachers get in exchange for that committee?

The Secretary of State referred to the fact that grant-maintained schools—opted-out schools—will be able to opt out of these arrangements. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that, remarkably, that means that teachers in opted-out schools will continue to have the right to strike in pursuit of a pay claim while that right will be removed from teachers in local authority schools? There can be no other conclusion to be drawn from the statement but that teachers in opted-out schools can take strike action in pursuit of a pay claim while those in local authority schools will be denied that right.

When I and my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) asked the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State about the reasons for delaying the Report stage of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, they referred, unbelievably, to pressures of parliamentary business. The Secretary of State, however, knew that that excuse was utter nonsense and had no basis in fact. He knew that hon. Members were bound to be misled by that excuse. Since that is the truth, would the right hon. and learned Gentleman now like to apologise for having taken the House for a ride?

The Secretary of State has wasted a great deal of hon. Members' time by abandoning a Bill that only four months ago represented the agreed policy of the Government. Ministers, by reneging on undertakings given to the profession and by their conduct, have shown that they are simply not fit to govern, and that it is time for them to go.

Mr. Clarke: I must admit that, while I sat here listening carefully as the hon. Gentleman waffled on in a state of rather confused indignation, I was waiting to hear whether he would announce that he was in favour of the review body to be established for teachers or against it. He gave no suggestion from beginning to end as to his opinion. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is a ditherer"]. Yes, he dithered.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that he had misunderstood one feature of my announcement, because the review body will not operate under any predetermined financial constraints, just as the present review bodies do not.

The one thing that the hon. Gentleman chose to get indignant about was my threat to the teachers' right to strike. He defended that with all the passion of the NUT militants who took the headlines briefly at the conferences at Easter. The NUT executive gave every impression that it shared my view and the view of the public, that most teachers do not want to hear people going on about their right to strike. They do not want to take strike action against pupils. They want to be treated with the respect for their professional status which the Government's review body recommends.

We are not going to take away that right by law. We shall proceed on the basis that has been borne out by the vast majority of the trade unions, and even the majority of the members of the NUT. Teachers will not take strike action on matters within the remit of a review body because that body gives them the professional status alongside doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, judges even, to which teachers have long aspired.

The hon. Gentleman put forward the ridiculous proposition that grant-maintained schoolteachers will retain the right to strike. I have always welcomed the idea of the hon. Gentleman suddenly launching himself on a campaign across the country trying to get schools to opt out of local authority status, so that their teachers can enjoy the privilege of organising strike action.

Unfortunately, I do not believe that I can have the hon. Gentleman on my side as an ally because, obviously, grant-maintained schools will work against the background determined by the review body. I also believe that it is right that the governors of those schools, should they want, can make such variations in employment as they

think fit, in exchange, no doubt, for agreements with their teachers on things such as longer school hours and extra-curricular activities. All those things are within the remit of governors of grant-maintained schools.

As for the ridiculous argument about parliamentary time, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) did not listen with sufficient care to what we said on Second Reading and in Committee. My hon. Friend and I have been contemplating and discussing this policy for some time. When the hon. Gentleman looks back at the debate on Second Reading and in Standing Committee he will realise that we were careful to leave our options open. As time went by, it became clear that the climate was changing.

The hon. Member for Blackburn asked for the explanation for our change, compared with this time last year, when my right hon. Friend, who is now the Lord President and Leader of the House, was very attracted by the notion of a review body. At that time the air was still full of talk of industrial action, bargaining rights and so forth. In the past few months it has become steadily clearer that at least three trade unions are now campaigning for a review body, a fourth appears to have joined them and a fifth will accept it. The reaction to talk of strike action at teachers' conferences is now listened to with respect only by people such as the official spokesman of the Labour party, who has just allied himself with such people.

I hope that he will reflect carefully upon the position and come to welcome what I believe is a significant step forward for the teaching profession in this country, giving the people who teach our children the esteem and respect that they deserve.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many thousands of teachers will feel that his decision today enhances their professional rights, whatever else it does, and this will be a welcome step? Is the wisdom of his decision not further reinforced by the evidence of the valuable work done by the interim advisory committee? Does that not provide a sound example of the way in which a review body could work to the great advantage of teachers and their professional status?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I agree with him. One can find on the record remarks by the hon. Member for Blackburn praising the work of the interim advisory committee, which has indeed produced a welcome improvement, especially in local flexibility in settling teachers' pay. The difference between the new review body and the interim advisory committee that it will replace is that the new body will not work within any predetermined financial remit. It will be enjoined to have regard to affordability and the need to recruit and retain, just as we always invite the other review bodies to have regard to those matters, but there will be no predetermined financial remit. Also the body will be appointed by the Prime Minister and report directly to him. He will give effect to its recommendations unless, as we have always said with all review bodies, there are clear and compelling reasons for not doing so.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In addition to the shocking statement made by the Minister —*[Interruption.]* The guffaws and laughter on the Conservative Benches at the destruction of democracy are appalling. The International Labour Organisation of the United Nations has repeatedly condemned the Government for destroying free negotiating rights for teachers, although not for other unions. It is no good the Government talking about education, which they have got into an awful mess which has forced them to this point. They do not understand where they are.

Will they reconsider this matter? Conservative Members are laughing and guffawing at free negotiation, which is one of the fundamental rights of negotiation, one of the rights that is the difference between tyranny and democracy. They must be ignorant of what that means to do such a thing because it is bound to cause the opposite. Therefore, I ask the Minister once again— *[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Flannery: In the face of such appalling ignorance it is difficult to ask my fundamental question. My question is one of many questions—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very good to see the hon. Member back, but could he bring his question to a conclusion?

Mr. Flannery: My question is, when are the Government going to obey the ILO injunction and give back negotiating rights to teachers because the absence of those rights will cause the very thing that they say that they do not want to happen in education—some kind of action, which we are opposed to?

Mr. Clarke: I too am glad to see the hon. Gentleman back in his seat after his period of sickness, and I trust that he is fully recovered, which he certainly appears to be. May I also point out to him that the ILO has never rejected the concept of a review body for any professions in this country that have enjoyed the privilege of review body status for many years. It would be most unwise to do so, because doctors and nurses, for example, have done well compared with others in the public sector as a result of the recommendations of review bodies.

The hon. Gentleman talks about the noise in the House, but there is very little noise coming from the Opposition side because there is scarcely a Labour Member in the House. He comes here as a lonely relic of the hard left, expostulating about teachers' right to strike and, extraordinarily, the Front Bench Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn, has allied himself with the hon. Gentleman. Frankly, teachers do not want to hear about the privilege of striking; they want to hear about the professional status that the Government are giving them today.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is one of the fundamental rights of a child to have uninterrupted education? What is important is the creation of a climate in schools in which strike action will not even be contemplated. The proposal that he has announced today for a pay review body will be welcomed by the vast majority of teachers, who do not think that the right to strike is the most important thing in their lives, but that it is the professional delivery of a service to their children, which they have done remarkably well since the introduction of the reforms. What my right hon. and learned Friend is proposing today will set the

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

right climate for the future so that the uninterrupted right to education that all children need now looks more likely than it has done for some years.

Mr. Clarke: I endorse all my hon. Friend's sentiments. Three or four years ago, there was a most unhappy period of industrial dispute in our schools. I think that all the more sensible people in teaching, in politics and among the public resolved that that should never again happen if it could be avoided, because it was so bad for teachers and for pupils. I think that there will be a wide welcome among the teaching profession and the general public for the sentiments that my hon. Friend has uttered.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): In marked contrast to his predecessor, the Prime Minister and his team seem to have raised the status of the U-turn to a fine art. This proposal is another example of that, following the poll tax U-turn. The Secretary of State must agree that the confusion and indecision cannot have helped morale, no matter what today's decision may do. Our position as a party will be to try to get a resolution to this—I hope that all parties will do that—that will be long-lasting and will start to rebuild teacher morale. Nothing that the Government have done in the past few months has achieved that. We shall not block this Bill and will attempt to make it work. In doing that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a debate. Could the hon. Member now ask a brief question?

Mr. Taylor: Will the Secretary of State, in trying to make a package that will meet widespread acceptance, consider including within it the creation of a general teaching council? Will he reaffirm to the House that he will make every effort to work with all parties in the House so that a Bill is achieved this year in time for the next settlement, rather than have the present interim arrangements continue indefinitely?

Mr. Clarke: This is a firm proposal and we shall produce a Bill shortly. Our aim is to get Royal Assent as rapidly as possible so that the new arrangments can work in April 1992. I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman will not oppose our proposals, and if we have helped bring the Liberal Democrats to a conclusion on the subject we have served a worthwhile purpose.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that my constituents in Taunton, where we have one or two difficulties with his Department to which I may have to refer next week, will greatly welcome today's statement and any proposals that reward the professionalism, experience and commitment of the great majority of teachers in our schools? Will he confirm that there is support for his proposals among trade unions, and would he contrast the opposition on the Conservative side of the House to strike action with the ambiguous attitude shown by Opposition Members?

Mr Clarke: Three trade unions are clearly campaigning for a review body to be established and I think that two others are near to that decision, so I confirm that there is obviously wide support among the teachers' trade unions as well as among hon. Members such as my hon. Friend for the proposition that we should move to a review body and away from strike action. I am glad to hear that my hon. Friend shares my confidence that this will raise morale among the profession in Taunton, and that is a good background for discussing the rather difficult problems of reorganisation in and around his constituency of which I and my colleagues are now seized.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the basic freedoms of people who have to work for a living and are subject to exploitation is the right to withdraw labour at all times? In view of what the Government have had to say in the past about ballots, will he give a guarantee that every single member of the teaching unions will be given an opportunity to ballot for or against the proposal? Have we not come to a sorry state of affairs when a Government elected in 1979 based upon entrepreneurialism, the marketplace and the highest bidder and against incomes policies have now resorted to a big idea in education which means a wages policy for teachers?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has the undoubted right in this country to persuade as many groups as he can to go on strike for whatever reason they wish, and he frequently exercises that right. I do not believe that in future he will persuade teachers to look again with any favour on strike action on pay terms and conditions because the great bulk of teachers will be attracted by what I have proposed. I have said that I am ready to meet leaders of the trade unions if they want to discuss my proposal. How the trade unions consult their own members is a matter for them. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should address himself to the activists in the National Union of Teachers, who I do not think are in a majority in the NUT, who might wish to carry forward the argument as he does.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The skill and dedication that I see among teachers in the maintained sector in my constituency is light years away from the performance that we have heard from the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) today. Does my right hon. and learned Friend find it as depressing as I do that, at a time when we should be welcoming the fact that the Government have set up a review body which is not cash-limited and when the hon. Gentleman should have been thinking about the rights of children, he has only been able to proclaim the rights of strikers? Does not that say far more about the quality of the Labour party than relaunches of red roses?

Mr. Clarke: I say quite candidly to my hon. Friend that I am surprised that the official Opposition did not come out in support of the idea of a review body. I realise that it would have put the hon. Member for Blackburn in something of a spot, but the fact that he could not bring himself to support it I find genuinely surprising. I agree that to hear the hon. Gentleman getting back on to the old trail of demanding the right to strike for teachers will go down badly with teachers in my hon. Friend's constituency as I am sure it will across the country.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that, way back, I spent many years in negotiations and I welcome his statement today lifting the status of teachers out of the cauldron that we once were in. I am sure that all parents and all the many decent teachers in Britain will applaud this measure, which will lead to a professional status which will help to remove

those elements in the teaching profession which came to the surface from the Cleveland contingent at the conference down on the south coast recently. We hope that the new pay review body will have a status so that no longer will we have such people in teaching and so that teachers can be rewarded properly for their efforts in their dedication to our children.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend's sentiments. I cannot help recalling that he and I have not always been in total agreement on industrial relations matters, so I am glad to hear that we are in agreement on today's proposal. Like him, I recall that, when Burnham was finally abolished, no one lamented its going, either from the trade union side or the employer side, and certainly not within the Government or among the general public. In the last 20 years of Burnham committee negotiations, a negotiated settlement was reached on only three occasions. It was a recipe for conflict. What we are proposing today is a recipe for harmony and greatly improved professional status for the teachers in our schools in the future.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): I welcome the commitment to a well qualified and well paid teaching force along with the establishment of an independent review body. I firmly believe that there is no better formula for improving education in Britain than raising the status of teachers and improving their pay. Does the Secretary of State envisage a move towards more decentralised levels of pay within the context of the new review body?

Mr. Clarke: It is obviously an advantage of being in a small party to be able to come to conclusions and to be in no way mealy-mouthed about support for the idea of a review body, and I am grateful for the hon. Lady's support. We already have a lot of flexibility and, as I have said, I hope that the review body will build on that. As a result of the IAC's recommendations, local authorities, governors and schoolteachers have a large number of incentive payments and discretionary scale payments to consider at local level.

I believe that it is right that the review body should set the right professional framework nationally and that there should then be the maximum flexibility to reflect local labour conditions, to deal with particular difficulties in recruitment in particular subjects, and to reward most particularly those teachers whose classroom performance is outstanding. All that is already there, and I hope that the review body will build on that basis.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that already this afternoon six out of seven teachers' unions have said that they welcome the excellent reform that he has announced, and that some 400,000 teachers now belong to the main teaching unions which are rejecting the strike weapon? Will he particularly recognise the long-standing work of the Derby-based Professional Association of Teachers, which has long campaigned on the two principles that teachers are professionals and that the right to strike is absolutely wrong and is a weapon that should never be used in the classroom?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing me the good news of this rapid response, but it is of the order that I predicted. I certainly share her confidence that the Professional Association of Teachers, with its general secretary, Peter Dawson, which has its headquarters in Derby, will be wholeheartedly behind what we propose. Everything that we have said is in line with the views about the professional status of teachers to which those who join the PAT have always particularly committed themselves.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is not the net effect of the Minister's statement to impose wage settlements on teachers? If teachers have this professional quality, are they not entitled to make a judgment about what is offered to them and to enter into genuine negotiations? Will he accept that teachers, like anybody else, only contemplate strike action as a means of last resort, like the nurses in the national health service who were pushed against their will to go on strike because it was the only alternative? The teachers have been often pushed into that position by the Government's attack on education but have declined to go on strike.

Can the Minister state unequivocally that that alternative will not be subject to any qualifications if, in the judgment of teachers, that is the point of last resort into which they have been pushed by an intransigent and anti-education Government?

Mr. Clarke: On the question of the Government imposing pay settlements, I remind the hon. Gentleman that in Committee the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said:

"We accept, in principle, that the Secretary of State should have the power to propose the final settlement."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 24 January 1991; c. 208.]

As the Government face the fare and pay the bill, the Government have to have that power in the last resort.

I am saying today that we will determine teachers' pay in the light of the independent recommendations of the review body and depart from them only if there are clear and compelling reasons to the contrary. That is a method which has served other professions extremely well. I think that it will be attractive to teachers and, as I have already said, I think that it is far more attractive than the hon. Member for Blackburn's invocation once more of the right to strike.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that when he visits schools, as I do, the teachers make the point that the one thing that they want is that raising the status of teachers should be placed alongside the importance of teaching children? What my right hon. and learned Friend has done today is to give them the very thing that they want—respect from the public and, as a profession, the understanding of Government. In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend confirm that, contrary to what one would expect from listening objectively to the comments that have been made, the one thing that he is not doing is to remove the right of teachers to strike if they ultimately feel that that is the only thing left open to them in order to register a protest against the review body?

Mr. Clarke: First, I entirely share my hon. Friend's sentiments. The position that he outlines parallels my experience with the vast majority of teachers that I have met. Secondly, the Government have put forward the review body proposal and intend to proceed on the basis that teachers will not strike about pay, terms and conditions and other matters within the review body's remit. It is an important principle of review bodies that

[Mr. Clarke]

they advise the Government on the determination of pay of those key professions in the public services which do not take strike action against pupils, patients and so on.

If strike action were contemplated the situation might change, but I put forward this proposal in the confident expectation, which my hon. Friend shares, that teachers will now regard strike action against pupils as a thing of the past and will proceed to a much more sensible basis for determining the pay of a learned profession.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): No doubt the proposals will shortly apply to Northern Ireland. I welcome the clear recognition by the Government of the professionalism of teachers. However, as a former teacher I must tell the Secretary of State that sheer frustration with poor pay and conditions, increasing work loads, generally poor morale and low expectancy of promotion occasionally pushes teachers into taking industrial action. I hope that trade unions will take the opportunity to put to their members the fact that the independent review body should be an acceptable way forward. Teachers should be consulted and their views should be communicated to the Minister before a final decision is taken.

Mr. Clarke: I should make it clear that my statement refers to England and Wales and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has no present intention to proceed in this way. The situation in Northern Ireland on teachers' pay has always been somewhat detached from that in England and Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland also has no present intention to proceed in this way, but, like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, he will no doubt observe the situation in England and keep his arrangements under review.

I propose to offer discussions to teachers' trade unions on the Government's proposal. We shall shortly introduce the Bill and will listen to the unions' views, but I expect that the unions will be driven on by the pressure of their members to accept this offer of professional status and a much improved method of determining their future pay.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members who are rising put brief questions and not repeat previous questions? If they do that, I shall do my best to get them all in.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the most union-minded teachers that I know—and I know thousands—including my former teaching colleague the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, have wanted such a pay review body for a long time? They will find fulfilment in my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement. Will he confirm that, as they move into line on pay bargaining with doctors, the judiciary and others, we can expect to see highly successful teachers properly paid in the same way as highly successful doctors and others who do no more than good teachers?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend says, the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers has been campaigning for a review body, so presumably his union will welcome my announcement. The review body will be independent and I cannot anticipate its recommendations. It will be told to have regard to affordability and the other considerations that I mentioned.

In the past 10 years, during the lifetime of the Government, groups such as doctors and nurses who are covered by review bodies have received a bigger percentage increase in earnings than any other group of public sector workers. They have received a bigger percentage increase than the police or teachers and a much bigger increase than many other groups. That will not be discouraging news in terms of the general career expectations of teachers. Professional status and independent advice on pay levels will recognise the true worth of teachers in our society.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that his statement will be warmly welcomed in the London borough of Barnet, where schools regularly produce the best A-level results of any local authority. My right hon. and learned Friend spoke about the review body having reference to local labour markets. Can he assure us that the review body will look closely at high housing costs in the south-east and at the need to give special pay incentives to teachers of shortage subjects?

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that employers will offer the review body advice on that and on many other matters. It is an important matter in Barnet and over wide areas of the south-east. I hope that the review body will build upon the progress that the IAC has made in injecting much more flexibility into the pay offered by individual employers to teachers of shortage subjects or to teachers in places where high housing costs make it difficult to recruit.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would be surprising if teachers did not warmly accept his proposals, because they will tend to do extremely well out of them? That is because I would be surprised if the review body did not recommend a considerable increase for teachers in order to meet the criteria that my right hon. and learned Friend spelled out —recruitment, retention, motivation and above all adequate calibre. Everyone knows that there is a problem about the calibre of teachers, and we are seeing its effects in spelling and reading and, most recently, in the scandalous case of Culloden school, which case I am glad to say my right hon. and learned Friend has taken up.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that we certainly need advice on the necessary levels of payment to recruit, retain and motivate people of the right quality in our teaching profession. I hope that the review body will adhere to that principle. I shall be enjoining sensible constraint on the review body when submitting evidence on behalf of the Government. I have repeatedly tried to do that when submitting evidence to review bodies advising on the pay of doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives.

We await the review body's judgment about what is a sensible and affordable level of settlement for next year. However, my hon. Friend may underestimate the power of persuasion of the hon. Member for Blackburn. Perhaps teachers will turn away from what my hon. Friend thinks is attractive and decide that the right to go on strike and to take action affecting their pupils is an important principle about which the Labour party will remind them and take them back to the old flags.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Plainly, the Secretary of State is simply engaging in empty rhetoric about industrial action. It is clear from his answers that he is not imposing a precondition of no industrial action. Will he confirm that the Bill will contain no provision that teachers will not be able to take industrial action? If he confirms that he does not intend to remove from teachers the right to strike, it is clear that all he has said about industrial action is just empty rhetoric to please the right wing of the Conservative party.

Will he also tell us whether his Second Reading rhetoric about the need for flexibility on the part of individual local education authorities has now been dropped? All the arguments that made up most of his Second Reading speech were that individual authorities should have the right to bargain separately with trade unions. Will he confirm that he has now dropped that further piece of right-wing ideology?

Finally, the Secretary of State speaks about improving the status of teachers and their confidence in the Government. After this mess, teachers will have little confidence in the Government, because for six weeks in Committee and on Second Reading we were told by Ministers that this was the best way to make progress in improving teachers' pay and conditions. Ministers did not know what they were saying or were wrong or simply did not have confidence in their own views. Therefore, how can teachers have confidence in what Ministers say? It is a shambles and a mess, and it shows that the Government are simply not fit to govern.

Mr. Clarke: Here we are, half an hour later, and the official Opposition spokesman still cannot tell us whether the Labour party is in favour of a review body for teachers and does not answer questions about it. I advise the hon. Gentleman to go away and contemplate these matters and come back and give us a considered view.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State keeps going on about strike action.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Members who go on and on and on about strike action are the hon. Members for Blackburn and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who are sitting together on the Opposition Front Bench, and two of their Back Benchers who over the past half-hour have made an issue of the right to industrial action.

The review body is being set up on the same basis as other review bodies, that those to whom they apply, in this case teachers, will not take strike action over pay, terms and conditions. That does not need to be in the Bill. If teachers accept the advice of the Labour party and insist on the right to take strike action over pay, we shall need to review the remit of the interim advisory committee. *[Interruption.]* Labour Front-Bench spokesmen will make a serious mistake if they advise teachers on such action. It would be a serious misjudgment to try to get teachers to support the right to strike and turn down a review body —*[Interruption.]* Usually, I understand the barracking of the hon. Member for Blackburn, but he is confused today. Rather than ranting from a sedentary position, he should go away and decide whether he is in favour of or against a review body, and whether he thinks that teachers should insist on the right to strike or whether they should abandon that stance. I would then listen to more of the Opposition's hectoring.

I have already said that local education authorities will have a great deal of flexibility. We will not allow them, as a whole, to opt out of the review body system, because that would enable a few left-wing authorities under the influence of the Labour party to destabilise the system by returning to traditional methods of setting pay, which we do not want.

Grant-maintained schools will have the right to enter into their own arrangements, exactly as was proposed in our previous Bill. It has become obvious during recent months that the managerial level of grant-maintained schools is the right level to determine the details of pay and conditions, just as grant-maintained status is the right way to determine the overall policy of a school. That is where we will place the managerial discretion—which, surprisingly, the hon. Gentleman appears to favour. I invite him to go away and address the key policy issue and perhaps let me know tomorrow whether the Labour party is or is not in favour of a review body, and whether it supports strike action by teachers or whether, overnight, it might come to think that it is rather a bad idea.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Members for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Bellotti), who rose after I made my announcement, that they might try their luck at education questions on Tuesday.

BILL PRESENTED

MENTAL HEALTH (DETENTION) (SCOTLAND)

Sir Russell Johnston presented a Bill to amend the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 with respect to short term detention of patients in hospital and the determination of applications for admission to hospital: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 22 April and to be printed. [Bill 134.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Data Protection Registration Fee Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

River Safety

5.12 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require minimum standards of visibility from the steering position of passenger launches plying on rivers and other inland waterways; to require the fitting of discotheque noise limiting devices in such launches; to make provision for signalling systems for traffic control in certain rivers; and for connected purposes.

The subject of river safety inevitably makes us think of the tragedy surrounding the Marchioness and the lives lost. I wish to go back beyond that date and show that the lessons that should have been learnt were not learnt, and that lessons must be learnt from the Marchioness tragedy to ensure the future safety of passengers on our rivers and waterways.

In 1927, 40 people lost their lives in Sydney harbour in a collision between the Tahiti and the Greycliff. The inquiry into the accident concluded that the Greycliff had not seen the Tahiti coming up on it from behind. The inquiry said that it was

"incumbent on the proper authorities to impress upon masters of all vessels the obligation of keeping an effective lookout astern as well as ahead and abeam. As a first and important step, the owners of vessels should be compelled, in all cases where adequate structural facilities for enabling such a lookout to be kept do not exist, to provide them without loss of time."

That was 1927. It is now 1991, and we are just getting round to doing that.

In 1981, the Bowtrader and the Hurlingham collided. The Hurlingham did not realise that the dredger was behind it, and altered course across its bows. The inquiry said that there was no adequate view aft from the Hurlingham. The Hurlingham was a similar structure to the Marchioness.

In 1983, the Bowbelle and the Pride of Greenwich collided. A subsequent report said that the

"Pride of Greenwich's visibility aft by night was virtually non-existent."

Again in 1983, the Shell Distributor and the New Southern Belle collided. The report said that the tanker saw the passenger vessel and tried to signal on VHF, but there was no reply. It tried its whistle, but it was not heard because the music on the vessel was too loud. The report also said that there was no rear vision.

In 1989, the Bowbelle and the Marchioness collided with the loss of 51 lives. It is clear from the report of the inquiry into that accident that, again, a major factor was that there was no adequate rear vision from the Marchioness. A shouted warning from the dredger was heard by some of the people on the deck, but not in the wheelhouse. One of the major reasons for that was the disco music on board.

The two lessons that we must learn from that and previous accidents is that something must be done, first, about visibility and, secondly, about noise, and my Bill seeks to deal with both. It is clear that when a skipper has to leave the wheelhouse and go to the ship's side, climb a ladder or raise a hatch in order to see astern, that is not a proper lookout. It is recommended that regulations be introduced governing that aspect of passenger launch construction for new vessels, and that the regulations should also apply to existing vessels where the visibility astern does not reach a minimum safety standard. That must be right. I know that the authorities are discussing the problem, but that is not adequate. We need to introduce regulations.

I am aware that closed-circuit television is being considered as a means to solve the problem, but I am not convinced that at night that would be adequate to see that nothing was coming up behind. The report recommends that a lookout be placed if the structure is not right, but I should prefer the structure on the vessels to be put right.

As we sit in the Library on a summer evening, we are well aware of the noise of the disco music on boats as they pass. That may be irritating to us, but it is highly dangerous to the people on board those vessels. Even when the noise-limiting device is, in theory, adequate, there are ways to bypass and cut off those devices. We need regulations to ensure that that cannot happen.

The noise on board a vessel can interfere with the ability of the skipper to hear a VHF signal. It can also affect his concentration. There is plenty of research showing that noise affects concentration during long periods of work, to the detriment of performance. There must be a noise-limiting device. Obviously, there must be a cut-out device so that if there is time—which, sadly, there was not on the Marchioness—to give a warning to passengers, the music can be cut off in the passenger area so that passengers can hear the warning from the skipper. Those are the two major lessons that have not yet been learnt from tragic accidents—not only the Marchioness, but the other accidents that I cited.

We must also deal with the question of the bridges on the river Thames. Their alignment does not always make navigation simple. Indeed, the tides do not always make navigation simple. There are large vessels in the area above the Tower of London, and they can cause problems for smaller vessels. In theory, byelaw 19 of the Port of London authority gives some priority to larger vessels above the tower because of their restricted freedom to manoeuvre. However, that is not adequate, because dredgers and other vessels, including tugs towing barges, are not simply restricted in their freedom to manoeuvre, but have no freedom to manoeuvre other than within narrow limits. In many cases they cannot reduce speed—indeed, they must keep up speed for safety reasons so that they do not lose steerage way when approaching a bridge.

My third measure is to ensure that there is a system of traffic lights on bridges so that smaller vessels know when larger vessels are coming through. I know that experiments are being carried out and I hope that the Bill will ensure that lights are made mandatory on all bridges where such a risk is deemed possible.

My last point concerns the publication of reports following disasters. It is now almost two years since the Marchioness sank with the loss of 51 lives, yet the full report cannot yet be published. It cannot be debated in the House or by the public because of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989, which are sometimes ambiguous. One of those regulations says:

"Where the Report . . . indicates that there may have been a breach of the law and that prosecution of the suspected offender should be considered, the Report shall not be published until either prosecution, including any appeal, has been concluded or it has been decided not to prosecute."

That is not an adequate description of the purpose of the regulations. Another regulation says:

"The fundamental purpose of investigating an accident under these Regulations is to determine its circumstances and the causes with the aim of improving the safety of life at sea

and the avoidance of accidents in the future. It is not the purpose to apportion liability, nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve the fundamental purpose, to apportion blame".

Reports should not remain secret, hidden and unavailable for public discussion unless it can be shown that publication of part of a report or, as happens occasionally, a whole report would damage a defence case. The onus should be on someone wishing to prove that such damage would occur.

It is now past Easter and the crowds are beginning to come out on to our river. We hope that people will enjoy their river trips, but I want to ensure that those trips are safe as well as enjoyable. The lessons of the past have not always been learnt. We must learn from previous tragedies. The lesson is that if ships can see and be seen, hear and be heard, notice and be noticed, they are less likely to have, or cause, an accident.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John, Bowis, Mr. Tony Banks, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Gerald Bowden, Mr. Matthew Carrington, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Dudley Fishburn, Miss Kate Hoey, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Toby Jessel and Mr. Ron Leighton.

River Safety

Mr. John Bowis accordingly presented a Bill to require minimum standards of visibility from the steering position of passenger launches plying on rivers and other inland waterways; to require the fitting of discotheque noise limiting devices in such launches; to make provision for signalling systems for traffic control in certain rivers; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 May and to be printed. [Bill 135.]

Opposition Day

[10TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Health Service and Community Care

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister. He has also asked me to tell the House that he intends to impose a ten-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 pm.

5.23 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House is disturbed that, in the past financial year, underfunding of the health service adversely affected patient care by compelling hospitals to cancel more operations and close more beds than even the previous financial crisis of 1987-88; condemns the persistence of Her Majestys' Government in forcing on the National Health Service a market driven system of health care against the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the people who work in the health service and of the people who use the National Health Service; records its concern at the growing evidence that the system of patients following contracts results in less choice for patients of where to be treated and restrictions in the treatments available to them; regrets the two year delay in the introduction of the Community Care programme which should have taken effect this month; is alarmed at the serious threat to social service provision as a result of the crisis in local government finance created by Her Majesty's Government; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government for urgent action to tackle the growing gap between income support levels and charges for residential care.

Listening to the previous exchanges with the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) I had a sense of déjà vu from our debates on this topic last year. I recall that in one of those debates I predicted that the last place the right hon. and learned Gentleman would want to be in April 1991 would be the Department of Health, where he would have to carry the can for what he had thought up. I said that he would rather be at any Ministry but Richmond terrace. I think that we can begin this debate by chalking up another accurate prediction. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is now bringing his customary tact and delicacy to the nation's classrooms. No doubt if he is ever asked about those two years in Richmond terrace he already has an answer handy: "I was never registered at that address: I stayed with a lady across the road." *[Laughter]*. In truth I must tell my hon. Friends that the White Paper was indeed written by a lady across the road, in Downing Street.

In the right hon. and learned Gentleman's place we have a different Secretary of State, complete with his own alibi——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Not for long.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend should be more charitable at the start of a debate.

While the changes in the NHS were germinating, the right hon. Gentleman was at the Department of the Environment, thinking up the poll tax. The claims that he is about to make for the NHS changes over which he now presides must be weighed against the wisdom that he showed in his predictions for the poll tax, including his observation that

"Those who argue that the poll tax is impracticable are protesting too much".

[Mr. Cook]

I have to warn the Secretary of State that those of us who, years ago, warned that the poll tax was impractical are now warning him that these changes to the NHS will deeply damage it. And on the evidence of the poll tax we have a better track record of getting our predictions right.

We do not need to look as far as the poll tax to see how widely wrong the Government's predictions are. Two key predictions about health issues since 1987 by the Secretary of State's predecessors have proved wrong on a scale that would be comic if it were not so serious. First, there was the abolition of free eye tests. The right hon. Gentleman's predecessor simply refused to believe us when we told him that if he stopped paying for free eye tests opticians would start charging for them. He assured the House that opticians would compete against each other to do it for free. In November 1988 he said:

"the charge for the eye test will steadily disappear . . . that is my strong personal opinion."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1988; Vol. 139, c. 927.]

Today, almost every optician charges between £10 and £17 for an eye test.

When does the Secretary of State expect charges for the eye test steadily to disappear? I should be fascinated to hear his answer. I will happily give way to him so as to hear it. If he does not expect charges for eye tests to disappear, how can he expect us to believe the Government's predictions of what the magic of the market will do to the NHS when we know what it has done to eye tests?

The second issue on which the Government were widely wrong was that of tax relief for private medical insurance for pensioners—the first proposal in the White Paper to be put into practice. The White Paper made it clear that the purpose of granting tax relief was to encourage the take-up of private insurance by pensioners. That is one thing that tax relief has not done. With a heavy heart, I must report to the House that BUPA has made a loss on its scheme for private insurance for pensioners. It has spent £3 million gearing up for a new era of BUPA pensioners, and it did not get enough new subscribers even to cover its start-up costs. All that has happened has been a windfall gain for all who already had private insurance. Thanks to this bit of dogma, we are now spending £50 million a year for no increase in the take-up of private insurance, without an extra penny of it going into the NHS wards for pensioners. The Government amendment speaks of "improved value for money". Where is the improved value for money in this expenditure of £50 million?

Against this background of spectacular misjudgments, we come to the right hon. Gentleman's predictions about the changes that the Government are levering into place this month in the health service. There are design flaws in the new system that are already evident—most of them predicted by us. But some things have occurred that we did not predict. I have to confess that I did not predict that Lord Rayner would emerge as a self-confessed critic of the changes. After all, he is the Government's favourite business man, brought in by the previous Prime Minister to bring business common sense to the public sector. Last month he brought his common sense to bear on the changes to the NHS and he said:

"The whole thing to me was a total nightmare. There is no way this business"—

that is, Marks and Spencer—

"could turn itself upside down overnight. . .There is no way we could do it without proper experiment and evaluation."

My only regret is that Lord Rayner is such a late entrant among the critics of the scheme, but many of us criticised it as it went through the House and we made a number of predictions which are all now coming true.

We predicted that there would be less choice for patients as to where they are treated. The Government promised that money would follow patients; we predicted that patients would follow contracts. Earlier this week I received a letter from a lady who had returned from seeing her GP in Kent. She wrote to me to say that she was, "Lost for words." She has been attending Guy's hospital since 1979. Last week she was told that she must stop attending Guy's hospital—she would no longer be under the care of the consultant who had been looking after her for 12 years—and transfer to the hospital in Kent that has the contract for that condition. The Government's amendment talks about more responsiveness to people's wishes. Where is the responsiveness to the patient's wishes in that case? I ask the Secretary of State the same question that that lady asked me:

"Was it the intention that the NHS changes should cause my care to suffer?"

Yesterday was released an internal document from Wandsworth health authority. It is 18 pages of guidance on how to handle patients who want to go to different hospitals from the one where the block contracts have been placed. Outside the Conservative party's manifestos, I have never read a document of such sustained cynicism. It is blunt. It states that it will have to "reduce to the minimum" the number of patients outside block contracts. Obligingly, the document admits:

"Patient choice, a cornerstone of the stated benefits of the reorganisation, may be reduced . . . This has its implications politically with respect to . . . public relations."

How did Wandsworth propose to handle those political implications and public relations problems? It resolved to resolve them by keeping the patient in the dark. Its advice to GPs is: "Never say no." Always "defer" or "redirect" a referral. Keep patients out of the discussion as to where they go.

"In most instances the patient should remain unaware of the process of the purchaser/provider discussion."

How does the Secretary of State square that squalid manual with the promise that the White Paper would put the needs of patients first?

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I hope that he will forgive me for intervening so early in his speech, but his answer to my question will have a bearing on the credibility of the rest of his speech. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that not so long ago the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that any future Labour Government would have a number of spending priorities such as pensions and child benefit. Can he tell the House whether the NHS would be one of the priorities of a future Labour Government? Will he answer yes or no?

Mr. Cook: Yes. Only yesterday my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"] I said, "Yes." There is no point in the hon. Gentleman's repeating the question after he has heard the answer. Only yesterday my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South and I sat on the same platform when we published our policy document for this year. It contained a whole section on spending commitments on the health service. We are committed to restoring the

underfunding of the health service under the present Government and fully funding pay awards—something that they have not done since 1983.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way, as I am answering the hon. Gentleman's question. The hon. Gentleman asked me a question. He cannot object if he does not like the answer.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cook: In the interests of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) I must implore your assistance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that he gets the answer for which he has asked.

In that document we are committed to making sure that the year-on-year funding of the health service fully reflects the changes in demographic pressure that result in added claims on that health service. Our spending priorities for the health service are clearly stated. I know perfectly well why Conservative Members do not like the answer. They wanted a different answer that bears out their prejudices about our priorities rather than the reality of what we say.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No speech on health from this Dispatch Box is complete without an intervention from the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) so we might as well get it over with now.

Mr. Hayes: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I know that he wants to be helpful to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim). I have here the actual document on health that the Labour party published yesterday. Perhaps the House ought to hear what it says and then the hon. Gentleman can tell us a little about sustained cynicism. It states:

"We will invest in the modernisation of our hospitals and tackle the backlog in maintenance and repairs—although we cannot expect to put it right overnight."

Mr. Cook: After that intervention I promise to let the hon. Gentleman in a second time. Let me explain to the hon. Gentleman, who appears to be unaware of these things, that the total maintenance budget for the national health service is some £500 million per annum and the total backlog that the Government have generated in a decade is £2,300 million. It is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman believes that even the Labour party could attempt to put right overnight a £2,300 million backlog. I assure him that it may take us more than the first night.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest) *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way again. They have had two fair attempts and I have been generous to the hon. Gentlemen in pursuing their hares.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): The hon. Gentleman supports the party which was responsible for the only cut in real terms in a year in the history of the health service under the Government in which the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was a Cabinet Minister. We have a right to talk about cynicism when the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) talks about spending pledges.

Mr. Cook: If the Secretary of State wants to tweak where people were in 1975 when the White Paper was approved, he should look at the record where he will find that I voted against those cuts. The record does not lie. I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree that if those Conservative Back Benchers who now tell us that they always opposed the poll tax had had the courage to vote for what they believe in, local goverment would not now be in crisis.

We also predicted that the changes would mean that less treatment would be available on the national health service. Lo, in the first week of the new system a woman from south-east Kent was refused sterilisation because her health authority would not pay for it. Nor will she be alone. Basildon and Thurrock carried out 303 vasectomies last year, whereas this year they plan to purchase 15. What has happened to choice for the people in those health districts?

Even before the changes were in place, North East Thames RHA took a covert decision not to pay for the removal of varicose veins. The Secretary of State's response to that was that it should be a matter for clinical judgment. With respect, it is precisely these changes that have stopped it being a matter of clinical judgment. The regional district manager of the North East Thames RHA stated:

"Regional officers are presently preparing a list of procedures which unless there is an overriding clinical need may be deemed inappropriate to place on waiting lists".

This is an appropriate moment to say that at 3.30 pm today the Secretary of State released the latest figures for health service waiting lists. They are the highest in any September since records began. Moreover, they reached that peak even before the effects of the past winter in which hospital after hospital closed its doors for routine operations. What is most embarrassing for the right hon. Gentleman in those figures is not the number of patients waiting, but the number of patients treated in those six months. Afters years during which the Government told us that what was important was not the number of patients waiting but the number being treated, today's figures show a 3 per cent. reduction in in-patient levels.

The amendment tabled by the Secretary of State invites the House to congratulate the Government on having achieved a 25 per cent. increase in in-patient activity during the past 10 years. In the light of this afternoon's figures, perhaps it will be appropriate for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to accept a manuscript amendment to reduce that figure to 22 per cent.

I warn my colleagues that I suspect that we are about to see a major improvement in waiting lists. I suspect that they will go the way of the unemployment statistics, not because more people are coming off those lists but because fewer will get on. Before they are magicked away——

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I am asking a question.

Ministers sold us the scheme as a basis for widening patient choice. Will they now guarantee that every patient who was on a waiting list on 31 March will be treated for the procedure for which they were waiting and at the hospital for which they were waiting? It is a simple question, which is a fair test of whether the scheme puts patient choice first. I see that all three Ministers are attempting to avoid my eye.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I will give way only to a Minister because we are entitled to an answer. Will every patient who was on a waiting list on 31 March receive treatment in the hospital of his choice? I can catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have difficulty in catching the eye of any of the Ministers.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not give way.

I am not surprised that the Ministers do not want to rise, because there has been a change in the language used to describe the reforms. Two years ago we were assured that the reforms would mean that money would follow the patients. Overnight, the Government had found the formula to end underfunding. I sat through successive debates with successive Conservative Back Benchers who were bubbling with enthusiasm about the fact that their hospitals would be in clover because they did more work than the others. They believed that because money would follow patients, more work meant more money. Oddly, we never heard from the Back Bencher whose hospital did less work and would therefore lose money which would be gained by others.

I issue a warning to those Back Benchers, some of whom I recognise here. I do not know whether they have noticed the change in the language, but "Money following the patient" is no longer a buzz phrase. It is a little while since I heard a Minister use it. I shall listen with excitement to see whether a Minister uses it today. The change in the language has been subtle. We are now told that the benefit of the reforms is that they make explicit what the health service can afford. I shall make explicit what that means —it means a tighter system of rationing health care. Health care will now be rationed by the business men with whom the Government have stuffed the health authorities and who do not represent anyone in the local community but are charged with deciding who in that community receives care.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman talks about the resources available and the effect that they may have on waiting lists, but he should remember that waiting lists have been reduced by 6 per cent. under this Government but increased by 48 per cent. under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Cook: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Government's figures produced at 3.30 pm this afternoon. If he cares to examine the figures released for last September, he will find that there has never been a September under this Government in which waiting lists have failed to be higher than those for any September under the previous Government. Now, for the first time, Britain has a million people on waiting lists.

I make a third prediction about changes. I predict that they will make the health service less fair. If health care is put on the market, the patients who will come first will not be those most in need, but those who bring the hospital the most money. I could not have hoped for a clearer warning of that danger than the decision taken by Christie hospital in Manchester—on the eve of the changes—to sell a fast-track admission to patients from health authorities that pay more. Health authorities that pay more will get patients in within two weeks, whereas others will get patients in after six weeks. I cannot think of anything more repugnant than a two-tier standard of admissions for patients who are in an advanced stage of cancer, which strikes more thoroughly at the principle of the NHS which is that priority goes to those who are most in need of treatment, not to those who have paid the most.

In my naivety I imagined that the Secretary of State would be embarrassed by the revolution. He was not; he welcomed the scheme. However, the scheme was too much even for the *Daily Express* which, on the day that the changes came into effect, reported the Secretary of State as saying that this was

"what the new reforms of the Health Service 'are all about'."

It continued:

"Then they are a disgrace . . . Maybe the Labour Party was telling the truth after all. Perhaps the NHS is unsafe in the Tories' hands."

My final prediction and warning——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): So far, I agree with and support all that the hon. Gentleman has said, but I wish to amplify his expression of concern. I am the Member of Parliament for the constituency that contains Guy's hospital. It is not only people from outside the South East Thames RHA district who are becoming increasingly concerned and have been told that they could not come to that hospital for treatment. Others have been told to return equipment on which they rely and without which they cannot manage. People from within the district are also increasingly fearful that they will be kept waiting on trolleys in corridors, as the hon. Gentleman saw when he came with me to King's College hospital. They are also worried about getting home because the ambulance does not come and about waiting for treatment that they traditionally received at their hospital, but which they might not now receive because some have the advantage of buying whereas they, as local patients, are not expected to pay.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for supporting my case. It is ironic that not only do I speak in this debate for the people who have supported my party and not only does the hon. Gentleman speak for the people who supported his party but between us we speak for most of the people who supported the Conservative party and who did not want these changes either.

Our final prediction is that these changes will make the health service less efficient. They have already diverted colossal resources into more managers, more clerks and more computers to run the marathon paperchase that it demands. There is a debate between the British Medical Association and the *Health Service Journal* on whether the number of new management jobs advertised is 300 a month or only 130 a month. It is common ground between both participants in the debate that we are pouring millions of extra pounds into administration at the very time when we are closing thousands of beds because we cannot afford to keep them open.

Of course, new managers need new salaries. Just like privatisation, opting out has released a tidal wave of gravy over top management. The chief executive of Guy's now gets £5,000 a year more to run Guy's than Duncan Nichol receives to run the whole NHS. It is common gossip in the health service that the financial package for the chief executive of Guy's includes a free car for the use of his

wife. The total cost of pay and perks to senior management at Guy's is equivalent to the cost of running three wards at that hospital.

Mr. Simon Hughes: One ward was closed.

Mr. Cook: As the hon. Gentleman said, one ward was closed in the first week of the changes. Whatever happened to "improved value for money" when those salaries were negotiated?

Another type of inefficiency is starting to emerge from the changes. The theory was that we would get better value for money because health authorities would shop around for contracts while hospitals would compete with each other for business. Like all fairy tales, this would have a happy ending—competition would drive down unit costs.

Of course, real life is much more complicated. After being told to balance the books or go bankrupt, hospitals have quickly discovered that the quickest way that they can do that is to do less work for the money that they were getting before. The district general manager of Tower Hamlets health authority has complained publicly that the Royal London insists on a cut of 3 per cent. in activity for the same amount of money and he is still arguing with St. Bartholomew's hospital which wants a cut of 15 per cent. in activity. He has gone on record as saying that every London hospital except those in Bloomsbury wants to cut its work load. That is a rational response because the Secretary of State has changed the objective from meeting patient needs to balancing the books. The point of markets is not to satisfy needs but to achieve equilibrium. The problem for the Secretary of State is that some hospitals want to achieve that equilibrium at lower levels of activity.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way again. As you said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many hon. Members wish to speak.

Is the Secretary of State prepared to measure the success of those trusts that opted out by the simple test of whether they do more or less work on NHS patients? There is, of course, a counterpoint to all the energy and all the inventions applied by those managers to the changes this month in the health service. This is also the month that was to witness the new programme of community care. In sharp contrast with the way in which Conservative Members plough ahead with the changes in the NHS, they have shelved the package of community care for two years, yet the amendment invites us to congratulate the Government on achieving it by April 1993.

Last July, the Secretary of State's predecessor said that the Government had to shelve the community care package for two years because of problems with the poll tax—another of the little impracticalities that he had overlooked. No doubt Ministers will tell us that the two-year delay is not a standstill in community care. That is right. Thanks to the poll tax, local government is in financial crisis. All over Britain, community care is not at a standstill; it is in retreat and is under pressure to make cuts.

Last month, the directors of social services published a survey on the state of social service budgets. Half those budgets ended up underfunded and in deficit. One third of those authorities expect to make reductions in their budgets this year. I have a list of cuts by one metropolitan authority that is cutting £2·5 million from its budget. Those cuts include cuts in home helps, meals on wheels, transport for the disabled and grants for voluntary agencies. The only thing going up are charges to the clients of those authorities.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Labour authorities.

Mr. Cook: Only two weeks ago, the hon. Gentleman's colleagues in government, whom I presume he supports, imposed a poll tax cap on five social service authorities, three of them Labour and two Conservative. A third Conservative authority escaped only by making dramatic cuts the night before. These pressures are not imposed just on profligate high-spending authorities; they apply across authorities of both political colours and to local authorities that are honestly and decently trying to meet the rising tide of demand in their communities.

The authority to which I referred plans to raise £1 million more in charges from its elderly and disabled residents by doubling the charges for home helps. Most clients were exempt before; none will be exempt now. Two weeks ago, the Minister for Health said that local authorities should become much more comfortable with the idea of charging clients. I am uncomfortable with the idea of charging even the poorest pensioner for the home help whom she needs in order to stay in her home.

The worst victims of the two-year delay are the elderly who cannot stay in their home, who were encouraged by the Government to go into private residential care, who were put into private residential care by managers who could not find a place for them in hospitals and who now find that the Government will not pay for their keep. On 1 April, their income was uprated by 3 per cent.—one third of the inflation rate and less than one third of the increase in charges for residential care.

Two months ago, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux published a report rich in examples of their caseloads of people who could not pay their bills and of cases showing the emotional distress, personal indignity and financial hardship caused by that trap. There is the woman of 88 who cannot buy batteries for her hearing aid because her personal allowance is swallowed up in paying charges. There is the man of 78 with Parkinson's disease and suffering incontinence who cannot buy new trousers because all his money has gone on the charges. There is the distress to the relatives of the two women pensioners on income support who, out of a weekly income of £75 between them, must find £15 a week to meet the gap in their mother's residential care charges.

There is no need for me to give more examples. Every hon. Member, on whichever side of the Chamber he or she sits, has such cases in his or her constituency. That is why, a year ago in the only Government defeat of this Parliament, the House voted to plug that shortfall. It is a shame, not just on Ministers but on the House, that we have let the Government get away with putting off that help until 1993 when many people who are now in that trap will be dead. Their relatives will not forgive the Government for what they have done to community care; nor will those who use the health service forgive them for what they are doing to the NHS.

I read last week that the Prime Minister is to launch a charity appeal for a major London hospital. The health service should not have to depend on charity. Moreover, Ministers will not prove their commitment to the NHS by promoting appeals for charities but will only confirm their lack of commitment to a properly funded system.

Mr. Thurnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No.

I find unexpected common ground with the comments made in the February 1991 edition of the Conservative Medical Society bulletin, which states:

"The achievement of a Conservative overall majority at the general election will be a much greater challenge than is often realised".

How true. One of the reasons given is that:

"The National Health Service was a key issue in recent general elections and there is no reason to think that this will change."

We do not intend to let that change. We shall put the NHS at the top of the agenda for the next general election and ensure that every elector understands that only if the Government are changed will the damaging changes to the health service be stopped. Only then will we get a Government who will restore the health service to a public service that treats people as equals and is accountable to electors and the local community.

6.4 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government on the near 25 per cent. increase in the number of in-patients treated and the near 100 per cent. increase in the number of hospital day cases since 1979 and on the further recent fall in hospital waiting times; welcomes the successful introduction of the Government's reforms which are already leading to better quality services, more responsiveness to people's needs and wishes and improved value for money; notes that the reforms are being backed in 1991-92 by record increases in resources for the National Health Service and in the standard spending assessment for the personal social services; welcomes the Government's commitment to full implementation of its community care policy through local government, by April 1993; supports the Government's objective of using the National Health Service reforms to deliver real improvements in the health of the people through the development of a national health strategy; and looks forward to the forthcoming publication of a consultative document setting out the Government's proposals".

Before I return to the subject of the debate, I hope that the House will forgive me if I deal with a bipartisan issue that has received wide coverage. Sometimes individuals suffer as a result of prejudice and it is necessary for the Government and the House to use their weight on the side of the individual. I refer to the case of Daniel Robinson, the seven-year-old carrier of hepatitis B who lives in Kirklees. With the full authority of the chief medical officer, may I say that there is no reason for other children to be kept from that school. Social contacts of a carrier do not need to be immunised and it is perfectly safe for the children to return to school. I fully support the local consultant in communicable disease control and the Kirklees chief education officer, and I have asked the chief medical officer or his deputy to be prepared to go to Kirklees to help to explain the facts if that would help. The misguided parents who, for no valid reason, are bringing such pressure to bear on a seven-year-old child should desist.

I welcome the opportunity to report to the House the immense achievement of those who manage our national health service and the introduction on time, at the beginning of this month, of the far-reaching reforms of NHS financing and organisation approved by Parliament last year, which they have achieved with no significant problems. The fact that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) could find only two problems, both of which have been reported in the newspapers and have been dealt with by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, shows that we can be proud of them.

I am happy to be able to give an account of the start of the period of introduction of the community care programme set out originally in the White Paper, "Caring for People". It will be completed by the beginning of 1993. I shall then sketch the main directions of further policy developments that we intend to pursue and cast an eye over the Opposition's plans to see whether they have anything to offer or any substantial ideas that should detain the House, although I fear that they have not.

We now have in place in the NHS the planned separation between the strategic or purchaser function in the districts and regions and the provider or unit management function in hospitals or elsewhere. Although the plans of the hon. Member for Livingston are disguised by language, they probably accept that division, and that is helpful.

The separation of two quite distinct functions lies at the heart of our reforms and is clearly sensible. One vital job to be done is to analyse local health needs and spend money as effectively as possible to meet them. Another is to manage the clinical and other skills necessary to respond to those needs. The former task, which lies with the districts, involves the setting of public health priorities and strategies and the deployment of money to achieve them. The latter, whether in NHS trust or other hospitals, involves bidding to meet the districts' objectives most effectively with negotiations to achieve maximum benefit for patients sealed in contracts.

For the first time, districts will have a chance to buy health for their people, knowing that when they do so they are spending taxpayers' money to the best effect. As one district manager said:

"Now I can concentrate on making choices that can improve the population's health. In the past I became bogged down by administrative issues."

Equally clear is the fact that responsibility for managing the resources of skilled people and capital, which now lies with the hospitals, is already producing a far greater source of involvement in and commitment to the task of giving the patients and their GPs what they want. As one chief executive of a hospital trust put it:

"The freedom Trust status offers will allow us to become closer to our patients and to the community and our involvement with GPs will be greater than ever before."

Alongside the district, we now have 300 fund-holding general practices covering 3·6 million patients and spending next year about £400 million, purchasing directly on behalf of their patients from the hospitals. An editorial in *Doctor* magazine called this

"the most important development in primary care in 25 years".

Professor Le Grand of Bristol rightly said:

"there are many including some politically unsympathetic to the present Government, who are excited by the idea".

All this is now in place. District contracts are generally completed, and in those cases where final discussions are continuing I am advised that they will be completed shortly. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure that patients' needs are met.

Meanwhile, the benefits that we are seeing for patients in this year's contracts include targets for the maximum wait for admission for in-patient treatment; patients

getting a full week's notice of an elective admission; one in four patients being asked to complete a questionnaire asking for their views of the service provided; a two-month maximum waiting time for an out-patient appointment; all new patients to be seen by a consultant on either the first or second attendance; individual appointment times for out-patient clinics; discharge letters being provided to the patient's GP within 24 hours in 90 per cent. of cases and within three days of discharge in all cases.

The new services for patients offered by different trusts around the country include: patients being notified of appointment dates within 10 days of the receipt of their referral letter; agreement that notification of the outcome of consultations should go to GPs within five working days; patient satisfaction to be measured against a "patients' charter" jointly agreed between the trust and the local community health council; reduction of waiting time to less than four weeks for a routine out-patient appointment; changes already made to catering services in one case in response to a patient satisfaction survey.

As hoped, GP fund-holders are the pioneers of improvement. For example, a Nottingham GP fund-holding practice has agreed with a small local hospital to provide a same-day, walk-in X-ray service. Routine reports will be issued by first-class post the following morning and urgent reports will be faxed to the GP surgery. Under the old system, delays were common and reports were sent second class. The practice is now using that agreement as leverage in negotiations with a large acute unit. Incidentally it also said that it has had more hospital-based health professionals coming in to find out what was wanted since the reforms than at any time in the history of the NHS.

Oxfordshire fund-holders have requested that no patient should wait longer than one hour in out-patients, and that this should be reduced to half an hour by next year. In the North Western district, fund-holders have encouraged the drawing up of clinical protocols that GPs can follow in order to refer directly on to an in-patient list, thus reducing inconvenience to patients and pressure on out-patient departments. In Southend, the patients of one GP fund-holding practice will see consultants specialising in general medicine, surgery, gynaecology, ophthalmology and radiology at their local surgery. As one Manchester fund-holder said:

"For the first time we are talking to the hospital side and making them aware of our needs. We see ourselves leading a drive for better services and others will get the benefits too."

Meanwhile, the new GP contract has completed its first year. I hope that we can improve it further and I have had a good discussion with the general medical services committee about that. Let us consider what it has already achieved. The incentives provided by the new target payment scheme for cervical cytology and childhood immunisation have helped to increase the uptake of the preventative services.

More than 80 per cent. of GPs have received payments for reaching targets, thereby assisting in eliminating unnecessary illness. More than 50 per cent. of GPs are being paid for providing child health surveillance services. Nearly 90 per cent. of GPs have been admitted to the minor surgery list. In the first nine months of the new contract, almost 500,000 individual surgical procedures were performed by GPs. More than 450,000 individual health promotion clinics have been held in the first nine months of the contract, covering such subjects as diabetes and giving up smoking. There has been a massive increase in expenditure on GPs' staff and premises, with more money than ever being invested. Next year's allocation of £564 million is 87 per cent. more than the £302 million spent in 1989-90. The number of nurses working with GPs has increased by 65 per cent. since 1989-90. These are formidable improvements, which we are already seeing in the development of the patient-centred NHS that we believe that the House wants and our people deserve.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): At the beginning of the procedure of switching to trusts, I asked the Secretary of State if he would publish the financial basis on which the Leeds trusts were established. He could not find it within his means to produce that information. Why is it that in the past weeks patients have been writing to me saying that they have been told that they must wait longer? Have the improvements not got through to Leeds general infirmary? Will the Secretary of State commission a report to see how the improvements are working out and publish the results?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman expects to see dramatic improvements in the first week. We shall see improvements—he should wait and see. I shall return to some of the predictions made by the hon. Member for Livingston later.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall give way three times, as the hon. Member for Livingston did. This is the second one coming up.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Secretary of State aware that hospitals which previously showed no enthusiasm for the trusts are being encouraged by the district health authorities to take part? Is he aware that this very day nine senior staff from the Pontefract general infirmary, including five surgeons, have gone off on an eight-day junketing tour to America to study American medicine? That is an attempt to encourage them to opt out when they have not previously shown any previous enthusiasm to do so. Does the Secretary of State support that method?

Mr. Waldegrave: Although the staff may learn some lessons from clinical procedures that they may observe in America, I do not think that they will learn much about the organisation of health care in America—I agree with the hon. Gentleman on that. Whenever an application is brought to me, I have to judge the clinical support for trusts.

The achievement and sheer scale of what has been happening in the NHS may have overshadowed the fact that at the same time we have initiated the introduction of the community care reforms. Local authorities, like district health authorities, will have the duty of assessing the needs of the vulnerable groups involved in a far more rational way and directing the money available to the best and most appropriate care from the private sector, the charitable sector and their own provisions. That policy is now under way.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): If that is the Government's intention, why have they infuriated the Association of County Councils and virtually every voluntary organisation involved in the subject by allowing, the week before our Easter recess, a junior Minister in another place to announce the outrageous decision that

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

the Government intended to ignore the unanimous will of this place and not implement the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986? Do local authorities not consider that legislation crucial to any strategy for community care? Why did the Secretary of State not have the guts to announce that decision in this House?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman was yesterday—perhaps he was engaged elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Minister of State discussed the matter openly in the House yesterday and explained cogently why that issue was not our highest priority at present.

From 1 April, we shall introduce local authority inspection units, new complaints procedures, a new specific grant to provide services for people suffering from mental illness and a new specific grant for services to drug and alcohol misusers. All that effort to improve services in both health and community care has not been at the expense of those who need to use the services as they are now. Proof of that lies in the latest waiting list figures published today.

The figures show that good progress is being made in reducing waiting times. The number of patients waiting more than one year for in-patient and day case treatment fell by 5,100, or 2·5 per cent., in the six months to September 1990. That comes on top of a reduction of 7 per cent. in the 12 months to March 1990. Furthermore, latest provisional figures reported by regional health authorities show that the progress has not only been maintained but has gained momentum, with a 12 per cent. reduction expected in the five months to February 1991. Those significant sustained reductions demonstrate the results of continued efforts to tackle the problems.

Getting the building blocks of the reformed NHS in place has been a great achievement. I am certain that, whatever the vagaries of political fortune in the future, they will never be undone. Now we need to ensure that attention focuses increasingly on the health improvements that we want the new system to deliver. The development of the purchasing role is central to that.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: Perhaps I should take an intervention from one of the lesser parties—I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Kennedy: Once the Minister gets past his sarcasm, perhaps he will give a serious answer to a serious question already put by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Before we come to the further stage of the trusts, will the Secretary of State give a simple explanation to the House about how he will gauge the success of a self-governing hospital trust? What criteria will be used?

Mr. Waldegrave: It would be foolish to say that the success of any hospital—whether a directly managed hospital under the old system or a trust—is measured only by an increase in its activity.

A specialty may well be moved from one hospital to another, or the opening of new functions somewhere else might divert patient flows. We must base a judgment on patient satisfaction, good use of funds—the normal and common-sense tests by which we would judge the success of any hospital.

The development of the purchasing role is central to the development of the reforms. 1991-92 has seen a steady approach to the implementation of contracting, with relatively few changes in patient flows. That was necessary during such major changes in management and funding arrangements.

I have sympathy with the hon. Member for Livingston and the leader writer in today's edition of *The Guardian* who complains, as though surprised, that money is not yet properly following the patient. Of course, it is not—the block contracts introduced in the first year limit that process, although it is beginning to happen. I share the enthusiasm—if that is what it was—of the hon. Member for Livingston to see the reforms begin to develop as they will in the years ahead to ensure that money specifically follows the patient with far more flexibility than that offered by block contracts. We are now moving away from the so-called steady state in the introduction of the reforms.

Like the hon. Member for Livingston—if this is what he wants—I want to see further changes in the pattern of services as soon as possible to provide the maximum benefits to patients.

Mr. Robin Cook: If the Secretary of State wishes to convince the House that the new scheme is at least as flexible as the scheme that it replaced, will he answer the question that I put? It is a fair test of the extent to which the scheme meets patient choice. Will he guarantee that every patient on a waiting list at 31 March will receive the treatment for which he or she was waiting at the hospital at which he or she wishes to be treated? Can he give that assurance?

Mr. Waldegrave: The districts may now be responsible for the waiting lists of their residents. If the referor's wish remains the same, it may be granted. However, under the present system the referor could not guarantee that patients would not move from one hospital to another to find either swifter or different treatment. If the referor makes the clinical judgment that a patient should be treated at a particular hospital, that will continue.

Mr. Cook: That was not the question that I asked. I asked what would happen if a patient wished to be treated at a particular hospital. The Secretary of State's answer was that the person would be treated there if the referor decided to refer him to that hospital. Let us suppose that, irrespective of what the health authority says, the patient says, "I have been waiting to go into that hospital for a certain procedure, which I want at that hospital."

Mr. Waldegrave: The patient will have been referred there by his general practitioner. If his GP sticks to his referral and says, "That is the right clinical referral for this patient", the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. There is no difficulty about that.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Is it not extraordinary that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) should raise the waiting list issue since, as we heard earlier, when a Labour Government ran the national health service waiting lists went down by 6 per cent. but under the present Government they have gone up by 48 per cent.?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that it may be the other way round. Waiting lists went up by 48 per cent. under the last Labour Government. It always enrages the Opposition when we remind them of what happened under their own stewardship of the NHS. It has taken them some years to regather their energy and address the problems facing the NHS.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): When I asked my local hospital whether it could guarantee that my constituents would be able to benefit from its services as they have in the past, the answer was no.

Mr. Waldegrave: If the referor's clinical judgment is that patients must go to that hospital, that will be the outcome, as I said to the hon. Member for Livingston.

As we move away from the steady state, we need to get benefits for patients from the contracts being placed. We want to get more and better quality health care for the populations represented by the health authorities. They have found this to be an exciting task. They have had to develop and discuss a local vision of what they want the reforms to achieve. They need to develop purchasing strategies, based on a fuller assessment of the health needs of the local community. They need to act together with the family health services authorities to ensure a better balance of prevention and treatment and a better integration of primary and secondary care.

The reforms are bringing about extremely exciting changes which are helping to break down the sometimes arbitrary barriers. As well as the changes being secured through the new contracts for GPs and dentists, there are major opportunities to build on team work between GPs and other health professionals to improve services further. An example of this is the development of minor surgery at GPs' premises. We need to consider whether we have gone far enough in that direction. The NHS management executive's discussion paper, "Integrating Primary and Secondary Health Care", is a clear indication of the direction of these changes and provides a useful framework for local development.

District health authorities must be open in finding out what local people want and discussing priorities. One of the only two cases that the hon. Member for Livingston gave was sterilisation treatment for a particular lady. As I said yesterday, the reforms have disclosed that in that instance the health authority had not for many years conducted sterilisations in its own hospitals. As it now has to specify openly what it does, it was found to be in breach of the guidelines from the centre about what treatment should be available. That matter has now been put right. There was no scandal in that. We want explicit health strategies which set out local priorities. Those priorities will—and, indeed, should—vary across the country, reflecting local health needs.

I have already made clear the important work that district health authorities must take forward in the area of community care. They must work closely both with local authorities and with the family health services authorities. It is right for us at the centre to contribute to that shift in attention to the production of health strategies, both local and national. We shall therefore shortly be issuing a consultative document setting out a suggested approach to the development of a health strategy for England which, if it is to contribute usefully, must go wider than the tasks of the NHS alone.

England has not developed a health strategy in a structured way before, although Wales has. We shall be learning from its experience, and from the experience of other countries. We shall proceed by publishing a consultative document, to be followed in due course—after, I hope, national debate—by a health strategy White Paper.

The House will, I hope, welcome the fact that the reforms now give us a far better chance openly to address the health needs of the nation and to direct resources to meet them. None of the progress that we want will be possible, however, unless the skills of the million or so people in the NHS are properly used.

I have three particular priorities that we shall wish to develop over the next few months. The first relates to the nursing profession. I do not believe that we are yet using the full potential of nursing skills. That is why we intend to establish a new directorate of nursing in the NHS management executive. Nurses themselves, with Government and outside support—notably King's Fund support—have developed some potentially exciting ideas on how to develop their profession. I am currently discussing with their chief nursing officer of my Department what further initiatives we can take to support them and I intend to make a further statement shortly.

My second priority is junior doctors. Steady progress is being made in the implementation of the heads of agreement on junior doctors' hours signed last December. Task forces are being established to propose solutions where local difficulties cannot easily be resolved, and 250 new career grade posts are being funded in England by the Government this year as part of the agreement. We shall play our part, but so must all the interests concerned—consultants, the royal colleges, NHS managers and junior doctors themselves. I do not believe that the juniors will easily forgive failure to make a reality of what is potentially an historic agreement.

My third priority is research and development. In post since January we have the first director of research and development for the NHS. I find it astounding that he should be the first holder of that post 43 years after the foundation of the NHS. None the less, he is now there. Professor Michael Peckham is a man of outstanding ability. As with nursing, his will be a key new directorate in the reorganised management executive. He will shortly publish his research and development strategy for the NHS. One of his vital tasks must be to spread more quickly best and most innovative practice throughout the service. Too often, bureaucratic or professional delay has hindered the spread of new ideas. The agenda is immense. The opportunity for benefit to patients is tremendous.

Labour, I have to say, has contributed virtually nothing to the national debate on health in recent years. First, it bobbed along like a dinghy in the wake of the British Medical Association campaign. How Aneurin Bevan, the patron of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), must have turned in his grave at that laying of the Labour party's sword at the feet of the BMA. Now the BMA, sensibly, is moving on. A recent British Medical Journal editorial said:

"As 1 April arrives, simply calling for a return of the old ways and more of the same will not do. The reforms may not address all of the problems of the NHS, but they do improve our capacity to specify the quality of services and to price improvements."

[Mr. Waldegrave]

So Labour's dinghy is now high and dry, stranded by the fact that the BMA is moving on.

On every important issue, Labour has cried wolf and been wrong. It campaigned—in effect, on behalf of the drug companies—against the limited drugs list, and it was wrong. It campaigned—in effect, on behalf of the then leadership of the BMA—against the new GP contract, and it was wrong. It campaigned against GP fund-holding and many of the Labour party's own supporters among GPs are telling it that, once again, it is wrong.

When it comes, as it now does, to crying wolf again —for example, about extra-contractual referrals— Labour's credibility is zero. As *The Economist* wrote recently:

"The Labour Party is paying the price for overstating the case against the reforms. Robin Cook, the Shadow Health Minister, insisted that the Tories were preparing to dismantle the NHS. Old ladies worried that hospitals would be either closed down or privatised. But on 1 April worriers will find that the NHS is still firmly in the public sector, financed from taxation, free at the point of delivery. Mr. Cook may prefer silence to eating his words".

Up and down the country Labour Members of Parliament and public relations people tell local people that there will be no difficult decisions under Labour. Its members are against every rationalisation; like the Liberals, they are in favour of every lobby. But in the City of London, when the Leader of the Opposition or the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) goes there to lunch, it is a very different story. Then it is, "Not a penny more for health—wait for the economic growth that Labour will produce." In other words, "Wait till the Greek kalends."

We have a right to ask how much more the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East would spend. He has made it clear that health is not in the privileged category with a pledge of spending behind it. If he does not intend to spend more, where is the £500 million present for the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the National Union of Public Employees to come from? Out of patient care—that is where it would come from. We have raised the share of health spending in terms of gross domestic product. In money terms we have increased it by half, after taking account of inflation. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East well knows that there is not the slightest chance that Labour could do better.

Luckily, however, the hon. Member for Livingston recently rose to the challenge of clarifying his party's policies on these matters. Pressed by the *New Statesman* about how much more he would spend, he uttered the resounding pledge:

"Our policy and strategy are clear. If you give a figure, you no longer have a policy that consists of a strategy; you have a policy that consists of a figure."

So now we all know where we are. Or, rather, we know where the hon. Member for Livingston is—he is up a gum tree, the only shadow Minister in the history of Oppositions so comprehensively to have lost the argument to his shadow Chancellor even before he got his feet under a real desk. Imagine what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East would do to him if they ever found themselves in power. That is why it is of considerable importance to those of us who care about the health service to see that Labour never again has the chance to repeat the Healey-Ennals-Foot cuts of 1977-78, the ruthless suppression of nurses' wages which took place between 1974 and 1979, or the destruction of the NHS capital programme which occurred in those years.

The truth is that the health debate in this country is now taking place on our ground. Labour is almost wholly irrelevant to it. Today I can offer the House rather striking proof of this proposition, hot off the presses. In the latest glossy rehash of the Labour party's old policy themes "Labour's Better Way for the Nineties", one finds the following:

"Health care markets are out, dreadful things"—

Tory things, and:

"Medical markets are in."

I have seldom read more decisive proof of the intellectual defeat of an Opposition party. Labour's irrelevance and intellectual defeat is encapsulated in the motion before the House. I have no hesitation in asking my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the motion, and in favour of the amendment in my name and the names of my right hon. Friends.

6.32 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Entering the House after the high profile of a by-election is rather like having been head prefect in primary school, only to be plunged into the obscure anonymity of a secondary school new boy. I am confident that that fate awaits me when I sit down today.

It is an honour and a privilege to represent Neath, or Castell Nedd, whose importance dates from Roman and Norman times, and which has the cosiest town centre in Britain, surrounded by scenic valleys and majestic waterfalls, with, to the west, the a spectacular night-time view of Pontardawe's unusually tall and striking church spire.

There is a strong sense of community, an immense network of voluntary activity, and a rich culture of amateur opera, music, and male voice and ladies' choirs. On the eastern tip of the constituency is Richard Burton's home village of Pontrhydyfen. Amateur sport is widespread—football, athletics and, of course, the best rugby team in country. Recently I was introduced to a class of nine-year-old children at Godrergraig primary school. The teacher said, "Here is a very important person." One of the nine-year-olds got up and asked, "Do you play rugby for Neath?" That, I thought, was a man who had his priorities right.

I have enjoyed renewing my interests in the game at Neath's home ground, the Gnoll. In my youth, that interest involved running on rugby pitches, both as a player and, later, in another capacity, which I shall refrain from describing, as this speech is made with your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am privileged in another way: I follow two Members, both survived by wives still living in Neath. Margaret Coleman is a highly respected figure in her own right in the community. Jenny Williams, now in her nineties, was a much-loved Labour party activist, and wife of D. J. Williams, who hailed from the close-knit village of Tairgwaith in the north-west of the constituency. In 1925, D. J. Williams wrote of the destructive impact of capitalism in the coal industry in terms that remain true today.

Donald Coleman's tragically premature death was not just a bitter blow to his family; it deprived Neath of a favourite son, and this House of its finest tenor. Although

I will do my best to follow in his footsteps as a diligent constituency MP, I am afraid I cannot hope to match his talent for music and song. The exuberance with which he sang and preached his love for Neath reflects the intense civic pride in the town and in the villages of the Dulais, Swansea, Amman, Neath and Pelenna valleys.

But local residents cannot survive on civic pride, mutual aid and mutual co-operation alone. They take great pride in educational achievement. I have met nobody in Neath who cannot remember how many O-levels he or she has. There is a great tradition of skill and hard work in Neath and its valleys. Much has been done in the face of Government indifference and neglect, but so much more could be done if the publicly sponsored investment in industry, infrastructure and initiative for which the people of Neath and its valleys are crying out were provided.

Surely Neath is entitled to the seedcorn investment, decent training provision and long-term loan finance that only national Government or the Welsh Office is able to provide. The old Blaenant colliery site—headgear still erect as a monument to the last pit in Neath; one of over 30 to close in the constituency in the last 30 years—nestles beneath the village of Crynant in the picturesque Dulais valley. The old Aberpergwm washery and pit site is just below the little village of Cwmgwrach in the Vale of Neath. Both are prime industrial sites, yet both stand idle, black and gaunt, their potential wasting away as 11 people chase every job vacancy, training places are cut to the bone, and businesses go bust. Nobody in Neath wants a free ride. People want simply the opportunity to build a new future.

That future must include high-quality health and community care provision. With its history of mining and heavy industry, the people of Neath suffer disproportionately from ill health. With a higher than average proportion of citizens of pensionable age—22 per cent. compared to 17·7 per cent. for Great Britain—there is a particular need for a properly funded health and community care network. Yet the Welsh Office and the Treasury have still not given the go-ahead for the new hospital that Neath so desperately needs, and West Glamorgan county council has been forced, under pain of poll tax capping, to close one of its old people's homes.

Neath borough council, meanwhile, has had to spend an extra £523,000 on collecting the poll tax, compared with the cost of collecting the rates. On top of this, the borough had to install a new computer system for processsing the poll tax, at a cost of £300,000. Neath's 16,000 pensioners are entitled to question the priorities of a society and a Government that waste such colossal sums of money while hospital waiting lists grow, and responsibility for community care is unceremoniously dumped on local authorities without the necessary resources to finance it.

How can we claim to be caring for citizens in need when the iniquity of the poll tax continues to penalise them so savagely? Even after the recent £140 reduction in the poll tax, residents in the Blaenhonddan area of Neath will be paying £113·66 a head. This is £85 more, incidentally, than I pay as a resident in Resolven, a few miles up the Neath valley, even though we are paying for the same local authority services, because of the discriminatory way the Welsh Office operates the transitional relief scheme.

One resident in the Blaenhonddan area—a woman from Bryncoch—is caring for her 83-year-old mother who has Parkinson's disease. The mother has a tiny widow's pension and has to pay the full £113. Their combined household poll tax bill is £339, yet both she and her husband are on tiny incomes which are so widespread in the Neath area. The hypocrisy of preaching community care while practising such a pernicious policy is not lost on that woman or her neighbours in Neath. Conservative Members who turn a blind eye to her predicament call to mind Thomas Paine's summer soldier and sunshine patriot who in a crisis shrink from the service of their country.

How can the House claim to be safeguarding the interests of individuals such as a 72-year-old man from the village of Gwaun-cae-Gurwen, where the Welsh language is spoken with pride, whose eyesight deteriorates daily? He has waited 18 months for a cataract operation—a simple, cheap operation. Yet waiting lists for ophthalmic surgery at Singleton hospital have doubled since 1987, and there are now 1,400 local people like him awaiting in-patient treatment. Perhaps most outrageous of all, he was told that he could have the operation next week if he could go private at a cost of £3,000. He might as well have been invited to go to the moon, for that is a sum quite out of the question for someone living on the pittance that pensioners get today. He can be forgiven for noting with anger the grotesque fact that 200 people, just 0·0004 per cent. of the population, now monopolise 9·3 per cent. of the country's economic wealth—some classless society indeed.

Meanwhile, the quality of the environment and the standard of living continue to deteriorate, especially for our elderly. Local bus services in the Neath valleys have been cut ruthlessly. Fares are exorbitant. Yet who can afford a car on a basic retirement income, perhaps topped up by a miner's tiny pension? It is difficult enough for senior citizens to pay their colour television licence and the standing charges on their phone, electricity or gas. It is difficult enough for them to find the money to eat properly as food bills rise remorselessly while the real value of pensions declines compared with wage earners.

If Neath's senior citizens had free bus passes, if standing charges on basic utility services were reduced or abolished for pensioners, if those on low incomes were entitled, like their colleagues in sheltered housing, to television licences for £5 rather than £77, if Neath and Lliw borough councils were not banned by the Government from using their combined housing capital receipts of £7·6 million to build new homes and hit by cuts in housing funding from installing universal central heating and upgrading their existing housing stock, if communities like Cwmllynfell at the heads of the four main valleys in the constituency were not choked by coal dust, disruption and heavy lorry traffic from existing and threatened opencast mines—if all those vital factors were addressed, the standard and quality of life of my constituents would be dramatically improved and, with it, there would be less need to depend upon health and community care provision.

Furthermore, if the curse of "London knows best" were removed, local people would of their own volition radically recast their priorities. That is why decentralisation of power through newly invigorated local councils and an elected assembly for Wales are so vital. That is why a freedom of information Act and an elected second Chamber are so essential. The voice of the people must be heard, not smothered by anachronistic and elitist institutions of Government.

During the last 12 years especially, Britain has become an "I'm all right, Jack" society, putting instant consumption before long-term investment, selfish "me-firstism" before community care, and private greed before

[Mr. Peter Hain]

the public good. The result is ugly to behold: the tawdry tinsel of decadence camouflaging a society rotten at the roots.

I thank the House for its indulgence or, as we say in Neath, "Diolch Yn Fawr."

6.44 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I congratulate the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on his maiden speech; a most excellent maiden speech it was. I have no doubt that, in the years ahead, the hon. Gentleman will make a substantial name for himself in the House, as he already has done outside. Being a by-election victor myself—we are rather fewer on these Benches than on the Opposition side—I have something in common with the hon. Gentleman. Not least, I congratulate him on being so quick off the mark in making his maiden speech, on the day after his introduction to the House.

The hon. Gentleman will learn, as I am afraid we have all learnt, that, in debates on the national health service, things are inclined to move at a rather predictable pace. New ideas from the Government on the restructuring of the national health service have all had the same hallmarks. They have all been radical and effective, and they have all been bitterly opposed by the Labour party.

The result is that, under the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the Labour party, which for so many years contributed to the debate on health care not just in Britain but throughout western Europe, has boxed itself into a corner where the only contribution that it can make to the debate on the NHS is no, no, no. That has been a great disservice not just to the Labour party itself but to the general debate in Britain, in western Europe and in the United States about the way in which western democracies can seek to deliver better health care where it is needed: patient care as far away from the Government and as close to the individual as possible.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announces a new strategy for health in Britain, I fear that the debate which we shall have on the new ideas will be concentrated largely on this side of the House. I should like immediately to put two ideas into that debate and to welcome what my right hon. Friend said about setting up a new directorate for nurses. The nursing profession, which was one of the first to benefit from a radical shake-up under the Government when nurses were put on a professional career basis, is still one of the most under-utilised sections of the national health service. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on announcing at the start of his strategy that there will be a new directorate for nurses.

I hope that, in a national health service centred on patient care, one of the first things that that directorate will do will be to examine the possibility of extending to nurses the right to prescribe a limited number of specified drugs and medical products. When that happens, I hope that we will not hear, no, no, no from the Labour party, as we have heard on every other new idea.

The notion that Britain's nurses—initially the 29,000 district community nurses—should be able to prescribe certain products has been gathering intellectual respectability and popularity over the last few years. Initially it was dealt with in the Cumberlege report which recommended that nurses should be able to prescribe a limited number of products. The Select Committee on Social Services considered the matter and said the same thing. The Department of Health had its own study: in Britain, we often seem to prefer studies to action. That study, the Crown report, recommended that permitting nurses to prescribe would be a liberal, effective and humane extension of our medical services.

I gave that initiative a further kick on its way when I introduced a ten-minute Bill on the subject some time ago. I hope that the Department of Health will incorporate in its new strategy proposals to permit Britain's 29,000 district nurses to write prescriptions. That is already permitted in the United States and Canada, and it would have an immediate impact here on alleviating suffering and on bringing medical services to patients in their own homes under community care.

It is the community nurse who looks after people who are home-bound, not the doctor sitting in the surgery. The nurse knows when the patient needs to have a new product prescribed and what it should be. It is wrong that patients should have to go to surgeries to pick up prescriptions written by overworked doctors. It would be far better for prescriptions for a number of standard products to be written by nurses.

I hope that that proposal is incorporated in the strategy for health care that we develop in the next few years. The better delivery of health care, rather than a changed framework in which that care is delivered, represents the right way forward as we digest the radical reforms of the past four years. I hope that the Labour party will contribute its ideas for improving health care, as that is the way in which to provide a richer and better health service.

In the past 30 years, western society has understood that many women prefer to go to women doctors. However, we have not grasped the fact that many people from the ethnic minorities prefer to be treated by doctors who belong to their own ethnic minority. It is a great shame that so few of those belonging to the ethnic minorities, particularly those of West Indian and black origin, do not graduate from our medical schools. I represent the constituency with perhaps the largest ethnic minority of those who had the good sense to return a Conservative Member of Parliament. The problem of recruitment does not rest with the medical schools alone. The Department of Health must reach our sixth forms to encourage those from the ethnic minorities to go to medical school in the first place.

In my constituency, there are 200 practising GPs, but there is not one doctor of West Indian origin. In the next 20 years, as we attempt to have a patient-centred health service, we must try to deliver the type of services that patients want. We should consider the recruitment of ethnic minorities to train as doctors as part of that policy. The Department of Health should take a lead in that.

In the future, many ideas will be proposed for improving the health service. The Conservatives have had many ideas—all the positive ideas—on how to develop our health service. The more people who submit their ideas on the next stage the better. In the years ahead, I hope that the hon. Member for Livingston will cease to say no and will allow his colleagues to submit positive ideas to improve our health service.

6.53 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I do not intend to continue the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), but it is important to consider what happened when we considered the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. In Committee many probing, constructive and critical amendments were moved. On some occasions such positive contribution came from Conservative Back Benchers, including the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). The Opposition made a positive contribution on every occasion, but the same cannot be said of the Minister. On every occasion she simply said no, no, no, or promised that it would be all right on the night. Whatever Opposition or Conservative Members sought to do, the hon. Lady assured them that that was already intended by the Government and that their commitment was good. The hon. Member for Kensington was a bit wide of the mark to suggest that there has been no constructive debate on the health service in the past. The difficulty has been trying to get a constructive response from the Government to any ideas advanced.

The Government have been in office for 12 years. Today, however, the Secretary of State outlined how much better all the changes will make the system and he described the improvements that will flow from them. One must ask what the Government have presided over in the past decade and more that led to such enormous problems that required such a drastic set of remedies.

Finance underpins the debate on the health service. The new revised trusts, operations and GP contracts mean that the planned expenditure for 1991-92 is £32 billion—a massive sum of money. That planned expenditure assumes a general inflation increase of 6 per cent., but that forecast is likely to be too low. If we spent proportionately as much on health as other western countries, the total level of expenditure would be closer to a ceiling of £38 billion.

The Secretary of State mentioned the proportion of our GDP that is devoted to health. He said that he was pleased to note that that contribution was rising. In this country it has risen to 6·1 per cent., but the average for the OECD member states is 7·5 per cent. By international comparison we still continue to lag behind.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Our figures do not bear comparison with international ones because they are largely misinterpreted. If one considers the levels of public expenditure on health in various countries, Britian is well up the list. The fact that other countries do better than us is due to the fact that they spend a larger amount on private health.

Mr. Kennedy: It is always the same with the Government: whatever the policy, when the figures are not as rosy as they would have us believe, it is all put down to misinterpretation. Doubtless all of us who shouted about the unemployment level in the 1980s misinterpreted the figures. We have had goodness knows how many changes to the unemployment statistics and each has led to a diminution in the level of unemployment.

We are now told that the method for calculating the rate of inflation is unacceptable and there are moves to take the mortgage interest relief out of the calculation. One wag suggested that if we wanted to improve our balance of payments it would be much fairer and more sensible not to include imports in the equation. In that way the economy would look a great deal healthier. I am somewhat sceptical when I hear Tory Back Benchers complaining about the reliability or otherwise of figures.

The resources devoted to the health service in the present financial year and the real-terms contribution to it will be eroded once again. That will happen because the health service must bear the brunt of pay review body awards that are staged and phased in such a way that they fall heavily on local health service provision. That has a great impact on all NHS funding.

I agree with the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about the costs of administration. We are witnessing a great disgrace in domestic policy, which has not been brought about by external events or economic circumstances—the poll tax. That policy was not inherited from another Administration, but it was conceived, delivered and botched by the present Government. The wastage of domestic expenditure on the administration of the poll tax will not be matched by the total administrative overheads of the health reforms, but, according to a recent survey conducted by the British Medical Association, those reforms are likely to add an extra £80 million on administrator salaries this year alone. That is almost six times the £14 million that the Government promised in December to cut junior doctors' hours of work. It is more than twice the £35 million that the Secretary of State for Health put towards cutting waiting lists in January. That is the reality of what this nonsense is costing us as regards the other deployment of resources that could and should be taking place.

The Secretary of State was not anxious to come clean about patients' rights under the new set-up. It is worth recalling the former Prime Minister's words. I know that that is no longer in vogue on the Conservative Benches. The wall posters along Whitehall are being taken down now that the change in leadership has taken place. In the introduction to the White Paper "Working for Patients" the right hon. Lady said:

> "We aim to extend patient choice."

Patients sometimes have strong feelings about where they want to go. They may have lost a relative or friend in a particular hospital and may find a hospital difficult to reach by public transport. A GP may think that the best specialist for a patient's condition is at a hospital some distance away.

What has been happening? General practitioners have accused the Government of lying to the public and have predicted that the issue could become as controversial as the poll tax because it became clear in the past fortnight that, apart from in exceptional circumstances, patients will be allowed to go only to hospitals with which their district health authorities have made contracts. What we are hearing about the extension of patient choice is not the case.

The Observer of 23 March quoted Dr. John Watson, chairman of Surrey's local medical committee, a GP representative committee. He was told that he can no longer refer 1,500 of his patients to his local hospital for physiotherapy and he is advising them to write to their local Member of Parliament. He said:

> "The changes have removed my freedom of referral. The Government has misled the public over this for the last two years. The NHS will be the downfall of the Government. I have voted Conservative for the last 30 years, but I will not do so next time."

That is a GP in the south of England, in true blue Conservative country, talking about his right as a general

[Mr. Kennedy]

practitioner to refer patients to the hospital of his choice. It stands in stark contrast to the rubbish that we got from the Secretary of State today.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I am obliged to the hon. Member for giving way and I am pleased to see that he has recovered from his illness. I trust that he will be able to confirm to the House that his excellent recovery is a result of the excellent health service that we have in this country. Could he confirm to me that he would deprecate doctors who lie to the electorate and especially those who took part in drawing up plans for the closure of hospitals when a new health service hospital was to open and who now endeavour to distance themselves from those plans because they see a few votes in it during the forthcoming elections?

Mr. Kennedy: Like every hon. Member in the House, I am never in favour of misleading, far less lying, to the electorate. It may be a local Isle of Wight problem.

Mr. Field: Very much so. I can confirm that.

Mr. Kennedy: I think that it would be helpful, especially for the Liberal Democrats, if the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), whose constituency we hope to regain at the next election, put it on record that one of his local GPs is a liar. If he would care to do so I shall happily give way.

Mr. Field: It was a member of the district health authority, appointed by the county council. He never once voted against the plans to shut local hospitals, but he has now put out a leaflet saying that he condemns those plans. He is extremely well known on the Isle of Wight, so there is no need to name him.

Mr. Kennedy: I think that we have achieved something tonight—another gain at the next election and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. However, we are not casting doubt on Dr Watson from Surrey, to whom I referred. That gentleman's comments speak for themselves. When we hear so much verbiage from the Dispatch Box it is worth letting the people in the health service speak for themselves. We do not often hear Government Ministers quote them.

The British Medical Association's central consultants and specialists committee recently conducted a survey of attitudes towards the changes and how people anticipated that they would work out. I shall give three quotes. The first is from the BMA's local branch in Wales, which said:

"Measures include—no new orders and reduction of stocks to the barest minimum."

South East Thames RHA said:

"Completely disastrous—we have ½ million overspend on 1.4.1991 (i.e. we failed to make the level playing field). We must do 5 per cent. less work next year."

So much for progress. North West Thames RHA said:

"Despite a savage bed closure policy, which has increased our waiting list by approximately 150 per cent., there were no financial savings recorded overall in the latest monthly figures available to us. There seems little or no prospect of any improvement after 1 April. Indeed; a worsening of the present situation, with further cuts, particularly in surgical bed numbers, seems likely."

That is the reality of what is happening, not the nonsense that has been spilled out by the Secretary of State for Health.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Could the hon. Gentleman also confirm the reality of the fact that not one reform suggested by any Government, of any political persuasion from either side, has been accepted without a fight by the BMA? There has never been a reform that it has not objected to.

Mr. Kennedy: The BMA has a representative capacity on behalf of its profession to engage in on-going discussions with the Government and to put forward the interests of its members but also in the interests of what it views as decent standards of medical care. One cannot dismiss the BMA, which represents doctors up and down the land, by saying that it always takes a vested interest and does not also pay some attention to medical care overall.

I can think of a number of reforms that the BMA would not oppose—for example, lifting the charges that have been imposed for dental and optical treatment. Doctors throughout the country want that and regularly say so in our constituencies. People on low incomes have to bear the burden of prescription charges and doctors would be happy for that to change as well.

Mr. Robin Cook: What about maximum patient lists?

Mr. Kennedy: As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, there is also the question of lists. There has been constructive argument by Opposition Members in the House and in Committee about that. The BMA would be happy to see some of those changes. However, we never hear about that from Government Ministers.

The other half of this motion rightly dwells on community care and I was fascinated by the words that the Secretary of State chose to use. "Sir Humphrey" was working overtime on this one. As we know, the Government have postponed community care—of that there is no doubt. The previous Secretary of State announced it.

I wrote the Secretary of State's words down with care. He did not use the word "postponed" when talking of community care, although everyone knows that that has taken place. He said that he had "initiated the introduction" of community care. In other words the introduction is not quite with us yet, but the motive force is taking place. I prefer the word "postponement" and I also favour using one word rather than three where possible.

Given the present poll tax shambles, what will be the funding basis for local government and for the delivery of community care, which is already suffering this postponement? Now there is uncertainty about the future structure, never mind the funding, of local government. How can there be any certainty or confidence in the caring and professional services that will have to make a reality of community care against such a backdrop of uncertainty? The Government have not made the case for these reforms and the authentic voice of people in the health service, who are grappling with the problem daily, is further clinching evidence that these reforms are unnecessary, that they do not inspire public confidence and, more importantly, are not the answer to a complex problem which is rooted in the fundamental lack of political will on the Conservative side of the House, as has been proven in the past 12 years.

We shall certainly vote for the Labour motion and against the record of this Administration and their ideas for the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation. Hon. Members might find it helpful to keep an eye on the digital clocks.

7.9 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I join in the congratulations to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) and in his tribute to his predecessor.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) did not address himself to my intervention. The fact is that Britain has a marvellous record, unequalled in Europe, on public expenditure on health. It is right that that should be the case. However, other countries in Europe have a greater commitment to the concept of private health care. That is not an argument for or against private health care; it is a matter of fact. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not acknowledge that.

I served on the Standing Committee that considered the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, which was a most enjoyable and interesting Committee. I was struck by the attitude of many Opposition Members towards the health service and its prospects. Almost to a man—or a woman—they never failed to cite cases of undoubted distress, which one readily accepts exist and which arouse sympathy in any human being. But they never mentioned the fact that the number of in-patients and out-patients treated has increased dramatically since the Government have been in power. There will always be individual cases which will give rise to concern and one regrets that. Indeed, the founding fathers of the NHS warned Parliament and the country that the health service would never meet demand, because demographic pressures would increase, and that we must never expect more of it than it can deliver. Those are precisely the problems that we face.

If Opposition Members accept such inherent problems and those created by technological advance, it is strange that they criticise the existing system yet resist reform. Surely reform is the only way to ensure that we have a health service in the year 2000.

The Opposition frequently do a great disservice to the NHS. They appear never to recognise, in public at least, the demographic pressures that it faces. They do not seem to appreciate or to accept publicly that our population is aging. We all hope that we will become part of that problem. The number of people as a percentage of the population who provide money for the health service through taxation is becoming smaller. That is a fact which no party of whatever political persuasion can run away from. Yet that point is never recognised by Opposition Members.

A party that simply stands back and objects to reforms that are designed to drag that service into the 1990s is the enemy of that service, not its friend. The enemies of the service say, "Stand still. Leave it as it is. Don't reform anything because it will destroy the service." The one way to destroy the service is not to reform it. How can a system that was designed to meet the needs of the 1950s meet the needs of the 1990s? We cannot run away from that reality, yet the Opposition constantly seek to do so.

I find it sickening to hear Opposition Members accuse Conservative Members of not caring about the NHS, as though they have a monopoly on caring. That is offensive. There may be differences between us about how the NHS should be run and operated, but our commitment to its existence and its future is equal to that of the Opposition. That commitment can be proved by the massive expenditure that the Government have put into the NHS —far more than any Labour Government have ever achieved and far more than any Labour Government would ever achieve.

As usual, Opposition Members say that the only way to solve the problems of the NHS is to throw more money at them. If the problems of the NHS could be solved by throwing more money at them, we would have solved them 10 times over. It is not as simple as that and the British people recognise that. They also recognise that the Opposition cannot claim, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) did today, that the NHS is at the top of their list of priorities. If it is at the top of their list of priorities, it is alongside education, training and transport. The public perceive that their promises in that regard are shallow.

If the public want to protect the NHS and ensure that it is there for the future, the Government's reforms will gain their backing. During the time that I served on the Committee considering the National Health Service and Community Care Bill I, like many hon. Members, was inundated with letters from patients who were frightened by the British Medical Association's campaign, but I cannot remember the last time that I received a letter complaining about the reforms. Indeed, one practice in my constituency is complaining that it cannot introduce the changes fast enough. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health was kind enough to meet the doctor representing that practice and I am grateful for that.

The climate has changed. The Opposition may try to turn the Government's reforms into a demon, but they are the one way in which to save the NHS for the year 2000.

7.16 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): I start by paying a tribute on behalf of the Labour party to my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain). He delivered his maiden speech with eloquence and passion and it is clear that he will not remain anonymous on the Back Benches with some of us for much longer if that is the calibre of his contribution in the House. I congratulate him.

The Opposition motion today could have been written for the people of Manchester and in particular for my district health authority of south Manchester and my constituency. If we look at the chapter of disaster of health care there we see that Christie hospital has opted out and there is a proposal to close the maternity unit at Withington hospital and eventually to close the whole of that hospital, although the health authority has denied that, saying that it is merely relocating it. That is a novel way of allowing patients to continue to receive their health care at the same hospital. Also the plan for the Central Manchester health authority to opt out has gone through.

The Secretary of State alluded today to the wealth of GP practices in Manchester which have taken up the challenge of becoming fund-holders, but to my certain knowledge only one has gone down that road. The way Ministers have scuttled in and out of south Manchester in

[Mr. Keith Bradley]

the past few weeks trying to boost the opt-out rate and the number of fund-holding practices shows their lack of confidence. The way in which the people of Manchester have responded to those reforms shows that they have no relevance to the future of health care in that part of Britain.

I do not want to spend the short time that I have discussing the sour taste left in the mouths of local people as a result of the opt-out of Christie hospital. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), in his devastating critique of Government policy earlier, referred to Christie hospital and the way in which Mrs. Kenrick did not receive treatment; the way in which, when the trust was launched, instead of looking at patient care senior management had a champagne and salmon party; and the queue-jumping proposals for people in urgent need of cancer care. Those decisions speak for themselves, and they are not lost on the people of Manchester.

As for the waiting list statistics, the Government continue to fiddle with them to make them look good. Manchester Members of Parliament recently received a letter from the chairman of the trust in central Manchester which stated that at the end of March 1991 the number of patients waiting for more than a year had reduced by 541, or 20 per cent., hailing that reduction and pointing to success in general surgery. At the same time as I received the letter, I received from a local GP on behalf of a patient a letter from the trust hospital in central Manchester stating:

"I do appreciate your concern for your patient and I am afraid that my good intentions to admit him in February this year for surgical correction . . . have been thwarted by our lack of beds. Approximately 25 per cent. of our surgical beds have been closed and this you will understand makes planned admissions extremely difficult in view of our continuing commitment to emergency services. I am afraid that until these beds are restored, treatment for patients like yours will continue to be much of a lottery. I will do my best to expedite his admission."

At the same time as the trust hails the reduction in waiting lists it fiddles statistics because it is closing beds and denying referrals to the hospital.

The closure of the maternity unit and the single site hospital planned by South Manchester health authority is causing a massive public outcry. The closures have been caused by a continuing financial crisis in south Manchester which has arisen because the Government have continually underfunded pay awards and have not allowed for the true rate of inflation in the health service. They have forced the service to make efficiency savings of 1 per cent. each year, but we know that that is really a cut in service funding. They have not fully funded clinical regrading, and over the years managers have tried to manage their way out of the financial crisis by closing wards. They closed wards for the elderly on the back of the intention to introduce community care. They thought that they could get away with closing long-term beds for the elderly because people would be moved into the community. Community care has been abandoned for two years, but the beds have not been reopened because the money is not available due to the financial crisis. Many people are left in their homes without support services and without the proper supervision and health care that they need.

Recruitment has been frozen and there are longer waiting lists. That could not go on, so rationalising the service was considered. In particular, the closure of the accident and emergency department in Wythenshawe hospital and the maternity department in Withington hospital was considered. The public outcry about closing the accident and emergency department in Wythenshawe hospital, which is next to Manchester airport, was so great that the authority backed off. It has now said that there should be accident and emergency departments at both centres. That seems crazy because it now says that it will close Withington hospital.

The authority has not backed away from the proposal to close the maternity department. I am pleased to see that the Under-Secretary of State for Health is present for the debate. He has agreed to meet me before making the final decision. The community health council has objected to the plan and the Minister is aware of that. The CHC's 10-page document clearly set out counter-proposals. I hope that the Minister has that document. When the matter went to the regional health authority, the cogent and clear arguments contained in those 10 pages were reduced to four and a half lines. Members of the regional health authority did not have a full document and made their decision on that short summary.

I hope that when the Minister reviews the decision he will look at the full document and recognise the importance of maternity care in Withington. The matter is made even more important by a recent health care report by South Manchester health authority which points to the high level of infant mortality in the district. It is higher than in most parts of the country and higher than the national average. If we are to address the problem of infant mortality we need local maternity services and local ante-natal and post-natal care. That is what the people of south Manchester want.

The single site proposal was delayed until the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. There were two reasons for that. The Government wanted stooges on the health authority in South Manchester to rubber stamp the authority's proposals to close the hospital. Not one of the new members of South Manchester health authority lives in that area or uses the hospital on which the authority is making a decision. The closure was the first item on the agenda of the new health authority. There was not a word of debate about the decision which went through on the nod and not one member of the new authority asked a question about the proposal. The matter was dealt with by people who have no interest in the area and who do not receive health care from the hospitals that they are closing.

One of the clear reasons for the health authority's proposal to close the hospital is the run-down in the fabric of the buildings in Withington hospital. In a financial crisis the easiest thing to go is the maintenance budget. In the 10 years from 1982-83 until now the amount spent in real terms on maintenance has been more than halved. No wonder the buildings are falling apart. That is bound to happen when the Government do not put in the resources to ensure that local hospital buildings are properly maintained.

The people of Manchester have clearly said that they want to keep their hospitals local and want access to decent health care in the communities in which they live. The "Save Withington Hospital" campaign has been magnificent and I pay tribute to those who have been

involved in it, especially the campaign's chairman Tom Grimshaw and its secretary Brenda Stevenson. They have galvanised people into trying to save the local hospital. The campaign has all-party support and even local Tories are campaigning against their own Government because they recognise that the hospital must be saved.

A week last Saturday 3,000 people turned up to link hands around the hospital to say that the Government must not touch it. More than 70,000 people have signed a petition. The Government's national health changes do not address the issues of decent hospital care in Manchester. We urge the Government to intervene now and tell the regional health authority, which meets on Tuesday, that it must throw out the plan and look to decent health care in our communities. That would ensure that Manchester people received the hospital service of which they had previously been proud.

7.26 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I congratulate the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who is not in his place, on his courageous speech. It was courageous because the hon. Gentleman made it absolutely clear that spending on the health service will be at the top of Labour's agenda at the next general election. I do not know whether he has spoken to his hon. Friend the shadow Chief Secretary, but I do not think that she will be pleased by his proposals.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who is the shadow Social Security Minister, will not be pleased because we were told some weeks ago in a similar debate that pensions would be Labour's top priority. On 9 December 1990 the shadow Leader of the House told us that education would be Labour's top priority. The electorate and the House would like to know whether there will be so many priorities that they will be meaningless or whether the Opposition are making promises that they cannot possibly deliver.

On 20 April last year, which was my birthday, the hon. Member for Livingston pledged that a Labour Government would spend £3 billion on the national health service. What has changed, apart from the fact that in the past two years the Government have spent £6 billion on the NHS? It is therefore hardly surprising that socialist economists such as Professor Julian Le Grand, the founder of the Socialist Philosophy Group, said that the Conservative Government had promised an extra £3 billion for the next financial year. He says that it is difficult to imagine that Labour could do much better, given the other demands that Labour will undoubtedly face on taking office.

Yesterday Opposition Members heard me quoting from the Labour campaign document on health spending. They said that the problems would not be solved and that finance could not be provided overnight. I give the Opposition credit for the fact that they have made it perfectly clear in that document and in the debate today that they will spend far more than this Government on the health service. However, they will not be spending it on patient care, on the poor devils in hospital. They will be spending it on bureaucracy, because that is Labour policy.

The Labour party will give us an army of quangos, a technology inspectorate, a health quality commission and a food standards agency. It is talking about regional councils to discuss the various quality controls within regional health authorities. Under the Labour party's proposals, quality will be built into contracts. I simply ask hon. Members to visit such places as Bromley, which is putting the contracts into place; they are very impressive.

The Labour party talks about value for money and quality—so why does it want to abolish the Audit Commission? What has that commission done for health authorities during the past six months? It has given each health authority a financial profile, something almost unheard of in the history of the NHS. It has provided a number of discussion documents that show where savings can be made to improve patient care. Through the changes and procedures suggested by the Audit Commission, about 300,000 additional operations could be provided without any additional cost. There could be savings of £30 million just by sorting out the heating problems and another £30 million through running an efficient telephone service. There is plenty of scope for bodies such as the Audit Commission, which is interested in value for money and in money being spent on patient care.

I want to go into some depth on what the Labour party is promising. We have the document, which says:

> "Labour will require health authorities and health boards to give new priority to disease prevention and health promotion."

Hooray. It continues:

> "This health strategy will set targets to be achieved over a five-year period"—

hooray—

> "such as a reduction in smoking, increased participation in exercise, and a narrowing of social inequalities of access to health care."

I agree with every word, but I do so because it happens to be Conservative party policy.

What heading has the Labour party given to that policy? It is "Promoting better health". Does not that ring a bell? Was not there a White Paper called "Promoting better health", which said all those things years ago? What was my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) saying when she was a junior Minister at the Department of Health? It was all that the Labour party is now saying in presenting its brand-new health promotion policy.

The Labour document says that the Labour party will do even better than that. It states:

> "The greater emphasis in our health strategy on health promotion will require new priority for primary care."

That sounds new. It continues:

> "Labour will therefore renegotiate the GPs' contract to reduce the pressure which it puts on them to seek larger patient lists."

I may be wrong, but I thought that patient lists had been going down consistently over the past few years. That is certainly what general practitioners say. I am pleased to say that most of them are happy with the new contract. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that he will sit down and talk to them about any areas of difficulty. There is dialogue between the British Medical Association and the Department of Health, and the Opposition should pay attention to that. The real gripe of general practitioners during the first negotiations was the very matters that the Labour party wants to promote. General practitioners complained that they had to take on health promotion tasks, the screening of 75-year-olds, and the provision of inoculations. It is precisely the sort of contradiction that I would expect from the Opposition.

The document says:

[Mr. Jerry Hayes]

"Labour will scrap the indicative drugs scheme which puts a cash budget on the drugs a GP can prescribe."

Just a moment, did not the BMA and the Opposition shadow spokesman on health only late last year publicly admit that there was no cash constraint on the amount of prescribing? Have not the Audit Commission and a number of other independent bodies made it quite clear that we have saved more than £200 million in drug prescribing, which has gone directly to benefit patient care? Should not that be welcomed? It is certainly welcomed by general practitioners and by the BMA. However, the Labour party wants to scrap it. What will it put in its place? The document says:

"In its place we will encourage greater efficiency in prescribing by requiring"—

that is the key word—

"greater use of generic prescription."

If this Government introduced legislation requiring general practitioners to prescribe in a certain way, all hell would be let loose from the Opposition and the BMA.

The document also says that the Labour party

"will invest in the modernisation of our hospitals and tackle the backlog in maintenance and repairs—although we cannot expect to be able to put right overnight the neglect of years."

That is another fudge on the finances.

We have been talking about the trade unions, and it was interesting that yesterday the Labour party said that one of its great policy planks was that there would be beer and sandwiches at No. 10. There is nothing wrong with discussion and negotiation, but there is a price for that, and that price would be a statutory minimum wage. How much would that cost the NHS? We all know—it is a matter of public record—that it will cost £500 million. Where will that money come from?

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: I am sorry, but I have only a minute left.

The document says that Labour recognises that the pay and conditions of certain health staff

"have worsened markedly under the Conservatives."

My hon. Friends have refuted that claim. The document continues:

"We will halt this deterioration—and develop fairer and more rational ways of settling pay and conditions for those health service employees."

It will be done in smoke-filled rooms by the paymasters of the Labour party.

It is interesting to note that the document states:

"In order to end the efficiency trap, budget allocations to hospitals will be flexible. Total spending must remain within cash limits but the increased funding to which we are committed will be used to create a reserve at Regional or District level which can be released in the course of the financial year to those hospitals who have outperformed their agreed targets."

What financial control will be there? What financial management will be there? There will be absolutely none. That is why I say to the House that the Government have nothing to be ashamed of in their health policy, and that is why I support the Government amendment.

7.37 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am delighted to join in the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), who made an excellent maiden speech. His constituents have every reason to be proud of him, as are we all in the Labour party. We look forward to many further speeches from him over the years.

In a remarkable response to an intervention of mine, the Secretary of State asked where I was yesterday during health questions. I was at a meeting with one of his colleagues at the Ministry of Defence—a meeting that I had been trying to obtain since the beginning of winter —about an important matter in Twechar in my constituency. I should not have thought that the few brief moments that were given to community care as a result of the accident of one question being at the top of the list represented a considered debate on the Government's remarkable decision to ditch without ceremony sections 1, 2, 3 and 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

The importance of community care and of that Act is all the more necessary because of what has been happening to the health service. Listening to the exchanges during this debate, one would think that it is not just a question of having a two-tier health service, although it certainly is. There are actually two health services—one is in the imaginations of Conservative Members and the other is the reality with which hon. Members deal day after day.

We know the problems. We know that my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) presented a petition organised by Health Alert to save the West Middlesex hospital. Lest it be thought that I am concentrating on important English matters, I should add that people in my constituency would not recognise the health service that the Secretary of State described this afternoon.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will not give way as time is short.

My constituents are fully aware of the case of the 71-year-old woman who was refused admission to two hospitals and subsequently died. They are aware of possible closures not just of wards but of hospitals in and serving my constituency—for instance, Stobhill, where ear, nose and throat, neurology and maternity units may be closed. Patients in my constituency—and those who visit them—will then face much longer journeys to hospitals further away than necessary to find proper health provision.

My constituents are worried about debate over the future of Gartloch hospital. The Greater Glasgow health board appears to be taking decisions about psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric provision without bearing in mind the importance of community care. My constituents are also worried about the future of Stonyetts and Birdston, and they are not alone in their concern. They know that it is not enough for society to concentrate on the demands of the health service, important though they are, at the expense of the 90 per cent. of our people in the community whose rights and needs must also be respected.

This is why I am appalled—I cannot disguise my anger —at the way in which the Government have responded to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. We were told by one Minister after another—including the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), and the present Prime Minister—that the Government's aim was to accept the will of both Houses and to implement that

Act when resources became available. As a Minister with responsibility for the disabled, the present Prime Minister, speaking of the implementation of the Act in stages, said:

"This should help to make progress towards establishing such a timetable."—[*Official Report*, March 1987; Vol. 112, c. *157*.]

Until the announcement was sneaked in on the Friday before the Easter recess by a junior Minister in another place, we all accepted that that was the Government's intention. As Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Prime Minister also said:

"The Act of 1986 was originally passed upon the premise that it would be brought into action over a period."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. *441*.]

This spectacular U-turn has yet to be explained by any Minister. The Minister for Health seeks to argue, and has argued elsewhere, that after the enormous amount of consultation which took place before the 1986 Act was introduced—far more consultation than the one week between the Government's White Paper on community care and the Bill that followed it—it is not necessary to implement all its sections. The consultation preceding the 1986 Act meant that sections 1, 2 and 3 provided the right of advocacy and assessment; and section 7 meant that people leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals would be entitled to assessment and were assured that the House would attempt to reduce the number of people released from such hospitals into non-existent community care—often into cardboard cities. The approach to community care embodied in the 1986 Act, to which the House gave a great deal of credence, has been abandoned, and we cannot and will not be convinced that the community care sections of the Government's National Health Service and Community Care Act transcend what we tried to achieve in 1986—they do not and they cannot.

During the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Act and the Children Act 1989—the latter also featured in the junior Minister's reply in another place—it was never said that the Government were planning to drop these vital sections because they were covered by those two subsequent Acts. The Government intend not just to postpone but to abandon community care until 1993. We cannot pretend that the 1986 Act was never passed.

We are told that the Government believe in citizens' rights and voluntarism and that they are prepared to listen to the views of others. Is it any surprise that the Spastics Society, Age Concern, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped and many other organisations are shocked by the Government's decision and the manner in which it was announced? Is it any surprise that Sir Brian Rix of MENCAP has said that it was a disastrous decision? Grass roots members and supporters of these organisations, and the 6·5 million people with disabilities and their carers—the blind, deaf and elderly people with disabilities who cannot express their views and who believe the Government's promises of choice and independence in which advocacy plays a vital part—are equally appalled. Mary and Albert Coyle, constituents of mine, know that their son Gerard, who is 36 years old and mentally handicapped, will not now have the advocacy, representation and assessment which they thought he had been promised by the House and which they saw as crucial to the future of their child and to that of many others suffering from mental handicaps.

The House will return to these issues, but before those major debates take place—the issue will not go away—it is only right that the anger of such people should be expressed today. Millions of disabled people and their carers want the House to express its repugnance at an exercise in intellectual arrogance and abuse of temporary power by the Government which must be rejected.

7.47 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): No matter how often we debate the national health service and whatever our debates are ostensibly about—whatever reforms and new ideas may be under consideration in the motion—they always seem to resolve themselves around two arguments advanced by the Opposition. First, they say that they should be trusted with the health service because they always spend more than the Tories ever could or would want to. Secondly, they draw attention to the way in which, as they see it, the Tories have looked after the health service, claiming that that is evidence of that fact that the Tories reform plans will fail and that the Opposition would do everything better.

We can bandy statistics across the Chamber until the cows come home; we can use global statistics which people may or may not choose to believe. But by examining what happens in a local district health authority we can start to peel away some of the falsehoods and see what has actually happened. In doing so, we can see that the two arguments on which the Labour party relies are false and useless.

Let us relate the first argument, to do with Labour's expenditure, to my constituency of Bury. The only time when expenditure on the NHS in Bury has fallen was under a Labour Government. Between 1974 and 1979, it fell by 2 per cent. Bury had needed a new hospital for about 100 years. It was the only part of the north-west district that had not had a new general hospital in 100 years, but one could not be built under Labour because of reductions in capital expenditure.

Those cuts in expenditure and that way of looking after the finance of the health service was mirrored elsewhere in the country. Under the Conservative Government NHS funding as a proportion of GDP has grown twice as fast as it did under Labour. So there is no argument about finance. There has been no greater or longer lasting deceit practised on the British people than the Labour party's claim that funding is better under a Labour Government.

Labour's second argument is that the way in which the Tories look after the NHS shows just how much we care. In answer to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who believes that we live in a world of our imagination, I shall read out some facts about the Bury district health authority. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that they are in my imagination he can come to my constituency, talk to the consultants, ring up the district general manager and query any one of the facts that I shall spend about four minutes reading out.

The past 10 years or so have seen substantial developments in the services provided by Bury health authority. Those developments have affected almost every sphere of activity and that momentum is set to continue in the foreseeable future. There has been a massive increase in the funds made available, and at the same time the authority has been praised for the high quality of service provided.

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

The improvements include extra doctors in hospitals. There has been an increase of 43 per cent. in the number of doctors employed, and the additional consultant specialists appointed include those in accident and emergency, anaesthetics, paediactrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, radiology, geriatrics, psychiatry, pathology, ear, nose and throat, adult health and orthopaedics. Those people exist. They are flesh and blood. They can be met, touched and spoken to. They are not figments of my imagination.

In the past decade the number of nurses in Bury has increased from 875 to 1,181. There has been an increase of 45 per cent. in professional and technical staff such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists, from 145 to 214.

As for capital expenditure on buildings and the like, during the past 10 years or so more than £25 million has been spent on new and improved buildings. They range from new theatres, new wards and out-patient departments to all the necessary support facilities required, such as kitchens and theatre supply units. The new phase 1 development of Fairfield general hospital cost £10 million and provided new wards for the elderly, children and ear nose and throat patients. A new ante-natal clinic was provided together with a new theatre. The developments continue with a current building programme of £2·5 million which was celebrated in the local newspaper under the headline, "Health Service Cash Bonanza". That programme includes a new purpose-designed obstetric theatre which was recently opened by the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), upgraded maternity and gynaecology wards costing £1·1 million, upgraded wards for the mentally ill and extensions and improvements to health centres.

In the Bury health authority no beds have been lost for financial reasons. There has been an increase in the number of beds which has led to an increase in the number of people being treated. There has been an increase of 55 per cent. in the number of patients admitted to hospital and a massive increase of 160 per cent. in the number of day patients.

In 1979, the health authority's budget was £12 million, and in 1990 it had risen to £34 million which represents 19 per cent. real growth in contrast with the 2 per cent. loss in real terms which occurred under the last Labour Administration.

I shall read out some figures relating to the number of patients treated. They are all real people. In 1978-79, a total of 17,780 in-patients were treated and there were 1,575 day cases. In 1985 the number of in-patients had risen to 20,778 and day cases to 2,731. This year it is estimated that there will be 27,600 in-patients treated and 4,100 day cases. That represents a total increase in 10 years of 55 per cent. in the number of in-patients treated and 160 per cent. in the number of day cases treated.

In February 1990 there were 1,303 people on waiting lists in Bury. By February 1991 that figure had reduced by 300. The numbers waiting between one and two years in February 1990 was 104. In February 1991 that figure had decreased to seven. In 1990 the number of people waiting more than two years for treatment was 36. In 1991 that number had been reduced to zero.

I am sorry to have taken five minutes to quote all those figures to stress that no party or Government intent on destroying the health service would provide a district health authority with a record such as that. There is no evidence in my health authority to suggest the lack of care on which the Labour party based its argument. All the efforts that have produced improvements in my constituency, the ethos behind them and the competitive tendering which has produced money that has gone into patient care have been fought every step of the way by the Opposition. That is how much they care about the health service. Their attitude is to say, "Leave it as it is. It is all right. It does not matter. Trust us."

It is sad that we spend our time tossing jibes to and fro to deal with the falsities put about by Opposition Members when we know the truth. There is only one health service; it has its good parts and its bad parts. It has its problems, and it has people who wait too long for treatment. It has bad hospitals that need tidying up and people who travel too far, but, above all, it has a dedicated staff who want to improve it. There is no mileage for anybody, whether they are doctors, administrators or politicians, in making things worse. Many people put in a lot of time and effort. Those who work in the health service, whether they are GPs like my father or hospital doctors like my brother, resent the continual efforts that are made to denigrate and run down the health service. The Opposition do not appreciate that that goes home to people who are working in the health service and trying to improve it.

We should spend more time talking about matters that the community health director in Bury dealt with in his excellent annual survey. He wrote:

"lung cancer and coronary heart disease. . .are the consequence of an unhealthy lifestyle and many potential years of life are lost because of socially acceptable lifestyles committed to cigarette smoking, an over-indulgence of alcohol, promiscuity, etc. The effects of such lifestyles even threaten and prejudice during pregnancy the chances of a healthy fit baby. Whilst on the one hand we spend vast sums of money as a nation treating or subsidising the effect of these diseases we also, as consumers, spend equally vast sums of money encouraging the habits—albeit with health warnings".

We should be talking more about preventive medicine and the things that really matter.

In conclusion, it is rather sad that when we have a Government with a national and local record in the health service such as I have described, and when we have the efforts that the Government have put in, we have at the same time a cynical Opposition who cannot even bring themselves to spit out through clenched teeth any acknowledgment of success and instead commit themselves to twisting the facts and pretending falsely and pathetically that under some new red dawn everything will be put right.

7.58 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I made the mistake of blinking during the Secretary of State's half-hour speech, and missed his reference—which cannot have been more than one sentence—to community care. I thought that the debate was concerned with the health service and community care, and I am sorry that the Secretary of State has such contempt for the important issue of community care that he could not be bothered to refer to it in some detail.

An answer that I received from the Under-Secretary of State for Health on 24 January said:

"We are firmly committed to a policy of community care which enables elderly and disabled people, with appropriate support, to live in their own homes or in small homely settings in the community for as long as this is feasible and sensible."
—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 295.]

Frankly, the Government have an excellent record on words about community care, but their deeds are different. Their record on community care is shameful.

I wish to stick to the question of community care because, with the honourable exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and the Labour Front Bench, it has not so far tonight received the attention that it deserves.

During the 12 years that the Government have been in power, they have operated a programme of emptying the large psychiatric hospitals. There has been a reduction in the number of homes for children and for mentally handicapped people and in the number of geriatric wards. The Government were committed to reducing institutional care but, at the same time, there has been a distinct revival of the institutional model of care in the private sector.

During the last 10 years, there has been a 4 per cent. reduction in the number of places in local authority homes for elderly people. There has been a 316 per cent. increase in the number of places in private residential care homes. In my area of Yorkshire, there has been an increase of almost 1,000 per cent. in the number of private nursing beds. The argument is that the number of elderly people has increased but, according to the Library, the number has increased in the same period by only 9·5 per cent.

The Audit Commission told the Griffiths committee that a quarter of the people living in private care homes could have been accommodated in the community with the appropriate support. Only a few weeks ago, evidence was given to the Select Committee on Health by a series of directors of social services who said that, in their areas, about 50 per cent. of the people living in private care homes could and should have been accommodated in the community with the appropriate support.

The Government's record is one of placing in institutional care people who do not need and do not want to be there. They are the Government of institutions, who are in no way committed to genuine community care which involves caring for people in their own homes and neighbourhoods.

It is interesting that the Government have pursued policies geared to reducing the support available to people who wanted to live independently in the community. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West referred to the appalling treatment of his much valued Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. If we consider the Government's record on local authority personal and social services, it is clear that they have pulled the rug from under the feet of people who wanted to remain at home and be independent. Underfunding of the national health service means that supportive health services such as district nurses and bath attendants have been withdrawn from people who wanted to remain at home but were forced to enter into care.

There have been huge reductions in the rate support grant. I asked the Library for an estimate of the reductions in that grant during the administration of the present Government as far as they affected the personal social services. I was staggered to learn that the reductions in the budget from the 1979 level of local authority expenditure on personal social services total about £6 billion. The Government say that they are committed to community care, but they have taken from local authorities that £6 billion, which should have been spent on home help services, day care services, meals on wheels and a range of supportive services which should be available to enable people to live independently in their own homes. My area has suffered as much as any other.

There is a problem with the nonsense of the standard spending assessment. I have spoken to Conservative Members who do not understand how the SSAs are worked out. Last year, Wakefield social services spent £4·5 million above its spending assessment. If it had had to abide by it, it would have had to reduce services drastically, scrapping provision for child protection in some instances. This year, it is £3 million above its SSA. Yesterday, I asked the deputy director of social services to tell me what it would mean if the authority had to cut that £3 million. It could mean closing four homes for aged persons and two children's homes, and reducing by 10 per cent. a fundamental part of community care—the home help service.

Alongside such cuts at local authority level in community support for elderly and disabled people, the Government have pressed money hand over fist into private institutional provision, in a huge explosion following the extension of supplementary benefit payments in 1981. When I see broadcasts by the Conservative party like that last week saying, "How much does a Labour councillor cost you?", it makes me think, "How much does a Conservative councillor cost you?" He cuts the home help service, day care centres and meals on wheels and ends up driving elderly or disabled people into private institutional day care, at a huge cost to the taxpayer. That is what a Conservative councillor costs us.

There should be a huge redirection of resources away from institutional care into independent living in the community. We must ensure that, when the new Labour Government come to power shortly, we turn on its head the central thrust of this Government's community care policy, which has been to push people into institutional private sector care.

We must transform residential care from the present warehousing provision that exists in so many private care homes. There must be more sheltered housing to give people semi-independence facilities if they need some care provision. Crucially, there must be a substantial redirection of public resources away from residential care into preventative provision within the community.

There is a need for a progressive reduction in the income support budget and the redirection of that budget to local authority community services, to voluntary organisations and to health authorities to fund a massive expansion in support and assistance within the local community.

Only today I obtained some interesting figures from the Library. I asked specifically how much money had been spent on income support to individuals going into private care homes during the past 10 years. I mentioned that the Government had removed £6 billion in personal social services funding from local authorities, thereby reducing the services available to people in their own homes and forcing them in many instances into care. The figures provided by the Library show that the amount spent on income support for people in private care homes during

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

that period is roughly equivalent to the £6 billion spent in putting people—many of whom do not need or want to be there—into private institutional care.

Unlike the Conservative Member who accused the Labour authorities of throwing money at a solution, I believe that public resources are going in the wrong direction. The Government are spending money on the wrong things, and it should be completely redirected. I am talking not about huge additional costs, but about the appropriate use of existing resources. When talking about health or community care, we must deal above all with the human cost of the failure to enable individuals to retain self-determination, their independence and their pride.

8.8 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) knows that I share his concern for community care and the provision of social services. He has perhaps done the House a disservice by suggesting that spending on social services has decreased under this Government. During the past 12 years, spending has increased by 52 per cent. and, at the same time, there has been a massive increase in expenditure through income support for those who are, sadly, resident in old people's homes. During the lifetime of the Conservative Government, that expenditure has increased from £10 million to £1 billion. There is no question but that resources are provided. It is sad that the Labour party constantly suggests that the Government do not care and do not provide money. The reality is different.

The Labour party's latest policy document suggests that a Labour Government would massively increase the resources available to the national health service. Clearly the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) does not believe that the health service is a spending priority and she is unlikely to provide the necessary money, even if Labour can find it.

No one believes that the Labour party is not sincere in wanting to improve the health service, but its record must speak for itself. When Labour was last in power, waiting lists increased by 48 per cent., the hospital building programme was suspended and in real terms doctors' pay decreased by 14 per cent. and nurses' pay by 21 per cent. The Labour party's ethos is that it cannot manage the health service efficiently; it concentrates its well-meaning efforts on the wrong items and it does not deliver the goods to the public.

The few reforms the Labour party has come up with recently—such as getting rid of competitive tendering, which will cost £135 million, and bringing in a statutory minimum wage, which will cost £500 million—will do nothing for the health service except increase costs. The money that the Labour party proposes to spend on statutory minimum wages alone would be the price of 20 district general hospitals.

I should willingly give way to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) if he will say which 20 hospitals he will close to pay for his daft minimum wage proposals. Or will he create the money out of thin air? He could not create it before. The hon. Gentleman will not rise from his seat.

Mr. Hinchliffe *rose*——

Mr. Butterfill: If the hon. Gentleman will excuse me, I shall not give way generally, because of the tight time limits. I should willingly give way to the hon. Member for Perry Barr, but he does not seem anxious to take up my offer.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): There would be one fewer speaker on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene? It seems that he does not.

Expenditure increased from £8 billion under the Labour Government to £32 billion under the Conservative Government. Nowhere is that more apparent than in my constituency of Bournemouth, West. Under the last Labour Government, East Dorset health authority was starved of resources. It did not get new hospitals. A socialist chairman of Wessex health authority decided that all new hospitals would go to socialist-controlled areas —Basingstoke and Southampton, which fortunately are no longer socialist-controlled—and we got nothing. East Dorset had virtually the lowest per capita expenditure in the country.

Since then, my constituents have seen the benefits of what has happened under the Conservative Government. There is a brand new general hospital, the first phase having been completed and the second being under construction. There is a massive new extension to St. Ann's, our hospital for the mentally ill. New operating theatres have been provided for the marvellous Westbourne eye hospital in my constituency. Perhaps most important, many new facilities and new wards have been built at the psycho-geriatric hospital at Alderney. All those developments are tangible. My constituents can see them and they demonstrate more clearly than anything else could the Government's commitment to the national health service. My constituents did not see those developments under a Labour Government.

My constituency has double the average number of elderly people, creating enormous difficulties for my health authority in particular. The elderly sector is the most expensive sector to maintain in the health service. Under the last Labour Government no special consideration was given to the funding needed, but under the Conservative Government a special factor was introduced in calculating funding for areas such as mine. Because there are more over-85-year-olds in my constituency than almost anywhere else, we get far more money than we used to get for them.

The evidence can be seen in the psycho-geriatric hospital. New wards were built to bring into the hospital people who cannot cope in their homes but would like to do so. There they can be re-trained, taught to be independent and shown how they can manage for themselves. With the help of social services, which have an enormously increased budget, those people have been able to live useful lives in their homes after a limted stay at hospital. New respite care facilities have been provided in hospitals so that carers—to whom I pay tribute—can have a break from looking after their elderly dependent relatives and elderly people can be cared for better and taught how to be more independent in their homes. All that is happening in my constituency under a Conservative Government. We have nothing to be ashamed of.

One of the problems of the success that we have had with the NHS is that people are living much longer, with

a corresponding increase in Alzheimer's disease. That appalling disease creates misery for the sufferers and, more particularly, their families. I believe that there has been a breakthrough. Encouraging trials are under way into a new drug to treat that awful disease. The trials seem to show that the drug will arrest the disease and improve the condition of existing sufferers. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister for Health would say something about that drug and how soon it may be generally available on the market.

8.17 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I wish to raise a problem in Yorkshire which is nothing short of a scandal. Although I do not expect the Minister for Health to answer me in detail, I hope that she will assure me that she will investigate the scandal and reply later.

Earlier in the debate, I drew the attention of the Secretary of State to what happened in Yorkshire this week. Like many others, we who live in the Pontefract health authority area have problems with waiting lists, and there are many tragic cases. In 1986-87, Pontefract health authority used some of the waiting list money that it received from central Government. After the authority had decided on a scheme to take 500 patients off waiting lists, consultants at a hospital refused to operate the scheme. The authority had to transfer the money to a private hospital. Slightly over 200 operations were done, whereas 500 could have been done at the NHS hospital in Pontefract.

It came to my notice last Monday that a team of five consultants and four senior managers from the Pontefract area health authority—that means from Pontefract general infirmary—were to visit three hospitals in the United States. The health authority says that the visit is in order to gain experience in issues such as quality of health care, organisational structures, American experiences in contracting and diagnostic grouping for the costing of services—I do not know what that means. The trip is to last eight days and is funded by a separate allocation from the regional health authority. I do not know what that fund is. Perhaps it is set aside to send top health officials and surgeons to America to study medical practice.

What use can be served by consultants studying American management practice? The House will recall that, in response to my intervention, the Secretary of State for Health said that he could not see any useful clinical purpose in surgeons going to America. But they have gone.

To date, we have been unable to find out the cost of that trip or whether other health authorities in Yorkshire have also sent people on it. However much such trips cost, surely the money could be better used. I do not believe that any hon. Member would support spending money to send health service staff to America to study private medicine. We are led to believe that, because the Pontefract health authority, from senior medical staff down, has never been enthusiastic about opting out into trusts, it is now being encouraged to participate in a junketing trip so that it will change its mind and show interest in opting out. If that happens in Pontefract, it will be fought all the way.

We must consider the fact that there are still great problems with staff grading. Many nursing staff feel that they have not been graded to the extent to which they are entitled. Many workers in the health service in Pontefract are not being paid in accordance with the work they do. The money that is being spent on such trips could be spent in many other areas. The security aspect is a problem in health authorities throughout the country. Something must be done about paying more attention to security. We must not forget the tragic case in Wakefield involving two consultants.

I have visited the Pontefract general infirmary several times to visit a couple of friends there, so the information that I give the House is not a trumped-up journalist's story. I give the facts. I visited a surgical ward as recently as last Sunday. In the day room, where many elderly and middle-aged patients who had undergone surgery were hoping to watch one of the semi-finals of the Challenge Cup, the patients told me that the television had been out of order for six weeks and that they had been issued with a small one that did not work very well.

Broken chairs were piled up in the corner of that small room and I was told that they had been there for six weeks. Some of those men, who were still carrying catheters around and suffering discomfort, could not find enough chairs to sit down. In another ward I was told by patients, supported by staff, that in the evening they were unable to have a drink of tea, coffee or Horlicks because their budget did not allow them to buy enough milk. I am not making a political point but stating facts. That is happening in an authority that can send nine people off junketing to America.

I do not expect the Minister of State to answer in detail but she should investigate what is happening and say where the money has come from and why people have been sent to America. What damage will be done to the people in my area who are on waiting lists—the most recent figure that I have seen is some 2,000 people waiting for general and major surgery—when five surgeons have gone away for eight days?

Like many other hon. Members, I could relate many cases that have been put to me by constituents. I am sure that Conservative Members must receive complaints from their constituents. The other day, a constituent who came to see me was worried that his wife had been waiting for a hip operation for 14 years. She had been transferred from Pontefract to St. James's hospital—that marvellous hospital in Leeds—two years ago. *[Interruption.]* It is no laughing matter. That is the information that I have been given. She was then told that she must wait two years and that she would be operated on in 1991. However, she has now been told that, because of the Gulf war, she will have to wait for another 12 months.

I sincerely hope that the Minister will investigate what I believe is nothing short of a scandal if the health authority is sending people to America when money could be put to much better use.

8.28 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): It is a sad reflection on the almost total bankruptcy of constructive thinking among the Opposition that we have had not only a speech by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that contained not a single constructive or positive idea on the Labour party's plans for the health service, but also an unimaginative, centralist and possibly even mendacious motion put forward by the Labour party today. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) that many people who work in the health service

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

resent the talking down which their service and the high standards that they so often produce always seems to receive from the Opposition.

I believe that the public have rumbled the Labour party's old argument that it would be the one to pump more resources into the national health service, and the Conservative party has not. That is nonsense. Now the average family in Great Britain spends about £44 per week on the national health service; under the Labour Government it spent £11 per week. In real terms, the amount of resources going into the health service has risen by about 52 per cent. in the past 10 years. Under the last Labour Government it went up by 6 per cent. in four years —about one third as fast. As we have heard, one year— 1977-78—saw the only cut in real resources to the health service in the past 10 years, and it was made by a Labour Government.

When I ask most consultants, they say that the facilities, such as instruments and operating theatres, with which they have to work have improved. They should have done so during the past 10 years when there has been an increase in capital expenditure of 62 per cent. in real terms under the Conservative Government. Under Labour, expenditure fell by a third in just four years.

I will translate what that increase means to my constituents. They have not only acquired a new hospital at Bewdley road in Kidderminster but, starting this autumn, there is to be a £6 million extension to our hospital, which will provide improved geriatric, obstetric and pathology facilities. I do not call such measures cuts —they represent significant investment by the Government.

The Labour party talks about beds as though the national health service were a furniture business. Beds are provided to treat patients. Under the Government 1·2 million more patients per year have been treated in hospitals than under the Labour party as well as double the number of day cases. People talk about closing beds, but last week district health authority consultants told me that the new capital investment for geriatric facilities had enabled us to close an antiquated, old fashioned Victorian building in Mill street which presently provides geriatric facilities for patients. I cannot wait for that facility to be closed. I make no pretence about it—the investment will provide a better deal for my geriatric constituents.

Nurses often have to hear their service being talked down, but there are 60,000 more of them than there were in 1979. Their average hours have dropped from 40 to 37·5 per week. They receive better training through Project 2000 and their pay has risen by 41 per cent. in real terms after taking into account price increases. Under Labour, the nurses received worse training, worked more hours and their pay dropped 25 per cent.—it bought 25 per cent. less during the last four years of the Labour Government. I do not think that Opposition Members have any lessons to teach us about managing the health service.

The hon. Member for Livingston has consistently been trumped by the Government, even when he merely asked for extra resources. I understand that last year he called for an injection of £3 billion into the national health service to make up what he regarded as lost resources. We have put in £6 billion over two years, and that investment will continue. Professor Le Grand, who has already been mentioned, is a socialist adviser to the Labour party. He said that it would be difficult to imagine that Labour could have done much better in terms of resources. If he says that, with his ideological commitment, it shows that the Labour party could not have done any better.

The most depressing factor is that the Labour party do not even seem to understand that if one tries to organise a service as big as the national health service from the top down, one is likely to make the decisions and efficiency of that service worse. That has been the case in eastern Europe. That policy makes it impossible to allocate costs properly and is likely to create greater waste and significant differences in efficiency—that has occurred between district health authorities in terms of ancilliary and administration staff.

I welcome the internal market because it will give more flexibility to local hospital managers to be able to manage properly according to local needs. It will give GPs more leverage to demand higher standards on behalf of their patients. It will identify the costs of providing treatment so that there will be a better resource allocation system than merely deciding what was spent the previous year plus a percentage. It will allow us to plan for patient needs. Therefore, it will give better patient care at any level of funding. That will be the result of the internal market and the Government's policies.

It is early days, but I shall spend a few minutes talking about GP fund-holders in my constituency. I anticipate that by the end of the year no less that 65 per cent. of my constituents will be treated by GPs operating a GP fund-holding practice. That shows the extent of the enthusiasm with which GPs have taken up the idea in my constituency. It is ironic that the three largest practices to have taken it up included the most vociferous critics of the idea when the Government mooted it last year. It has enabled them to give and demand higher standards in hospitals to and for their patients. I know that one of the GP practices already provides weight clinics, well person clinics, diabetes clinics and glaucoma clinics. As a result of being a GP fund-holder, the practices are also likely to provide further facilities for osteopathy, parentcraft and even alternative medicine.

It is not surprising that *Doctor* magazine states:

"Although it is easy to be cynical about health matters, there is no doubt that much of the health promotion now proliferating within general practice is doing a power of good."

It is doing a power of good because it gives GP fund-holders and other GPs more control over their budgets and the way they do things. That is not to say that matters could not be further improved.

I should like to see the smaller GP practices with fewer than 9,000 patients given the opportunity to be fund-holders and the ability to charge hospitals for minor operations, which would take the weight off hospital casualty departments. Eventually, I should like GP practices to be given a greater control over their budgets than the 3 per cent. they currently have. But we have taken a step in the right direction because the GPs are a dynamic part of the system. They are the patients' advocates and are nearest to patient demand. That is why they will not just demand better services or just be a spur to efficiency in NHS hospitals but, most of all, they will provide a rational data base so that planning in the health service can be done

on the basis of actual demand and costs of a district rather than supposed costs worked out by a bureaucrat in a regional health authority or in Whitehall.

According to the *British Medical Journal* and the King's Fund, as a result of the national health service reforms decisions on resources will go away from the private domain of doctors and into a more public arena. That can only be good for efficiency and the national health service. Sadly, the Labour party is too purblind to understand that the flexibility and better costing which are integral to the internal market are not a substitute for a good national health service but crucial to it. I support the Government's amendment.

8.38 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I add my tribute to those paid to my hon. Friend the new hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on his compelling speech. He is at that blissful stage in his parliamentary career when we all tell him that we shall hear a lot more from him. He may not realise that he will have to hear a lot more from all of us.

One point that has been made by Conservative Members is that the Labour party does not understand management and efficiency. I have available to me the purchasing contract system of the Newcastle district health authority. I discovered that the new, more efficient, better managed system will include an unspecified number of purchasing review teams, at least five new professional forums—whatever they may be—five quality assurance committees and at least six different audit systems—all within the one purchasing authority of one district health authority. One of the greatest weaknesses of the new system is that, because it has not been tested, the purchasing side is far too weak. Even with all the gimcrack bureaucracy that I have just described, it will stay. People who are already in the system confess that it is weak.

I have in my hands the business plan of the North Tyneside family health services authority. It tells us that, as a contractor, it feels its position to be weak because it cannot define standards. It cannot generate competition between contractors, because it does not have sufficient authority to locate contractors. It also tells us that it has no managerial or contractual relationship with practice-based staff.

The Secretary of State has already admitted that the new system he has created will be not a true market but a managed market. I do not know whether that means that the Secretary of State is one of those people whom the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) referred to as saboteurs. If it is to be a managed market, considerable deficiencies can already be seen within my own health authority. We have discovered that the managers of self-governing trusts have already awarded themselves pay rises of between 30 and 80 per cent. and that they have announced that the true extent of that pay rise is secret and commercially confidential.

We have already discovered that a 75-year-old woman has been told that because the waiting list for cataracts is so long she cannot be added to it. She cannot even go on the list as a statistic. We have already discovered that the radiotherapy and chemotherapy departments of one general hospital have not been provided with funds for new cancer drugs and the means to deliver them, and that special arrangements have had to be made to underpin that service. We have already discovered that a dermatology service will be so reduced, under the new system, that the consultants in charge of it have been told that they can have just one office in which they may choose from time to time to put four beds. We have just discovered that no provision has been made in the dental hospital for purchasing the contracts for patient services. That is the reality of the new, so-called "managed", market.

The real damage that the Government will do to themselves under the new system was referred to by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). He mentioned the public health needs planning system. Not a single Opposition Member of Parliament disputes the need for a public health needs planning system, but I wonder whether Conservative Members have a clue about the information that that will produce, or of how devastating it will be.

The northern region has hardly started its public health needs planning system, but it has already discovered that 330 of the babies born in November 1989 died unnecessarily before reaching the age of one because our health performance standards are worse than the national average. It has already produced information that 40 per cent. more women die of cervical cancer in the northern region than in the nation as a whole. It has already told us that, of those women who will die unnecessarily, 10 times more come from the families of unskilled manual workers than from the families of the professional and managerial classes. The Government will have to address those devastating new needs. I doubt whether they are prepared to take on board the means that will be needed to deal with those problems.

As for the new annual report, we called years ago for such a report, but nothing was done about implementing the recommendations of the Acheson report. We are told that many more people die prematurely in the northern region, week by week, month by month, year by year, than almost anywhere else in the country, and that the best years of the lives of far more people in the northern region than anywhere else in the country are ruined by disease and disability. Neither the Secretary of State nor those Conservative Members who have spoken in the debate even hinted that they are willing to take that information on board and do something about it. I see no sign that their complacency about the new system that they have just devised has been punctured.

8.45 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) referred to a lady who had been kept waiting for a cataract operation.

Mr. Cousins: Her name had not even been put on the list.

Mr. Thurnham: She was kept waiting, yes, to be put on the list. He referred to the realities of the situation, but he seems to have forgotten that last year 92,000 cataract operations were performed, compared with 40,000 when his party was running the national health service. He should be pleased about the reforms. I am convinced that they will lead to an increase in the number of cataract operations.

[Mr. Thurnham]

Now that hospitals are being asked to quote figures, we see huge variations in the costs of operations as between different hospitals. There are also wide variations in the waiting times for operations in different parts of the country. The reforms should lead to a much improved service and to a considerable increase in the number of cataract operations.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is not here. I share his impatience. I believe that he had the sympathy of the House when he referred to the 1986 Act, which he introduced. However, he was wrong to criticise the Government for what he called a U-turn. His Act will, in time, be implemented. We should not forget that there has been a massive increase in spending on the social services under this Government. During the last 10 years it has increased by 52 per cent.

It was the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that disappointed me most. He said nothing about his party's proposals. He failed to give any firm commitments. He said that £2·8 billion could not be found overnight. The Government have increased spending by £3 billion during the last year. I do not know what he is offering.

The hon. Gentleman referred to NHS waiting times. The longest waiting time in the NHS is the time that we have been waiting to hear what he has to say. I sympathise with his difficulties. The Labour party is giving a low priority to the NHS. It says that child benefit, pensions and education are its top priorities, so spending on the NHS is not a top priority, therefore he cannot come forward with any proposals. His party's record is very poor. Capital spending, the proportion of gross domestic product spent on health, pay for nurses and doctors, on the increase in the number of in-patients treated each year, on waiting lists, and on NHS revenue funding—all have been far better managed under this Government than they were under the Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman is in a predicament. He cannot look back and he cannot look forward, because his party does not believe that the NHS is a top priority.

What upset me most about the hon. Gentleman's speech was his unwarranted attack on charities. Is this a new Labour party policy? Perhaps he will advise the House. It will be interesting to study what he said in *Hansard*. I understood him to say that he did not agree with charities giving money to the NHS. Does he suggest that when, or if, we ever have another Labour Government he would not allow charities to contribute to the NHS? My experience is that people like to give money for hospital equipment. They gain satisfaction from doing so. It is only the trade unions—the hon. Gentleman's bosses, I guess—who do not like charities. They believe that they are a threat to trade union restrictive practices.

I am disturbed by the contrast between the successful way the Government are running the NHS and the problems encountered over the delivery of social services at local level. The people in my constituency can look forward to the provision of a new hospital. The plans are coming through and work will start in the spring of 1992. The cost will be £13 million. We have been promised an increased share of North Western regional health authority revenue. For too long, Bolton has been the Cinderella. For too long, it has been at the bottom of the league table—19th in the district. Now, not only is an increased proportion of gross domestic product spent on health care, but there will be an increase in expenditure on Bolton itself.

Like other hon. Members, I welcome GP fund holders in the constituency. Two of the major practices have embraced the idea. That spirit of reform has been adopted very strongly in the area, as well as by Christie hospital, and Central Manchester hospital, which are both going for the new trust status. I welcome the extra funds that are being made available for mental handicap units. In my constituency, there are plans for such a unit. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has been to Bolton and has heard plans discussed. I know that the health authority is working on a proposal for a new 18-bed unit to provide residential and respite care. I look forward to that coming to fruition.

I am disturbed by some failures and problems created by local authorities—too many of which are controlled by Labour—in their attempts to deliver services of a high standard. In Bolton at the moment there is much unrest among social security staff. There are threats of strikes or working to rule. It all reminds one of Labour's winter of discontent, which was the cause of so much dissatisfaction during the final year of the Labour party's last term in office.

Local authority residential homes and neighbourhood network homes involve excessive costs. There are delays in assessing the needs of the handicapped. Indeed, that applies in many local authority areas. Some local authorities, including those in Bolton and Salford, are failing to take up the mental health grant—money provided by the Government. Then there is the terrible dissatisfaction throughout the country with the way in which social workers, who are supposed to protect children, have been removing them in dawn raids from their innocent families. That has destroyed to a considerable extent the confidence that people ought to have in the way in which social services departments are run. I realise that social workers have a difficult job, but they have been given guidance in the shape of the Butler-Sloss recommendations. The situation is very disturbing. It makes one wonder whether there should not be wholesale changes in the way in which the social services are run.

A particular aspect of social services work with which I have been concerned recently is the adoption of children from Romania and other countries. I am very concerned at the attitude of the official spokesperson of the Labour party on children, the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). I believe that in her opposition to the adoption of children from Romania and elsewhere she is quite isolated. Her attitude is in complete contrast to what was said by President Iliescu of Romania when he was here yesterday. He said that he welcomed the help given by United Kingdom couples who are willing to adopt Romanian orphans. He told us that there are still 170,000 children in institutional care in Romania, and that couples wanting to adopt are welcomed. That is contrary to advice issued by some social services departments. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who has been so sympathetic in encouraging couples who wish to adopt, will take note of what the Romanian President said. He hopes that British couples will not stop adopting as a result of changes occurring in Romania. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make that fact clear to social services

departments that have been advising couples that no adoptions can be done at the moment. On the contrary, there is a great need for adoptions to continue.

I hope that my hon. Friend will find the recent formation of the British Advisory Board on Inter-Country Adoption to be of some help. That should result in the provision of very good professional advice to Government Departments, Members of Parliament and other interested people. The advisory board consists of virtually all the leading professional people concerned with the adoption of children from abroad. It has been set up under the chairmanship of Margaret Bennett of the International Bar Association, who will be involved in the forthcoming Hague convention discussions.

A few moments ago, I talked about the difficulties in social services departments. I hope that, in her winding-up speech, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will give a little thought to whether some of the functions of the social services department might be transferred to the local health authorities. There is a difference in attitude. People employed by local authorities tend to like to work from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, whereas many of these services are required 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I believe that these services could be provided much more sympathetically and competently by the local health authorities than by the local social services departments, many of which have demonstrated incompetence and have lost the confidence of the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has run out of time.

8.56 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate. It is 40 years since the inauguration of the health service as we knew it. Perhaps complete revitalisation, revision and overhaul are somewhat overdue, in view of the obvious changes in circumstances, in medicine and in technology. But there is one thing that never changes, and it forms the basis on which the health service was originally created—to provide equality of health care and of medicine to all citizens. In other words, citizens were to be treated equally. Let us hope that the target of a Government of any party would be care of high quality, particularly for those people who cannot care for themselves.

In January of this year, the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order was passed in this House late in the evening, after a debate lasting just an hour and a half. That is the extent to which we from Northern Ireland were able to participate in the discussion of legislation affecting ourselves. No account whatsoever was taken of the differences between the manner in which services are rendered in Northern Ireland and the manner in which they are rendered in Britain. Over the years, services in Northern Ireland evolved in a slightly different direction. Communities in Northern Ireland are much more closely related, and services much more harmonised, than is the case here.

For instance, general practitioners, local hospitals and professionals involved in the provision of social services and community care have been very closely linked and identified with each other. No attempt was made to take into account that very valuable asset. With the new order, the link between one section and another went out of the window. The new structures that have been set up have diminished that facility. The order concentrated on financial restriction and administrative structures, in respect of both hospitals and doctors.

I am not in a position to make a critical analysis of medicine or of the provision of medical care, but, as a public representative, one sees what is happening. Three major areas will not be addressed adequately under the new regime. First, there is a need for greatly increased provision for the larger number of elderly and mentally disturbed elderly in the community. Secondly, the new structure does not seem to take into account the obvious necessity to provide more health care for those on lower incomes who, because of financial and other circumstances, often cannot look after themselves. Thirdly, more resources should be devoted to preventive medicine because income levels, educational ability, housing conditions and general social factors make preventive medicine more difficult in some sections of the community. In those three spheres, there will be less adequate provision under the new regime.

The new structure seems to be almost solely concerned with financial restrictions, budgetary control and so-called cost efficiency. There is an administrative nightmare in the hospital and general practitioner sectors. There is a thrust, if not a firm policy, to translate services from the public sector to the private sector as much as possible.

Budget squeezes are affecting all the boards in Northern Ireland. My area is covered by the Eastern and the Southern health and social services boards. It is evident from the new programmes and policies which they have published that the most vulnerable members of the community will suffer under the new regime. Already we have had an announcement of the closure of three homes in my constituency, in contrast to the new buildings which are planned in other constituencies, according to the contributions which I have heard in the debate. In my area, where modest hospital renewal has been planned for some 26 years, it will not be available under the new regime.

I can only draw on personal experience to comment on what is happening. The modest provision of transport for mentally handicapped children in my constituency has been withdrawn. Now they will not be transported from the rural areas of a largely rural constituency to the small towns where Gateway and other bodies provided facilities which gave some respite to their families. The elderly are suffering great deprivation from the lack of facilities which previously were available to them. All that is happening because the budgets of the boards are being squeezed beyond the point of financial efficiency to the point of financial deficiency. Unfortunately, it is the very sensitive sections of the community who are suffering.

Allied to all that in Northern Ireland has been the total abolition of local democracy in the health services. Previously we had district health committees allied roughly to our 26 district councils. They have been reduced to four health service councils. No public representative has been appointed by the Minister to any of those councils, so there is no local democracy. Every member of all four boards is a ministerial appointment. That means that the natural probing which results from local representation will be completely absent from the scrutiny of the councils.

Provision for the mentally handicapped has been reduced locally. Under the health boards in my constituency the priority areas will suffer most. Acute hospital services are being cut. There has been a reduction

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

in residential and community care, particularly child care. That is happening under the new horizons of the structure that was supposed to lead to better care for the people. When we look back, we will see that there is no longer equality of health care and community care, or concern for the less fortunate.

I have no doubt that the weakest members of the community I represent will suffer most because of their background, income level and education. In Northern Ireland, the social deprivation suffered by some may be even worse than on the mainland because, right or wrong, their local area is designated as subject to some paramilitary influence. Those people who already suffer deprivation, however, will suffer even more because they will no longer receive reasonable health provision and care in the community.

I hope that my interpretation is wrong. I hope that we are now witnessing a new Jerusalem in terms of health and social security. I am not arguing statistics, nor do I seek to argue as an expert in medicine or administration, but my experience means that I know that the people I represent are not getting the health provision they received in the past and to which they are entitled now and in the future.

9.5 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who should have come to the House to apologise for the consequences of his ill-informed campaign against reforms in the health service. His misleading campaign of disinformation and distortion caused unnecessary suffering to many elderly and ill. Was it the act of a caring man to arouse such unnecessary fears among the elderly and the sick or was it the act of an opportunist?

Typical of the distortion that has been offered by the hon. Member for Livingston and his hon. Friends is the implication that, once hospitals have become self-governing trusts and opted out of the NHS, those people must somehow pay for the treatment they will receive in those hospitals. The Opposition should accept that those hospitals are opting out of the bureaucracy of the NHS, but that they are not opting out of the principles that have underlain the NHS since 1948.

Everyone who goes to a self-governing trust hospital will still receive free treatment, but they will also find that those trusts, such as the Royal Free hospital which serves patients in my constituency, will be more responsive than in the past. It is significant that the sponsors of the trust at the Royal Free have made a commitment to reduce the hospital's waiting list.

The hon. Member for Livingston should have come to the House with a great sense of humility, because there is no doubt that he lost the battle for extra spending in the shadow Cabinet. It is not sufficient for the hon. Gentleman to tell the House that health service spending is top of the Labour party agenda, because we know that agenda as a result of the draft Budget produced by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Although it offered more spending on child benefit, there was not a penny more for the health service.

Yesterday, an Opposition Member spoke about a hospital closure in Liverpool, and today we heard about a hospital closure in Manchester. They claim to oppose such closures, but they should tell the House what hospitals they would close in their place.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Why?

Mr. Marshall: Because his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East has already said that there will not be a penny more for the NHS from a Labour Government. The draft budget made that clear, and Opposition Members should argue their case within that constraint.

The situation that would prevail under a Labour Government is even worse than one might expect. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) has already pointed out that the introduction of a minimum wage would result in an extra £500 million cost to the NHS. To meet the cost of getting rid of competitive tendering, eye and dental check charges and prescription charges, 30 general hospitals would have to be closed.

It is up to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) to tell us whether one of those 30 general hospitals would be in his constituency. Would a hospital in Manchester be closed? How many hospitals in London will be closed by the Labour party? That is a policy to which it is committed.

I welcome the reforms that the Government have introduced. The Labour party is indulging in nothing less than a cynical charade. One does not have to listen to the rhetoric to understand that; one need only look at the record. The last Labour Government cut the hospital building programme by 16 per cent. They cut nurses' pay by 21 per cent. in real terms, and increased hospital waiting lists by 48 per cent. The people will look at the record of the last Labour Government, they will contrast it with the rhetoric of the hon. Member for Livingston, and they will know that the record is the guide to the future.

People can look at the record of this Government, who are treating a record number of patients with a record number of doctors and nurses. That record is in complete contrast to that of the Opposition when they were in power. The reason is that the Conservative party have created a more efficient economy. That, plus the fact that we have caring Ministers, has enabled the health service to improve dramatically in the past 10 years.

9.10 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): It was a privilege to hear the fulsome tributes by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) in his maiden speech to our late colleague, Mr. Donald Coleman. My hon. Friend gave a graphic description of how the people in the valleys of south Wales have suffered in the past decade. He not only knows how many O-levels he has, but where his home is—and it is now clearly among the valleys. My hon. Friend will be here a lot longer than most of the Conservative Members who heard his speech, and he will be here to play a role in rectifying the neglect of the past decade.

I timed the Secretary of State's speech at about 20 minutes. Less than two minutes of it referred to community care policy, as my hon. Friends have emphasised. He then spent 10 minutes on bluster, attacking the Labour Opposition. Frankly, I am not going to take anything from the intellectual guru behind the poll tax. They can witter all they like, but part of the

responsibility for their 1987 White Paper, Cmnd. 9714, was a direct result of the work of the committee chaired by the Secretary of State for Health. The poll tax has destroyed community care policy, as it will effectively destroy the Government.

The Government-imposed changes in the national health service have created a climate of fear in parts of it and among the staff in some hospitals, one of which I shall name. That hospital is so well-located, geographically, in the centre of a city that it is used by citizens in all areas of the city and outside it. Indeed, parts of north Warwickshire have such a poor public transport system under this Government that it is easier to get to the general hospital in the centre of Birmingham than to local district hospitals.

Birmingham general hospital is friendly to its users, which goes against it. It is efficient in throughput per consultant firm, much better than the Queen Elizabeth hospital, and that also goes against it. It is not a mega-hospital, and that, too, goes against it. Until the blight brought about by the Government, that hospital had a better record of nurse retention after training than the Queen Elizabeth hospital, which also goes against it.

The operating theatres have been closed deliberately to force patients elsewhere so that the figures can be manipulated. It is known that accident and emergency cases go past the hospital to get to the general hospital. Because of the climate of fear, the position is so bad that Members of Parliament cannot be seen talking to senior staff in Birmingham general hospital by administrators simply because the staff fear for their careers and for those of their colleagues. Meetings have to take place elsewhere in the city.

That is just one example and we have heard many others in the debate. We have heard horrific stories about the waste of public money, going well beyond the bounds of public probity, especially in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). However, I want to concentrate on community care, as the Secretary of State did not but I presume that the Minister will.

I want to draw the attention of the House to a survey published on 9 April which claimed that 80 per cent. of all those interviewed said that they had never heard of the policy of care in the community. Those who had heard of it said that they did not really know what its implications would be for them. The survey was commissioned by the BBC education service for a new BBC 2 series, "Who Cares?"

The survey questioned a sample of 2,000 people mainly aged over 70 from England, Scotland and Wales and 80 per cent. said that they had never heard of the community care policy. Those were elderly people who were being cared for, or thought that they would need care in the future, as well as current and future carers of elderly people. They were living in a wide range of accommodation—residential care, sheltered housing, both public and private, and in their own homes. By any stretch of the imagination, it was a good cross-section, but 80 per cent. said that they had never heard of the Government's policy of care in the community. More than 50 per cent. said that they needed more information about facilities and services. That issue is constantly raised throughout the country.

I give notice now of one question that I would like answered before the end of the debate and I shall repeat and come back to it during the course of my speech. Frankly, I should have thought that it would have been answered by the Secretary of State. It is this: will the Government tell us the cost of their policy of care in the community? The Secretary of State did not talk about delaying the policy or putting it on ice. He talked about its slow implementation—that it is under way and will come to fruition. Therefore, he must have some idea about the cost of implementation.

Last July, a delay was announced to give people more time to get ready. I want to know what the Government have done with the extra time that they have had to calculate the cost of the implementation of that policy so that they can give that figure to the House for the first time.

The details of the survey which were supplied to me by the Carers National Association revealed a blunt message —80 per cent. said that the standard of care for elderly people should not depend upon individual income. If I may use a pun, there is a health warning in this survey for the Government, and that is that two thirds of carers had heard of the policy. Most did not have great expectations of it and three quarters of those said that a political party's policy on caring for elderly people was important when voting in a general election.

It has to be fair comment to say that it was nothing less than cruel for the Government to raise false hopes for an improvement of tailor-made services and support for the elderly and disabled and then to dash them last July during a statement from the Dispatch Box. This month should have seen the implementation of the policy.

The anger among carers, some at the end of their tether, is enormous. They soldiered on not knowing that they were carers, but they got the message that there was help on the way and right at the last minute their hopes were completely dashed and the help was withdrawn. The bitterness, anger, frustration, worry and concern has to be heard and seen to be believed. I wonder how many carers and groups Ministers have met, not in the great conference halls but on a one-to-one or a family basis since they announced that cruel decision last July.

Now there is considerable doubt about whether the Government's commitment to implementing their policy stands. I say "their" policy because it is certainly not the policy of the Griffiths report. The Government just chose the bits of that that they wanted.

We want to know why there is a delay in the implementation of the policy—why, in the Secretary of State's words, there is a slow implementation, and why, in the words of others, it has been abandoned. Last year, the then Secretary of State for Health said that it was because of the poll tax. He constantly repeated that on 18 July during his statement to the House. He referred to

"excessive levels of community charge".

Later he said that it was

"in the light of irresponsible behaviour by largely socialist local authorities, up and down the country, who cannot keep their policies within reasonable costs."

Then he said:

"The policy was proceeding with a general welcome . . . until we reached the problem with the community charge." —[*Official Report*, 18 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 1003-5.]

The general consensus at the time—not from the Government—was that it would cost about £15 per head per year on the community charge to implement the policy. Since then the Government have lopped £140 per head off the community charge. Even so, last July when the decision to abandon the policy was announced the community charge was expected to be here for ever more.

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

It would still affect and be affected by the implementation of the policy. What was to happen in 1992 and 1993 when the poll tax was still there? Indeed, it still will be there in one shape or another if the Government remain in office.

By now the Government must know the cost of implementing the policy and they should share that knowledge with the House and the nation. Two years, even allowing for the delay, is a short time in local government planning and expenditure. After plans have been made the Government cannot keep intervening and turning everything upside down like a constant revolution. There must be planning if policies are to be effectively implemented and we want to know what use the Government have made of the extra time. The Government constantly ask local authorities and the voluntary sector what they are doing with the extra time that they have been given to make sure that policies are up and running. They throw the question back to the Government.

Are Departments talking to one another? This crucial policy is shared by several Departments—Social Security, Health and Environment. It is a cliché to say that it is everybody's distant relative and nobody's baby, but it applies strongly in this case. Even the Department of Transport must be involved.

This morning I was in the constituency of Luton, South discussing with people in sheltered housing some of the problems that they encounter. Those people are in semi-care. They have their own front door and kitchen and a minimum amount of care outside their homes. They cannot even get bus services to do their shopping. They are being forced into dependency simply because of the Government's crazy policies. They said to me, "Our MP does not visit us very often. We do not know whether he uses a bus or whether he understands the situation."

Mr. Hayes: It is disgraceful for the hon. Gentleman to say that.

Mr. Rooker: It is not disgraceful. My job is to articulate the needs of the people of this country. If those needs are not articulated by Members of Parliament, somebody else has to voice them.

The Government must have made decisions about the transfer of the social security budget from income support to local authorities so that those authorities can assess the best means of operating the care plans and mixing public, private and voluntary care as required by the individual. Decisions must have been made about the transfer of mega-billions of public expenditure. *[Interruption.]* We are surely talking about well over a billion for a start.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: No, I will not give way.

That amount will rise to close on £2 billion this year—and that is purely for the income support for residential care. We also want to know the community care expenditure in respect of the health service because that will have to be transferred at some time. What is the mechanism for that and what are the Government's thoughts on it? They should share with the House, local authorities and care providers the decisions that they have taken.

It is still a matter of chance as to whether a person ends up in long-stay geriatric care, nursing care or residential care, all of which levy different costs and charges. The Minister of State and the Secretary of State know that that matter must be addressed. How are they addressing it? Secrecy should not be the order of the day. The providers are not Ministers but local people, the voluntary sector, local authorities and the private sector, and they need to know the Government's thinking. The Government have made no attempt to set out the key issues since the announcement of the abandonment of the policy.

Mr. Hayes: It is not an abandonment of policy.

Mr. Rooker: It is an abandonment of policy. Until Ministers tell us what they have been doing since they announced the decision in July about planning for the future and the costings for the policy, people will not believe they are serious about fully implementing the policy. Last year's figure for income support in terms of residential care was £1·3 billion, rising by about £400 million a year. That is in a narrow sector of care, and health service provision must be added. Therefore, we are talking about several billions. That issue caused the Government to commission the Griffiths report in the first place. No decisions were being made about this continuing expenditure and there was an open-ended budget commitment on income support. That was why the Government listened to the Audit Commission in 1986 and asked for the Griffiths report.

There was a long delay before a White Paper was published in 1989. That was followed within days with the publication of the Bill, which was quickly pushed through to Royal Assent seven months later on 29 June 1990, with implementation this April. Less than three weeks later, the whole thing was put on ice. That is not good business or good management of Government affairs. We are entitled to be told about the consequences. I know that there was disquiet at the time about the rush to implementation——

Mr. Hayes: Where from?

Mr. Rooker: From the Select Committee.

Until 17 July, the Government were adamant that the Bill should be implemented on 1 April——

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I am not giving way as there is no time to do so. I should be taking time out of the Minister's speech.

The Select Committee had misgivings about the timing. Others also had misgivings, but the Government had no misgivings. If those misgivings had any foundation, the Government should today tell us the real reason for the delay and the real costs of the implementation of the policy. Local government needs to know.

Last July, wild allegations were made about local government and the poll tax. That was the Government's reason for delaying the implementation of the Bill——

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: Sit down—I am not giving way.

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I right in saying that it is for the Chair to tell me when to sit down and not the hon. Gentleman, who is afraid to answer questions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is telling the hon. Gentleman to sit down. The Minister for Health will doubtless catch my eye in a few moments, and she can reflect the views of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Rooker: The main reason given for the abandonment of the policy was the poll tax, not that it could not be implemented by local authorities. The former Secretary of State said that the key reason was the cost on the poll tax, not the mechanics of implementation. If, in fact, it was not the poll tax that delayed implementation, what was it? Local government has not been treated fairly. We need to know the current figures.

The Secretary of State said last year that the delay was reasonable, and we think that the Government want to put off implementation until after the election. Of course, they think that they will not lose the election. The devastating critique—and the Minister has read it because she has answered questions on it—by the King's Fund Research Institute on the causes and consequences of the delay in implementing the community care programme have not been fully answered by the Government. There has not been an opportunity in the House either in an Adjournment debate or in an all-day debate. Today, the Minister has the opportunity to answer some of the points made in that important but not lengthy report. It contained all the bald points about the consequences of the Government's decision.

The obvious and major consequence is that by delaying implementation the resources will not be available for extending care at home. We must home in on that point because finance is the key to the policy and its implementation. Local authorties know that the resources are just not there. Health authorities have been busily shifting resource costs to the social security system. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) gave an example of that. Money that would have been identified as directly possible for transfer to the care in the community programme is disappearing. It is no longer available because health authorities have gone their own way. They identified a window of opportunity to shift the burden on to the social security budget, which the Government are also short changing by not funding the full care costs.

It all comes back to money. Others are involved in juggling with the Government's budget, because it is an open-ended budget commitment. Surely the Government will not say that there is to be a continuing open-ended social security budget commitment over the next two years. That budget commitment would be growing by at least £400 million a year. The problem of implementation then will be twice as bad as it would have been had they done the job properly this ye... They know that. They are storing up further problems. In the meantime, thousands of our fellow citizens are being deprived of the opportunity of remaining in their own homes, with the extra costs that that entails. Nobody claims that that is a cheap option, and I do not claim that the Government said that it was.

There is not enough time to do justice to the other issue that I intended to raise which has been touched upon by Conservative Members—mental illness, for which the Secretary of State highlighted the specific grant. I do not want to go into the details, but the difficulty is that the infrastructure to deal with the problem is not in place in the community. The grant will not cope with the problem, because it will deal only with discharges, not with the people who will not be able to go into mental hospitals as they might once have done and later come out into the community. The whole policy is centred on discharges. When hospitals close, where is the procedure for making sure that their patients are picked up and helped into the care of the community in their own homes? There is no infrastructure. There is a moratorium on the care in the community policy—and that is putting it politely. There should be a similar moratorium on the closure of long-stay hospitals until the infrastructure for discharged patients in the community is put in place.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Rooker: That is not what the Government are doing. If they were doing it we should not be able to see in large cities, and even in small cities, our fellow citizens wandering the streets, sleeping out at night with nowhere to live, because there is no proper effective system to take care of them. That is the difficulty that Ministers have brought upon themselves by continuing the discharge policy while abandoning the care in the community policy.

The Labour party, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is different from the Tories. I do not seek to drag you into the debate, but you know that, and so does Mr. Speaker. We shall offer a genuine partnership between Whitehall, town halls and the voluntary sector. We want authorities' social services spending on community care to be clearly identified, and the Government's contribution to be ring-fenced. The Government do not agree with that. That is why the money for community care is kept secret, and why we must press them on the costs. We will ring fence the money so that everybody knows exactly how much there is. We want a Department of Health and Community Care so that there can be no dithering about which Minister or Department is responsible for implementing policy. We shall restore fair choice as between public and private sector residential care, so that access to the massive public subsidy is on the same footing whether elderly and disabled people choose private residential care or a local authority or voluntary sector home.

We shall implement the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. We mean it when we say that users of the service have rights and we intend to see that those rights are given practical effect, which can be done only by implementing the rest of that Act. Our package will include support services for carers—the group the Government have forgotten. We shall provide care attendants to supply vital daytime and evening care, genuine and sufficient respite care to allow for breaks for carers, and a proper carers' benefit. Why should carers suffer massive financial loss as they do now? The Government are the Government and they will not tell us the cost of the policy that they are trying to implement. We will make sure that there is sanctuary provision for some of those transferred into the community who may need to be moved back to extra care temporarily due to stress. No one can deny that that problem exists.

I recently met a gentleman who is living in a nursing home in his own room on the ground floor with access to the garden after spending 41 years in a mental hospital being pumped full of drugs. We do not know why that happened. Having spent six months outside hospital, he is

[Mr. Rooker]

transformed, but a whole lifetime has disappeared for one of our fellow citizens. It is not a party political matter, but there must be hundreds if not thousands of people to whom that has happened in the past. We must take that on board and make sure that the policy is not delayed any longer than necessary. It is why we object so much not about the implementation of the specific grant but to the abandonment of the policy.

It appears that the Government are seeking not to implement the policy but to let it wither on the vine, and to let local authorities pick up the tab. That will give the Government a further excuse to complain about local authorities.

We shall set about enabling all individuals, wherever they are and wherever their home has been for however many years, to achieve as full a life as possible within the community care programme. They should have—and their advocates should invoke for them all their rights to ensure that they get—justice and fair play. Disability should not equal dependency. The only way in which we should make sure that does not happen is by fully implementing the Government's plans plus what we would add to them as we do not see eye to eye with them on these matters.

I keep hearing sedentary interventions from Conservative Members about costs. When we are in government we shall fully disclose all the costs of our policy. We shall ring-fence funds so that we can be accountable. I am asking the Government to do the same for their policies. We want services to be formed and shaped not according to the purchasing power of users as consumers through the mechanism of the marketplace, but out of respect for them as human beings and their rights as our fellow citizens.

9.37 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I begin by joining others in congratulating the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on his maiden speech. He follows in the footsteps of an hon. Member who was much respected in the House and is greatly missed. It is clear from the hon. Gentleman's speech that he will be a champion of his constituents. Members of Parliament on both sides are united in their care and commitment to their constituents and the way in which they inform their judgments about policies in the House.

We have had a debate in which many hon. Members have spoken forcefully and with feeling. Frankly, I sympathise with the shadow health team. How difficult it must be to have to admit that, in respect of their portfolio, the Conservatives do it and have done it better. Take our record over the past decade. One has only to look at the potential in our reforms. We are committed to the best health service possible for patients. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) is quite right. The Opposition argue for a proliferation of commissions and quangos. We do not. We rely on the dedicated work force of the national health service backed by a strong economy. That is why we can say, and the Opposition know, that the numbers of doctors, nurses, dentists and midwives have increased.

I am not surprised that Opposition Members groan; they realise only too well that when we talk about statistics, facts or incontrovertible information, they have nothing in the cupboard. Their record has nothing except cuts and the destruction of the health service that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) so clearly demonstrated.

During the previous 10 years, the numbers of in-patients, day cases and out-patients have all increased. Earlier today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced the encouraging figures of the reduction in the number of people on waiting lists, especially the target group of those who have waited more than a year for treatment.

It is outrageous and deplorable for the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to compare the figures with those of the autumn of 1979, after the Labour Government had left office. My hon. Friends know that had he chosen to compare the figures to those of the spring of 1979, he would have found the highest figures for those on waiting lists.

Mr. Robin Cook: Let us do just that. If we compare the number of people on the waiting list in March 1979 with those announced at 3.30 pm this afternoon, we see that there are 144,000 more people on waiting lists now than there were in March 1979.

Mrs. Bottomley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cook: The hon. Lady cannot deny it. I am citing figures from the press release issued by her Department this afternoon. If she wishes to quote figures for nurses, she should read the parliamentary answers that she signs. She would then know, from an answer that she gave to me, that in five years the previous Labour Government created twice as many nurses as this Government have done in 10 years and at four times the rate.

Mrs. Bottomley: There is not one nurse in the country who does not know perfectly well that nurses' pay has increased by more than 40 per cent. under this Government, whereas it fell by more than 20 per cent. under the previous Labour Government. In fact, only recently the Royal College of Nursing said that the main problem is not nurses' pay but their status. We recognise that, which is why nurses appreciate the practical steps taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to enhance the role of nurses, to introduce Project 2000 and to ensure that nurses are properly recognised as full members of the health care team.

Nurses can be confident under this Government. The Opposition make promises but constantly fail to deliver. We have invested in the health service and increased the number of nurses and doctors. We have provided £32 billion this year which has been highlighted by so many of my hon. Friends. People are living longer—there is an extra two years of life expectancy—and infant mortality continues to fall; about half the previous number of women now die in childbirth and fewer men under the age of 65 die of strokes and heart disease.

When did the Labour party suddenly begin to think that perhaps the NHS needed restructuring? It was only after our reforms started to capture the imagination of the people who work in the NHS. We see the enthusiasm and commitment of an increasing number of people who recognise the opportunities that are made available by our reforms to improve patient care and to make more responsive plans to meet their patients' needs. One thousand seven hundred GPs have chosen to become fund

holders and there are 57 trusts now operating. There are more than 100 units queuing up to be part of the second wave.

Labour's opposition to fund holders is now perhaps a little less shrill. It will not be long before the noise about trusts also abates. Perhaps by the time they revise their policy they will adopt trusts as they have adopted the right to buy, trade union reform and multilateral disarmament. I am afraid that my hon. Friends have seen and heard it all before.

The hon. Member for Livingston fails to understand the growing support for the reforms among those who work in the NHS. Labour had to resort to threatening trust managers with their jobs to try to dampen their enthusiasm, which was disgraceful. Thankfully, Labour has stopped short of threatening GP fund holders with their jobs. It would have to face committed family doctors. Labour is playing the part of the health service Rottweiler but without the teeth. Labour's leader—rightly—will not let his Front Bench off the leash yet. The shadow Health Secretary has been muzzled by his own leader and he and his colleagues have been forbidden to make pledges of increased funding to the health service. They can only stand on the sidelines and shout as we deliver the increased resources—£32 billion this year—*[Interruption.]* I am grateful to have had the opportunity to give that information.

Labour's approach is based on promises, on a scandalous disregard for the achievements of the NHS and social service staff, on Sunday surveys for Monday publicity and on sackloads of words. People in the health service and welfare services know that we are a Government with a record to be proud of who have a great deal more to do. We live in times of change and times of improvement. There is a great deal happening in the health service that we feel strongly about.

I agree that it is easy in a debate to concentrate on the exciting developments in the health service and the new treatments available, such as hip replacements and cataract treatments—treatments that push forward the frontiers of science and were not available before. Like other hon. Members, I wish to concentrate on community care aspects. Ninety-five per cent. of health care takes place in the community. Our policies for implementing community care are extremely important. Community care is vital to the nation as a whole. It potentially affects all of us as givers or receivers of care. Again, our valuable record demonstrates our commitment to enabling more vulnerable people to enjoy as full a life as possible in the community.

Spending on personal social services has increased by 53 per cent. in real terms. Labour's Sunday surveys do not seem to care for that progress. This year's standard spending figure for personal social services is £4·5 billion —a cash increase of more than 23·5 per cent. on last year and the biggest increase for 15 years in social service spending. I am afraid that Labour social service speakers are silent on that spending. Cash benefits for the disabled and the long-term sick rose from £1·8 billion in 1978-79 to £8·3 billion in 1989-90. The number of those receiving invalid care allowance rose spectacularly from 11,000 to 130,000 in just five years. That means more help for carers and for those cared for.

I hope that the issues of mental handicap and mental illness unite hon. Members. There has been a threefold increase in the number of community psychiatric nurses. They are the key agents for effective care of the mentally ill in the community. There has been a sixfold increase in the number of mental handicap nurses. Those substantial achievements ensure that community care can be implemented successfully and effectively.

I am staggered to hear hon. Members who should know better talk about care in the community being abandoned. I suggest that each of them makes contact with his or her director of social services. I suggest that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) talks to his director of social services. I met her on Tuesday this week. She has been at the forefront in implementing community care and recognising the role of carers. Like other directors of social service departments, she has seen the amount that we believe social services should spend increased by a record 23·5 per cent. this year.

Mr. Hayes: Will my hon. Friend remind the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that the Social Services Select Committee warned the Government of the dangers of speeding implementation of community care?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. One could, in justice, say that the hon. Member for Perry Barr made that point himself. There were many conflicting themes in his speech. He questioned whether anyone knew about community care and said that the carers were upset that it had not taken place. He asked why we had not gone ahead but also said that the Social Services Committee had said that we were going too fast.

I wish to talk about the aims and goals of the policy. People should enjoy the optimum quality of life and maximum independence for as long as they can. Service users should have as much say as possible in the care provided for them. Carers should be properly supported. The policy is about promoting choice and promoting dignity. It is about catering for people's needs, not providing services according to those that are available.

I wish to refer to many of the themes that were raised during the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) spoke forcefully and effectively about the reforms and the need for change. It is a question not simply of throwing more money at the health service but of ensuring that that money is used well. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow also made a forceful and clear speech and referred to that eminent academic, Professor Le Grand, and his view, which I am pleased that he drew to the attention of the House. He also identified the important work done by the Audit Commission to ensure, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), that efficiency is the ally and not the enemy of compassion. By achieving value for money we can ensure that we improve our services to the best possible effect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), in an excellent speech, identified in practical terms the changes that have taken place in his health authority —the increases in funding, in professional staff and in care for patients. My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) spoke about the changes, improvements and opportunities. We shall consider carefully his call for a further extension of fundholders to enable those with smaller practices to come within the scheme.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South made it only too clear that we should judge records as opposed to rhetoric when we decide which party can best be trusted with the health service. We all agree with the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). He said that the longest waiting time in the national health service is the wait for Labour's policy. That is only too right. He raised an important issue about inter-country adoption and I shall carry it forward. I value the work that he has done to ensure that inter-country adoption, which plays an important part for many families, is properly controlled, the families are properly scrutinised and assessed, and the local authorities co-operate and undertake their work effectively. I also value his assistance in ensuring that we have an effective policy in that area.

However, the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) gave a biased account and a catalogue of complaints about his constituency. That is something that those in the health service find so desperately demoralising about having a Labour Member of Parliament. Unlike my hon. Friends, who look for progress, success and achievement in the health service, Labour Members go around looking for ways in which they can denigrate the achievements of those who dedicate their lives to providing health care. I feel that I owe it to those who work in the health service in the constituency of the hon. Member for Withington to point out—he is obviously not going to do so—that the number of day cases that they treated between 1982 and 1990 rose by 72·3 per cent. and the number of in-patients rose by over 10 per cent. Moreover, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who is to meet the hon. Gentleman about some of the proposals for change in his area, recently opened a community health centre at the cost of £1·2 million. A £4·2 million development——

Mr. Bradley: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I feel that the work of the health service in Manchester will not be recognised if I do not put the record straight, and I shall not allow the hon. Gentleman to contaminate its excellent work again.

The new hon. Member for Neath made an excellent speech. However, I do not want him to follow in the footsteps of some of his colleagues, because there was a tendency to follow the same path. In his maiden speech he overlooked the fact that, between 1979 and 1988, the number of in-patients rose by 37 per cent., the number of out-patients rose by 37 per cent. and the number of day cases that were treated trebled in his part of the world. As a new Member, he will want the health workers in his constituency to recognise the great developments that have taken place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) has provided a most valuable service to the House in identifying and pushing forward the cause of nurse prescribing. We are making good headway on that issue and, as he knows, a cost-benefit analysis is under way, the results of which we hope to have by August. The Government have made it clear that, like my hon. Friend, they believe that there is more that nurses can do. They will be vital when we fully implement community care. We want to use their professional skills to the full.

I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington for mentioning women doctors. They have made excellent progress. About one in eight GPs used to be women; by 1989, the figure was one in five; and this year —I hope that hon. Members will bear with me, hon. Ladies certainly will—one in four GPs will be women.

My hon. Friend also raised important points about encouraging more people from ethnic communities to come forward to train as doctors. I shall certainly follow that up.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), who has done so much to promote the cause of community care, identified a number of important issues. We value the steps that he is taking in relation to small residential homes. He mentioned the new drug for those with Alzheimer's disease. There are some exciting developments and I can assure my hon. Friend that the drug, which is currently under trial, will, we hope, come forward for licensing. But, of course, the strict tests for licensing must include safety, quality and efficacy. There is no doubt that many people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease in this country will greatly benefit if the drug can receive a full licence.

A number of other points were raised. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) spoke of consultants in his health authority visiting the United States to try to inform themselves on how to carry forward their work in the health service. I shall certainly look into that aspect, but if my investigation reveals that those consultants and managers were trying to ensure that their work was informed by best management practice, by the effective use of resources, all of us should applaud that. Of course, it is not the case that our health service, available to all and free at the point of delivery, is anything other than profoundly different in many aspects from the provision of health care in the United States.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the issue of the security of those working in the health service—a subject which we are addressing more carefully.

Many hon. Members have questioned the work under way to implement community care. This April, local authorities were required to have in place complaints procedures and inspection units. Increased training resources have been made available so that 140,000 staff in social service departments are this year being trained for care in the community. We have carried forward our drug and alcohol assistance for the voluntary organisations. Above all, the work done by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to ensure that the work on mental illness makes further progress is extremely important. Hon. Members have been united in their concern to ensure that the mentally ill receive the services that they require. That is why the specific grant, backed by capital assistance, was introduced to ensure that those leaving a psychiatric hospital or those in need of care in the community receive the help required.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister of State give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that the hon. Gentleman would like me to address the issue of the Disabled Persons

(Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. He has done as much as any hon. Member to identify the needs of the disabled. The key point is that the care in the community proposals overtake the 1986 Act and ensure the user is at the forefront of the assessment. The lion's share of the Act has already been implemented, but I shall repeat the assurance that I have already given. Should the need emerge for further elements of the Act to be implemented, we shall most certainly continue to consider that.

Mr. Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have heard nothing out of order.

Mr. Clarke: Is it in order, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister to mislead the House by saying that the lion's share——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not misleading the House.

Mrs. Bottomley: When he reads the record, I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that I have covered his points fairly and squarely. I should, of course, be happy to discuss the matter further with him.

May I ask the hon. Member for Perry Barr to spend a long time with his own director of social services and to continue to work with us to promote partnerships throughout the country? He mentioned regional health authorities——

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 310.

Division No. 118] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carr, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamble, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Mont'e E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan

Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen

Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wiltshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the near 25 per cent. increase in the number of in-patients treated and the near 100 per cent. increase in the number of hospital day cases since 1979 and on the further recent fall in hospital waiting times; welcomes the successful introduction of the Government's reforms which are already leading to better quality services, more responsiveness to people's needs and wishes and improved value for money; notes that the reforms are being backed in 1991-92 by record increases in resources for the National Health Service and in the standard spending assessment for the personal social services; welcomes the Government's commitment to full implementation of its community care policy, through local government, by April 1993; supports the Government's objective of using the National Health Service reforms to deliver real improvements in the health of the people through the development of a national health strategy; and looks forward to the forthcoming publication of a consultative document setting out the Government's proposals.

Community Charge

10.16 pm

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the two community charge prayers——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a correction slip for the regulations, SI 230, which has been made available to the House. Would it be possible to clarify the contents of that correction slip, because, at first sight, the matter to be corrected and the correction appear to be identical, unless the semi-colon at the end of the correction is integral to it rather than separating it from the other mistake in the orginal regulations. How can that obscure point be clarified so that we know what we are talking about?

Mr. Speaker: Would it be for the convenience of the House if I read out the correct version?

Mr. Beith: That would be extremely helpful.

Mr. Speaker: It says:

"regulation 9(3):

delete $\frac{\text{`2}\times C-(W\times £104)}{1+F\text{'}}$

substitute $\frac{\text{`2}\times C-(W+£104)\text{"}}{1+F\text{'}}$

I hope that that is clear.

10.17 pm

Mr. Brian Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move,

That the Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (S.I., 1991, No. 230), a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th February, be revoked.

If I felt generous, I might spin my speech out long enough to allow the Minister to receive advice from his civil servants on how to respond to the point of order raised. Whether or not he can respond to that point of order and clarify this matter, it is symptomatic of yet another piece of confusion in what has become the whole long and sorry saga of the poll tax. In a few minutes, the Minister will have, not for the first time, the embarrassing task of defending one further instalment in that saga. As we know, the poll tax saga is set, unlike its main progenitor, to go on and on and on.

We are told that the Cabinet will reach a decision tomorrow—a decision that we all know is just as unlikely to put an end to the poll tax and the continuing controversy it has created as all those other decisions, reviews, sweeteners and transitional relief schemes that we have been assured at regular intervals will finally do the trick.

The Minister's embarrassment is all too well founded. Even if we limit ourselves to the narrow category of transitional relief schemes, tonight's debate deals with what, on any reckoning, must be regarded as both the third and the fourth versions of such a scheme. There are the third and fourth attempts to——

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way; I have just started.

This is the third and fourth attempt to put in place a scheme that will work. Even in the limited terms that have been claimed for it and its predecessors, we have had, first, the initial transitional relief scheme which was forced upon a reluctant Government. We then had the modified version of that initial scheme produced by the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten). The whole thing then began to speed up. Then came the present Secretary of State's new scheme, announced at the beginning of this year, and, in even quicker order, the new replacement and refinement of that scheme which the right hon. Gentleman announced a week or two ago.

It is little wonder that the Minister of State has at times been so bemused by that bewildering sequence of events. He and his Secretary of State have alternated in producing figures which have bounced up and down as far and as fast as a yo-yo.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I am just about to embarrass the Minister of State. When I have done so, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

On 25 March, the Minister told us that the new version of the scheme would benefit 8 million people. Perhaps, to be fair, he is not at his best at this time of the night. Less than 48 hours later, the Secretary of State had to correct him by pointing out that he was wrong to the tune of a little matter of 100 per cent. Little wonder that Ministers have made such a mess of the poll tax if they have such difficulty in agreeing among themselves or even understanding their own figures. I expect, but I may be wrong, that the Minister will tonight adhere to the 16 million figure given by the Secretary of State, but why should we believe him on this occasion when he has proved to be so wrong before?

Mr. Arnold: What would the hon. Gentleman say to the 9,400 community charge payers in Gravesham who would lose by his abolition of the community charge reduction scheme? Furthermore, what would he say to the 71,000 community charge payers in Gravesham who would lose £12 per head under his own fair rates criteria?

Mr. Gould: I am delighted to say that, even in Gravesham, there would be substantial savings in administrative costs and collection levels, and that many poll tax payers would be relieved of that unfair burden.

Similar confusion attends other questions, such as the public spending cost of this measure and the extent to which the money set aside for the purpose will be offset by savings on the amounts spent on the rebate scheme. It has to be said that the Government have moved, albeit painfully slowly.

The present scheme's predecessors were fatally flawed, because they dealt in assumed rather than real figures and because such large categories of people were excluded from the benefits of the scheme. When we mentioned those matters and made justified criticisms, the Government denied that the schemes were flawed in those ways; but they have now conceded, at least implicitly, that the force of our criticisms was great. Such is the power of effective opposition. That is why this revised scheme has been brought forward—because we have prevailed in our insistence that its predecessors were so deficient in what they sought to do.

However, the Secretary of State remains wrong, in what is now a long and dishonourable tradition in such mattters, when he asserts in a cavalier fashion that no one will pay more under this scheme than the £1 per week above their old rates bill that it specifies.

Will the Minister of State confirm that significant categories of people remain excluded from the scheme? Will he confirm that among those excluded will be people who move during the current year since 31 March, young adults who became 18 during the year and people who live in properties on which rates were not payable before the poll tax was introduced—for example, properties built since that date? The real peculiarity of the scheme is not confusion over the numbers affected, over the costs of the scheme or indeed over the catetories which are within or outside it. The real peculiarity lies in the concept of the scheme.

What is the great and central virtue claimed for the scheme? It is instructive to try to answer that question, because the answer is that the great central virtue is the extent to which the scheme is able to reduce bills so that they approximate to the levels of the bills sent out under the much derided rates. That is what is claimed for it.

What is the benchmark by which that great virtue is to be measured? Why, it is the old rates bill itself which is said to embody that great benefit; that very Nirvana to which the scheme can do no more than approximate.

I fully accept that the old rates bill is the embodiment of that virtue. I welcome the extent to which poll tax bills will be brought to approximate to the old rates bills. But if that is the rationale of the scheme, why fiddle around with all the confusion and all the costs of maintaining the poll tax? Why bother with all the horrendous headaches of administrative costs, the register, the low collection levels, the sweeteners and the transitional relief schemes themselves? Why not show a little courage and honesty?

Why not be honest and straightforward and admit that, rather than aspire merely to approximate to rates bills, it would be better to go directly to the rates bills themselves? Why not use the money available under the scheme, as we have proposed, to institute a proper fair rates scheme? Why not end the shilly-shallying and accept the logic of the scheme—the logic which points inexorably away from the poll tax and towards an immediate return to the rates?

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I am rather puzzled because it is within my recollection that, at the time of the last election, the hon. Gentleman and most of his colleagues subscribed to the Labour party statement in its manifesto that it would abolish the rating system. Is that fact or fiction?

Mr. Gould: I can understand why the hon. Gentleman is puzzled, because he is flatly wrong. *[Interruption.]* Yes, he is.

That is the point that we were trying to make earlier today—that this money should be used to abolish the poll tax. To help the Government, we have published our poll tax abolition Bill—here it is—setting out the means by which we can ensure that this year's poll tax bills will be the last. We offered our co-operation to the Government in speeding the Bill through the House.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What about widows?

Mr. Gould: I will come to widows in a moment, if the hon. Lady will be patient.

We have taken the logic of the Minister of State's measure and applied it to the more direct and comprehensive solution of replacing the poll tax by a fair rate scheme.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I have been trying to follow the hon. Gentleman carefully, and I think that I have understood him to say that he wants to take the money from the community charge reduction scheme and apply it to produce lower rates bills under his scheme. If I had understood him correctly, how does he square that with the document "Opportunity, Quality, Accountability", which says that Labour would introduce transitional measures right from the start? I do not understand how those two positions are consistent.

Mr. Gould: The transitional provision is included in our fair rates proposals to deal with matters such as the unified business rate. That is where we make it clear that we will provide transitional relief. No transitional relief is required under our scheme, because it produces bills which are, on average, £140 lower for each household.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: In a moment.

Dame Peggy Fenner: The hon. Gentleman does not want to give way to me.

Mr. Gould: Yes, I will: the hon. Lady simply has to be patient.

I fear that, instead of the honest and straightforward measure that we have proposed, we are promised instead a consultation paper, which the Secretary of State tells us—perhaps he has changed his mind—will set out a number of preferred options.

My information is that the consultation paper will so far accommodate all that range of preferred options that a separate page is to be handed over to each member of the Cabinet. I understand that there will be a page for the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales in which they will set out their proposals for different schemes in different parts of the United Kingdom. Special pages will be embossed in honour of those members of the Cabinet—the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Health and the chairman of the Conservative party—who have made such sterling contributions to the current difficulties.

The paper will contain an honorary page which will be handed to the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), in which she will say that she at last concedes that she was wrong to introduce the poll tax and now wholeheartedly supports the notion that it should go and should be replaced by a property-based tax. The right hon. Lady will say that she looks forward to being whipped on a three-line Whip through the Lobby in support of the new measure. I understand that that page will contain dissenting footnotes from the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State in which they will make clear their continuing adherence to the principle of the poll tax, a principle that they have often supported in the House in the most glowing terms.

I fear that the Secretary of State for the Environment will have not one page but several in which he will set out at length all the ideas that he has produced in such profusion over the past decade. The ideas are contradictory, but no doubt he will feel obliged to put them before us. At the culmination of the document will be the page devoted to the Prime Minister's contribution. Of course, it will remain blank.

[Mr. Gould]

That brings us to the cost of the scheme, and the use to which we would put that money under the fair rates scheme. We assume that sum, for the purpose of our calculation, to be about £1 billion, but I am happy to accept whatever figure the Minister of State wants to suggest. As we made clear last week, that money, together with the money saved on administrative costs and on higher collection levels, would be applied to an improvement in central Government grant so that average bills would be lower by about £140 per household. In that calculation, we have compared like with like, headline bill with headline bill.

No one has seriously or effectively challenged our arithmetic. Quite the reverse, because the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and others have confirmed that our arithmetic is impeccable. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may be interested to hear the next part of my speech, in which I shall attempt to deal with the Government's complaint. They complain that we have been unfair in our calculations, because we have taken the benefit of the cost of this scheme and applied it to reduce our headline bills but have not allowed a similar reduction in their headline bills. We have been straightforward and have made it clear that we are comparing headline bills with headline bills.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman claims to have compared headline bill with headline bill. On "Today" on Radio 4, he said:

> "What we're talking about is a household bill which would be £140 lower than that same household would pay under this year's poll tax provision."

That is not a headline bill, and it is not a reduction of £140 in what people are paying under this year's provision. What the hon. Gentleman said on that programme was absolutely wrong, and he is now trying to cover it up by claiming that he compared headline charges. He did not.

Mr. Gould: The Minister of State will have an opportunity to develop that point. Our statement makes it clear, and I do so again, that we are comparing headline bills with headline bills. I am happy to deal with the Minister of State's point, but I rather suspect that Conservative Members will not be happy when I have done so. If the Government want to compare the bills that are payable, I am happy to join in the exercise, because the Minister of State would then be in a rather different difficulty.

If we consider the bills payable, it is not just the transitional relief that must be taken into account; the question of the rebate must be added to the reckoning. The big difference between the Government's poll tax bills and our fair rates bills is that, when the Government reduce bills under their reduction scheme, they pocket the very substantial savings they make on rebate. When we reduce the headline bill by much more than they are doing—by an average of £140 per household—we will redistribute the money saved on rebate and apply it to an extension and improvement of the rebate scheme that will benefit the very widow about whom the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) is so concerned. That is why the bills that will actually be paid under our scheme will be substantially lower than the headline bills.

Because the Government are not sure of their figures, it is difficult to calculate the sums involved. If the Minister would like to offer us some figures, we would be delighted to confirm our calculation. It is a reasonable assumption that the £140 advantage that we have shown in the headline bill per household will at least be maintained when both transitional relief and rebates are taken into account.

Mr. Beith: Why did not the hon. Gentleman tell us in his announcement last week what rebates would be available under his proposal, how much money he thinks can be channelled from the scheme to provide rebates, and where that money will come from?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman and I have exchanged correspondence on that matter, and I continue to be puzzled about why he finds it difficult. We have been clear about our position, and I am happy to restate it now. Unlike the Government, we will not pocket the savings on rebates; we will spend exactly the same amount net as currently goes to rebates, but because of the savings and because of their redistribution we can extend the scheme substantially and improve it. That is how we can help the widow and do away with the 100 per cent. contribution.

Our challenge to the Government—who are introducing a confusing and expensive package whose only claimed merit is that it reduces some bills to an approximation of rates bills—is, why make do with the approximation? Why not have the real thing? Why not have the savings on both headline bills and bills payable, which would flow from our fair rates scheme, as soon as possible? Let us forget the nonsense of transitional relief, and apply the money to fair rates. The Government should take up the Bill that we published today and use it to get rid of the poll tax now, once and for all. The pity of it is that the Government do not have the courage or the will to take that simple step. That is why we shall vote against the regulations tonight.

10.38 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): This has already been a worthwhile debate. One can scarcely believe that we are debating a prayer—a subject chosen by the Opposition. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) put his foot in it two or three times during his speech. We now know that there is to be no transitional relief scheme under Labour's proposals. That is scarcely consistent with the document "Opportunity, Quality, Accountability" which talks of introducing transitional measures from the start. I find that puzzling. Possibly the hon. Gentleman has a ready-made document, or perhaps he misheard the cue from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

The hon. Gentleman has tried to wriggle out of something that is quite clear. He made a false comparison on the "Today" programme on Radio 4. He has been caught out. He can assert as often as he likes that he was comparing headline figures, but the record stands—he did not say that. He was quoted on Radio 4 as saying something different.

The scheme that we are discussing brings great relief to many community charge payers, who will note with interest that the Labour party is this evening voting against that relief. The community charge reduction scheme is now extremely straightforward and simple. To answer the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), there is indeed a

difference between the original and the corrected versions. A multiplication sign becomes a plus sign—an important difference.

For every couple in future, the increase as between the community charge bill and the old rates bill will be limited to just £52. For every additional eligible adult another £52 threshold is added——

Mr. Gould: The Minister used the word "every". He may recall, if he was listening to what I said, that I invited him to comment on a number of categories of people who I suggested would fall outside the scheme—for example, those who become 18 during the course of this year, or people who move house this year, or people who formerly lived in houses that were not liable to rates. Will he confirm that those people are outside the scheme? If not, how are they brought within it?

Mr. Portillo: Yes, there are a number of categories of such people who are outside the scheme.

The operation of the scheme is not so difficult as some people would like to make out. In fact, some local authorities—10 at the last count, including Watford, Trafford and, I am thrilled to say, Barking and Dagenham—have already sent their bills out net of the general reduction of £140 and net of the community charge reduction scheme.

The Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 bring into effect the changes that we announced last January. They therefore take over where the transitional relief scheme left off, but with some important changes, including special rules created for people living in sheltered housing so that their reduction can be calculated on the basis of their share of the total rates bill. Tonight, the Labour party is voting against reductions for such people. The Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 1991 simply correct one of the formulae used in the calculation of the reduction for people living in sheltered housing.

Although not the subject of the debate today, of critical importance is the second amending set of regulations—the Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 1991. These regulations account for the most recent changes, which are: an even lower threshold of £52; more help for larger families and people living in groups of properties covered by one assessment only—they will not have to pay more than the 1989-90 rates bill plus £52 for the first two eligible people and a further £52 for each subsequent eligible person; people who moved in 1990-91 and who lost their entitlement to transitional relief may now enter the reduction scheme at their new address.

An example might be helpful at this point. As the hon. Member for Dagenham was fair enough to point out, following the £140 reduction those eligible for a reduction under this scheme have to pay only the 1989-90 rates, calculated as the rateable value for their property, multiplied by the average rate poundage for their areas, plus £52 for the first two people and a further £52 for every successive eligible person.

So three eligible people living in a terraced house in Pendle for which the rates were about £200 may have to pay in total only £304—that is, £200 plus £52 for the first two people and another £52 for the third person. Each individual's liability—before any community charge benefit is calculated—will be only just over £100 compared with Pendle's revised charge of £218.

About 7 million people benefited from transitional relief last year, but an estimated 16 million people will benefit from this scheme at a cost of just over £1·2 billion. This brings the average charge before the calculation of community charge benefit to £220. Let us consider how this compares with Labour's careful analysis.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): As well as giving us hypothetical examples from wonderful places north of Watford—such as Pendle—will my hon. Friend reflect on a constituency case of mine? A constituent in Surrey recently wrote to me saying that he faced a charge this year of £1,161, which he said was outrageous. I was able, however, to write this afternoon to tell him that under the proposals that the Government have produced his family of three would have to pay only £534—so my hon. Friend's proposals have saved my constituent and his family £627. Is that not better than anything that the Labour party could come up with?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend has produced a remarkable example. When he next writes to his constituent he will presumably be able to write as a postscript that the Opposition voted against the giving of that relief.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister agree that the example of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) showed how outrageously high poll tax bills became and how substantially reduced a real rates bill would have been for the same family?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman has failed to respond, despite several interventions, to the case of those who benefited substantially from the community charge. I think especially of single widows. They have no need of the community charge reduction scheme because they are doing better under the community charge than under the rating system. When the hon. Gentleman proposes that he should take us back to rates, with no upper limits, no protection and no transitional relief, he is saying that single widows should be taken back to and beyond enormous rates bills. He has no solution to that problem. He does not care about single widows. He has explicitly ruled out any relief for them, or any reduction for single people generally. He is on poor ground.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My hon. Friend has made an interesting but obvious comment about the unfairness of the rating system. He will recollect that a few years ago the Leader of the Opposition said categorically that that system was the unfairest tax that was ever invented and that it should be abolished forthwith. Has my hon. Friend any recollection of when the Leader of the Opposition contradicted that statement?

Mr. Portillo: The Leader of the Opposition prefers not to talk about local government finance. When he addressed his party's local government conference, he used about half a sentence to describe the so-called fair rates policy. I do not know whether that is because he does not understand it or because he is not satisfied with it. I cannot think of any occasion on which he has disowned his statement about rating policy.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): If the poll tax is so splendid, why are the Government attempting to abolish it? Why is there so much disarray within the ranks of the Tory party? Why is the poll tax not being retained as it is?

Mr. Portillo: The House was discussing disarray within the Labour party. We were discussing why the Leader of the Opposition described rates as the unfairest of all taxes and is now proposing to return to them.

I take up what the Labour party has said about "fair rates". It claims that the average bill per household will be £333, and that that will represent a saving of £140 over the average paid in community charges. It is wrong on two counts. First, the average bill should be about £360, not £333. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has confirmed these figures. It has said that Labour's scheme would need to raise £6·7 billion of income from the domestic ratepayer and that the average bill would be £358. The CIPFA figures deduct from what is raised now £1·25 billion of grant from the community charge reduction scheme and putative savings of £400 million on the cost of collecting the tax. They do not bear out the Labour party's figures. The CIPFA figures are at variance with the Labour party's figures by £25 per household.

The Labour party has made a mistake in the first part of the calculation of £400 million, but it does not end there. The figure that describes the saving of the average household is also wrong. The Labour party has taken out the money that goes into the community charge scheme to produce lower rates bills, but it has not allowed for that money when dealing with the average bill now being paid under the community charge. It has assumed that the average household now pays £473, but households pay only £394 on average once the community charge reduction scheme has been taken into account. The £66 difference is a saving that people are already making under the Government, not an extra saving that they would make under Labour's policy. That eliminates another £79 of Labour's savings.

I heard loud and clear what the hon. Gentleman said this evening and I also heard what he said on the radio, where he misrepresented the facts. I have what he said in black and white. Is he denying the transcript of his radio broadcast or saying that it is wrong?

Mr. Gould: The document that we published at our press conference made it clear—indeed it was so clear that it was in the first paragraph—that we were comparing headline bill with headline bill. Apparently the Minister of State did not understand what I said, or chose not to understand. I made it clear that if he wants to compare bills paid with bills paid the advantage is there in similar measure. He would have to take account not only of transitional relief, but of the superiority of our rebate scheme. I shall be interested to hear what he has to say about how much is saved on the rebate scheme by virtue of the transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Portillo: I can tell that the House is in a generous mood this evening. If the hon. Gentleman cared to apologise for his mistake, the House would accept that. He could say that he was speaking on the radio and did not mean to be misleading. He said:

"What we're talking about is a household bill which will be £140 lower than that same household would pay under this year's poll tax provisions".

Mr. Gould: That is right.

Mr. Portillo: That is not right; it is absolutely wrong.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: What a household pays under this year's poll tax provisions must take account of the reductions being received by 16 million people under the community charge reduction scheme.

Mr. Gould: The Minister of State persists in either failing or refusing to understand the point that I made at the beginning of the debate. I said that if we are to consider bills paid, the Minister cannot stop merely at taking account of his pet transitional relief scheme in calculating the bills paid. He must also take account of the rebate scheme. As the rebate scheme is substantially reduced by the transitional relief scheme, and as we propose to recycle that money and ensure that every penny is used for rebates, when we regard both of those factors my statement stands. If that is not the case, let the Minister of State dispute the arithmetic.

Mr. Portillo: My advice to the hon. Gentleman is, "When you are in a hole, stop digging". The record of what the hon. Gentleman said on the radio is clear. The House has seen him wriggling today, but he cannot undo what he said on the radio.

The Labour party's figures are wrong by £104 per household. The remainder of its assumed savings could equally arise under any new local tax. It is claiming savings from collection costs on the assumption that all the debts from the community charge system are written off. That could be claimed for any tax system. When it comes down to it, the Labour party is offering savings that people are already receiving and which might be claimed for any new local tax. Its figures are bogus.

Let us cast such mathematical quibbles to one side. Labour party policy is, as the hon. Gentleman said, to take the money available through the community charge reduction scheme and redirect it through the grant system to all local authorities. The hon. Gentleman confirmed that.

The Labour party would take away targeted help from those who need it most—those who faced the largest increases on moving to the community charge—and spread it around. Of course, that help under Labour would be targeted on Labour councils. The money that now goes to reduce bills would be used to support even higher levels of spending by councils. We know where the highest levels of spending are—they are in Labour councils. That is Labour's way for local government.

I must again remind the hon. Member for Dagenham of the statement made in "Opportunity, Quality, Accountability" that there will be transitional measures "right from the start". He now denies that this will apply to the new scheme and says that it is meant to apply only to the business rate. I therefore have two charges against the hon. Gentleman. First, Labour policy on this issue is thoroughly confused and the hon. Gentleman gives a passable impression of not having read his own policy document. Secondly, he is unwilling to offer any protection to anyone, whether single people or widows, when he proposes to move people back to their rate bills.

What is more, if there is to be further transitional relief under the business rate—as we now understand the hon. Member for Dagenham to be saying—may we know where that money will come from? Will it be raised separately? Will it be added to VAT? Will it be raised from income tax? Will it be imposed on domestic ratepayers? Will it be raised from higher business rates for other people? *[Interruption.]* I am asking the hon. Member for Dagenham a question. Instead of laughing, he should think about how the scheme will be financed. If, as I understand it, there is to be transitional relief for business payers, where will the money come from?

Mr. Gould: I was laughing because I was astonished at the Minister's brass neck. He represents a Government who introduced a transitional relief scheme for their own nationalised business rate which was financed by business ratepayers.

Mr. Portillo: It is not easy to get answers tonight. I take it that this is a further impost on those who pay business rates who would otherwise gain from the move to the uniform business rate. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dagenham nods. It is a further impost on those businesses that would otherwise gain.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has made it clear that a heavier burden will be imposed on local people through domestic rates to pay for higher council spending? As the hon. Gentleman said on BBC Radio 4 on 26 March this year, the amount will go up to 20 per cent. The hon. Gentleman fudged the issue by pretending that it is the same as the current level. That is not true.

Mr. Portillo: Indeed. The hon. Member for Dagenham claimed that the appropriate amount to raise from local taxation was 20 per cent We have reduced it to 15 per cent. My hon. Friends may remember that the Labour party was very much against the increase in VAT that enabled the reduction from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent. to be made. Labour Members want to have it both ways. They now want to claim that the new tax should be based on 15 per cent. even though they were so dismissive of the idea of putting it on VAT. If they do not want it on VAT, does that mean that we are to go back to 20 per cent. funding from local taxpayers, or will the money be raised in another way?

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: I shall give way for the last time. I must let others speak in the debate.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way so generously as he is again trying to misrepresent what I said. The Minister, the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) should get their act together. We should at least be talking about common definitions. If they care to check the statement made to the House by the Secretary of State on 21 March, they will see that he proudly claimed that the sum raised by the poll tax had been 34 per cent. but because of the switch in the Budget had been reduced to 22 per cent. Let us at least have some consistency in the use of these figures.

Mr. Portillo: I did not hear the hon. Gentleman answer the question. If he is against the VAT increase, where will the money come from?

The regulations offer real help to people who need it. It is valuable help, costing £1·25 billion. It is help to a large number—16 million people. This evening, the Labour party will compound a wretched evening for itself by voting against the regulations. I commend them to the House.

10.59 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Conservative Members talk about confusion in the Labour party. For the past year, I have seen a great deal of confusion in the Conservative party. I watched English hon. Members go into the Division Lobby without losing a wink of sleep to put the poll tax in Scotland. When they realised what they had done in England, they brought about the downfall of the then Prime Minister. Bit by bit, they are now backing off from the poll tax.

We are debating the poll tax tonight because Conservative Members are worried about the municipal elections and the effect that they will have on Conservative councillors. I hope that, for the sake of people who are suffering real hardship throughout the country, they will get rid of the poll tax. Let us forget about the £144 under discussion tonight. Conservative Members must know that elderly people and widows are coming to our surgeries and saying that, under the rating system—bad as it was—they could depend on rebates. Now they are worried and do not know whether they are coming or going.

The Minister spoke of "single widows". What can a widow be but single? He said that no one has given assurances about widows, but he must know that, if a widow resides in a house with four or five adults in the household, under the poll tax system she will be worse off than she was under the rating system. In Strathclyde the poll tax is £350. I know of no widow with sons and daughters who is in a better position under the poll tax system. Widows who live alone may be in a different position, but I should have thought that the rating system could cope with their situation under a rebate scheme.

The Minister must know that the terrible system whereby sons and daughters leave the household and refuse to register puts mothers and fathers in a distressing position. For the first time in their lives, they have debt collectors coming to their doors. People who prided themselves in never having had debts are now threatened with warrant sales. The Secretary of State for Scotland said that local authorities such as Strathclyde should have more warrant sales. Warrant sales are being implemented in Strathclyde as a result of mistakes by the local authority, when people have paid their poll tax through bankers orders and the money has been credited to other people. People have then been threatened with messenger-at-arms officers.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Incompetent Labour councils.

Mr. Martin: The hon. Gentleman must know the terrible pressures being put on councils, whether they are Conservative or Labour.

Much of the talk about and the attacks on local authorities, regardless of their political persuasion——

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martin: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman because the Front Benches have taken up more than half the debate. The hon. Gentleman can take his chances.

Conservative Members' remarks do a disservice to councillors throughout the country. They must know that councillors do an excellent job. They take care of social work problems, look after the local authorities on a voluntary basis and, when they get home at night, are pestered with phone calls and must attend numerous meetings in their wards. When the Minister talked about local authorities, he did not mention that. A disservice has been done.

I also believe that the poll tax has brought out the charlatans, the organisations that run around collecting money under false pretences. One organisation, known as the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, has received thousands of pounds from the poorest of the poor. It has organised demonstrations, but I do not hear a word from the Minister about investigating where that money goes.

The All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation in the west of Scotland has turned up to school meetings all over Strathclyde. It has collected money under the pretext that it will go to fighting the poll tax and no one knows where that money goes. Some of it has been directed into getting people involved in violent demonstrations in Trafalgar square. The Scottish Nationalists do not come out of the affair very well because some of them—Members of Parliament—have graced the platforms of such organisations. They have turned up in my constituency, telling the poorest of the poor not to pay their poll tax when they know that the worst thing that can happen to people is to get deeper and deeper into debt.

The poll tax has brought out the worst elements in our society who are prepared to exploit people who are living in poverty—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members talk about the Labour party. There are respectable men and women in the Labour party who are on record as saying that, regardless of whether or not this is a bad law, people must obey the rule of law. I shall go on record as saying that. It is wrong for hon. Members to name a few Labour Members and say that their behaviour is typical of all of them.

I do not say that Lady Porter, who sells off a graveyard to developers, is typical of Conservative councillors—far from it. Therefore, why should Conservative Members smear Opposition Members in that way when they know that they are decent men and women?

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martin: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman —I have given my reason.

Badness comes out when a bad law is brought in. There was a by-election in Scotland where Scottish Nationalists told people on their doorsteps not to pay their poll tax. When asked by the media, the Scottish Nationalist candidate said, "If I am pushed to a warrant sale I will bring out my cheque book and pay the poll tax." Some of my constituents whom the Nationalists encouraged not to pay their poll tax do not have the luxury of bringing out a cheque book and paying their way out of the problems. When bad law is introduced, it brings the House into disrepute, and the poll tax has done that.

11.8 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I am shocked beyond measure to learn tonight from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that Her Majesty's Opposition will not vote in favour of the community charge reduction scheme. I believe that there is a certain sad consistency in that dreadful statement. I cannot accept that Labour party members are, in their hearts, committed to cheap, effective and accountable local government. If they were, whether the scheme benefits 8 million, 18 million or 28 million people, it will still be a scheme that gives financial help to people who have found life with the community charge tough.

It is inconsistent and hypocritical of the Labour party to say, on the one hand, that it cares about the poor and, on the other hand, to fail to support the community charge reduction scheme. I am ashamed of its Members; I think their action is disgraceful. I have spent much of my adult life working for the poor. However, hypocrisy may not be the only hallmark of the modern Labour party, Her Majesty's Opposition. I believe that there is a flaw in their acceptability as a potential Government by virtue of their financial incompetence.

The Labour party was foolish enough to go into print. When one goes line by line through its documents that state how it intends to bring about a fair rates system, one sees that beneath those bold statements lie hypocrisy, inconsistency, incompetence and inaccuracy. I make strong statements because I have a local government background. I know about local government finance. I designed systems that led to accountability to the local electorate. While carrying out that work I found that the least competent and, therefore, the most expensive councils—the ones that paid through the nose for work that ought to have been done very economically—were, alas, those that were powerfully controlled by the Labour party.

Reference has already been made to the Labour party's difficulty over understanding the difference between 27, 15 and 20 per cent. When we calculate percentages we use different bases, according to the point that we are discussing. The assumption of the hon. Member for Dagenham is fundamentally flawed. I made that point earlier.

The Labour party assumes that councils will spend the same amount as they have set in their budgets. That is such a naive statement that it hardly bears consideration. We know that Labour council figures do not reflect the long-term effects of very high spending. A more important point is that the Labour party assumes that

> "Government grant is redistributed among councils on the fairer equalisation basis set out in 'Fair Rates'".

I leave aside the obvious point that Labour failed to tell us what form its grant distribution formula would take. The Labour party says that it is consulting on its alternatives, yet it knocks the Government for consulting. It is a curious "Alice in Wonderland" state of affairs when a word means just what one wants it to mean, according to how one uses it.

A more important point is that, according to the fair rates document, the Labour party's proposals would not take effect for several years after the Labour party had taken office. It is therefore untrue to say that Government

grant would be redistributed among councils on the fairer equalisation basis set out in "Fair Rates." That would provide no help for two or three years.

The Labour party proposes that first there should be a return to the old rating system. That would be very difficult. Some of the rating lists are 10 or 20 years out of date. In a few places in my constituency revaluations have not been made since 1967. How, therefore, on page 3 of "Fair Rates: Labour's Alternative to the Poll Tax" can the Labour party say that the first thing that it intends to do is to modernise the rates by using that list? It also says —this is the untruth at the heart of that paper—that it would make them fairer by relating them to ability to pay. The Labour party offers a menu that will taste very bitter if the electorate is foolish enough to want to taste it.

The Opposition say that the timing of the changes will depend on the situation that they inherit and, in particular, on the resources that are available. They go on to detail a stream of people whom they intend to help in the long run. On top of that, they go into some detail in identifying what they call a property tax linked to ability to pay. That, I believe, is meant to be their fair rates system. They say that they will modernise the rating system immediately. We are told that they will instantly make it fair by relating it to ability to pay. In fact, what they outline on page 4 of this massive, inconsistent and frightening document is the effect of major, centralised computerisation. They say:

"We have considered the potential of the Inland Revenue's increasingly sophisticated computerised data base as a highly efficient and responsive way of linking tax liability to ability to pay."

They may have considered it; clearly, they do not know how it works. It is indeed a highly sophisticated, highly economical means of collecting the inland revenue, but it would take years to alter it to do what Her Majesty's Opposition want it to do—pick up the possibility that

"means-tested rebates could be replaced by an automatic calculation of liability, using information already available."

We are told that the system

"could even preserve confidentiality and require the disclosure of no new information."

Here we go:

"Properly designed, it could be an important step towards a much wider reform encompassing the benefit system as well as taxation, and offering the prospect of a single tax-benefit transaction between the individual and the Government."

When I raised this matter just before the Easter recess I was assured by Opposition Members that they had no intention of centralising information on citizens in this way. Yet this is what they offer. This is what is supposed to preserve confidentiality and personal privacy and to keep people from worrying. This is their way of creating what they call the fair rating system. It would take a 10-year programme to bring all these things together in a recomputerised format. We would end up with a system cutting right across the principle that confidentiality and individuality should be preserved to some degree. The way to preserve confidentiality and individuality is to keep these two wings of the Government's work apart. That has always been the basis of our society's thinking. But, at a stroke—or, rather, with a few lines on a word processor —the principle is cast aside. What is on offer is not a fair rates system; it is a return to the old burdensome rating system, based on an antiquated list which is 30 years out of date.

This Labour party document is not just full of flaws; it is a fudge, a mudge and an example of utter hypocrisy. I am no longer surprised that Her Majesty's Opposition will not vote for something that will benefit the electorate. Last time, they did not press the matter to a vote, but tonight they will do so. All that they are able to offer is something that should be discarded before it can see the light of day. I wish that they would either be honest and say that their paper has no validity in our society, or sit down and shut up.

11.18 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): These regulations are before the House tonight because the poll tax was never related to ability to pay. In the case of many people on moderate incomes, large bills were not abated satisfactorily. Help was available only at the lowest income levels. High-spending Labour authorities were not the only ones to send out large bills; people in Conservative-controlled areas like Harrogate and Warwickshire had to face the same problem; and people throughout the country were getting bills that, in terms of the national average, were of medium size. They produced levels of tax which it was unreasonable to ask people of modest incomes to pay; they were often much higher than the families had faced under the rating system.

One response would be to try to relate the system wholly to ability to pay. The Government response has been other than that: it has been to change their whole policy on the balance of local and central expenditure so as to get the basic charge down. That may be only a temporary measure until they have produced the scheme which they may tell us about tomorrow, but that is the purpose of the regulations.

Intriguingly, it is also the purpose that has been pursued by the Labour party. It has concentrated considerable effort on trying to produce another and significant decrease in the overall charge for everybody. Of course, such schemes have the effect of providing a reduction for those who are big gainers from the poll tax as well as for those who are big losers. They benefit the poor less than the rich, because some of those at the bottom of the salary scale cannot gain £140 from the system. It would have been far better for the Government to go from the start for a system related to ability to pay.

What has become even more puzzling tonight is why the Opposition, in their criticism of the whole thing, have not made it clear how a proper rebate system can be grafted on to what they are proposing. It has become the great Labour rebate mystery. The fair rates document indicated that, under Labour's proposals, rebates would be introduced as resources allowed, depending on the position that was inherited, rather than being made integral to the scheme from the start.

What has been wrong with the poll tax all along is that ability to pay has not been integral to the scheme. That is why I and my right hon. and hon. Friends so strongly favour a local income tax, which would be based from the beginning on ability to pay. That fundamental defect cannot be solved by the Government's proposals. That said, so far into the charging year, the House would be mad to throw out the £140 relief. That would be a crazy thing to do.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay) *rose*——

Mr. Beith: So little time has been left for me that I cannot reasonably give way.

[Mr. Beith]

Throwing out the £140 relief would be denying to those people who have been hardest hit by the scheme the only relief on offer. Therefore, I cannot invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for the prayer and to attempt to throw out the scheme, however deficient it is in some important respects.

There is a second reason, however, why I do not want my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the prayer. The Government scheme also incorporates something that I have been pestering Environment Ministers to do ever since they dreamed up the first transitional relief scheme; that is, to make provision for people living in sheltered housing schemes. I have been to meetings and on deputations to try to persuade the present Ministers and their predecessors that it was wrong that people living in sheltered housing schemes should not have had the benefit of transitional relief. It was the main means by which the Government sought to abate poll tax bills.

Many people in sheltered housing schemes are those who most deserve that help. Thank goodness they are at last getting it. It happens that, at the time they are getting it, they will also be getting the additional benefit of the £140 relief to the extent that they are eligible for that as well. So the immediate effect will not be as noticeable, but it is putting right an injustice of the transitional relief scheme since it started.

We are in an odd position, because we are debating two sets of regulations, although three are floating around on the subject. The one which is not before us actually amends the regulations that we are considering. Indeed, things that we pass tonight will be undone in the technical sense by statutory instrument 844. It would have been more helpful if we could have considered all the regulations at one go and if a group of prayers had been tabled by the Opposition to cover all three.

Those technicalities, along with the abstruse formula which has had to be corrected, will not be most evident to the people who are desperate for some relief from the terrific burden of the poll tax. This is the only relief on offer. What a crude mechanism it is, and how crude too is the mechanism which Labour has suggested as an alternative. We should have a local tax related to ability to pay. That is what a local income tax would provide.

11.24 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): If we voted for every scheme and every proposal put to the House that had a grain of good in it we would never vote against anything. It is on those grounds that we shall vote against the regulations tonight.

The proposed scheme is flawed. It does not target help according to ability to pay, but relates help to previous rate bills. On 17 January we were told that the changes would cost £1·7 billion and that 18 million people would benefit. On 24 January, however, the Prime Minister said that any scheme that involved having to give a discount or rebate to more than 50 per cent. of the population was fundamentally flawed and would not last, so we have the right hon. Gentleman's word that we should not vote for the regulations tonight.

On 19 March the Treasury admitted that the £140 reduction would cost £4·5 billion and that a clawback of £1·25 billion was necessary from the scheme that we discussed today and from rebates to fund that reduction. On 12 April, however, the Secretary of State told us that £1·25 billion was the cost of the scheme. That means that £800 million will have to be clawed back from somewhere in the rebate system.

The proposed scheme is flawed because it does not target help according to ability to pay. It is not related to the rebate system, which would perform that precise job. It does not tackle the 20 per cent. contribution, which penalises the very poor, and it is certainly not aimed at helping widows. One Conservative Member kept on crying out about widows during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The way to help widows is to ensure that the bills which have to be paid are directly related to the income of the person. We are not into helping Jacquie Onassis pay her bill under a blanket scheme. We shall help those who need assistance.

The regulations in SI 844 extend the scheme to families with three or more individuals living in the property, even though the Conservatives will announce next week that they want to target help on individuals living alone.

The scheme is absolute nonsense. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has confirmed time and again, including in a letter from Noel Hepworth on Monday, that it agrees entirely with our arithmetic. It issued only one qualification and *The Times* got it wrong. It said that, as part of its constitution, it would never endorse any national party. Our scheme stands up to scrutiny. We shall target our help on those who need it most.

If the community charge reduction scheme had been operating 20 years ago, one individual would have had great difficulty in claiming the rebate, because that individual would have had great difficulty in identifying which local authority he lived in. That individual would have been the resident of No. 10 Downing street.

11.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): The saddest thing about tonight's debate is that it is not being held in prime time with a packed House so that the public could hear exactly what has been said by Opposition Members, mistake after mistake and fluffed line after fluffed line. The Opposition have denied what they said on radio and television. It has been an extraordinary event.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) talked about a grain of good, and some grain it is—about £1·2 billion worth. The hon. Gentleman dismisses 16 million people with a reference to a grain of good. Tonight 16 million people will hear that Labour has voted against their relief. As the Opposition vote against that relief scheme, CIPFA and the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation will be busy distancing themselves even further from Labour's scheme.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) on his courageous speech, which it must have been difficult to deliver. He was right to talk about the violence that has been caused by those who have refused to pay their poll tax. It is interesting to note that the Scottish National party was absent from tonight's debate and it fell to the hon. Gentleman to make that courageous speech. He talked about a disservice to councillors. I do not think that there is any such disservice in what the Government are trying to achieve. We are

trying to ensure that there is a proper partnership between central and local government. That is crucial if local councillors as well as central Government are to work in proper partnership on behalf of all the people whom we represent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) made a telling speech about the fundamentally flawed Labour policy. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was his usual generous self when commenting upon the sheltered housing schemes, and rightly referred to Labour's rebate mystery.

What we have achieved in the regulations is to take into account excessive spending by authorities and we have further reduced many people's charges in our subsequent schemes to within just £52 of their old rates bills.

This has been an important measure and there are further regulations to come. The House will not have to wait long——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to the Order [22 March.]*

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 293.

Division No. 118] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carr, Michael
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir James *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Graham Allen be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Dr. Kim Howells be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Dyslexic Children

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

11.43 pm

Mr. Peter Walker (Worcester): The last time that I had the privilege of initiating an Adjournment debate was in 1961, when I enthusiastically advocated a bypass for the village ofa Ombersley in my constituency. I am delighted to say that, 15 years later, the bypass was built. I hope that the result of this debate will be rather more speedy and that it will be more effective in its approach to a serious problem.

I raise this subject because of an event in my constituency 10 or 15 years ago, when the 11 year-old son of a constituent who was quite well known to me was having enormous problems at school. He had been condemned for being careless and bad at spelling and English. He had constantly bad school reports, and anxious parents condemned the boy for his failure to apply himself properly to school work. Suddenly, on the advice of a friend, he was examined for the possibility of dyslexia, and it was discovered that he was a bad case. Having discovered that, the parents approached the education authority to try to tackle the problems involved. The authority could provide no proper education to meet the difficulties of the child.

The parents discovered that, in the private sector of education, there were schools that specialised and had the appropriate training. One of the best was a boarding school. The parents sold their house and lived in a caravan for six years so that they could send their child to an educational establishment where his handicap could be overcome. They succeeded. Their son achieved good A-levels and went to university. He is now following a good and successful career. He survived because of the immense sacrifice of his parents.

Because of that experience, I have always wanted much more to be done in that area. If one has the privilege of serving in the Cabinet, one cannot publicly campaign on issues that are not within one's departmental responsibility. I recall going to see my former colleague Sir Keith Joseph when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science. I outlined the details of the problem, the failure of the whole education system to recognise it, and the failure of the Department of Education and Science and of the education authorities either to identify the problem or to provide the appropriate education.

Being the kind and compassionate person that he was, Sir Keith listened with immense interest. I must confess that the observations of the officials who surrounded him rather frightened me. They suggested that many parents used dyslexia as an excuse for the bad performance of their children. There was a slight atmosphere of suspicion about whether the problem was of the order that I was suggesting and whether it was something that could be clearly identified and treated. I went away depressed, but Sir Keith decided to hold a symposium to examine the subject in depth. He kept to his word and held that symposium, but alas, a few weeks later, he left that office.

I do not believe that there has been anything like the progress required. What is the dimension of the problem? The most authoritative organisations believe that 340,000 children in our schools are suffering from dyslexia. That means one in every class. It means that in the typical constituency, there are probably 550 children suffering from dyslexia, and so 1,000 parents are having to face all the difficulties involved.

Some time ago, I was given lunch by Sir Nicholas Lloyd, the editor of the *Daily Express,* and I persuaded him that it was a good area in which a national newspaper should campaign. He thought about the idea and decided to do it. The *Daily Express* fought a good campaign to try to arouse public interest in the topic. It is staggered by the correspondence that it has received, from all over the country, from parents and children who have suffered and whose problems have not been solved.

What is the basic requirement to tackle the problem? What are the areas in which the Government and education authorities can act? We start with the need for identification, and at an early age. The Government are now suggesting that the test for seven-year-olds may result in greater identification. I hasten to point out, as someone who has studied the matter in great depth, that it would be more appropriate if the problem could be identified even pre-school, if school starts at the age of five, or certainly in the first year at school. In New Zealand the condition is being identified in pre-school children and in children in the first year of school.

This brings me neatly on to the problem of teacher training, which in this country does not deal with the problem. I recently tabled a parliamentary question to the Department of Education and Science. The Minister who is kindly replying to this debate answered me with the magic words that teacher training colleges "should" provide tuition on the subject. He did not say that they would, or that they do. I know from my study of the subject that most teacher training colleges either spend no time at all or very little time on the topic. Teacher training colleges devote only 100 hours of training to literacy, and most of them devote none of that time to this problem.

We should see to it that every training college in the country trains teachers in how to identify and then tackle this problem. A vast section of the profession already practising has no training in this sphere, so we need courses for those already in education. Such courses exist, but I know that teachers find it difficult to be given time off and the necessary grants to attend them. Nothing like enough is being done.

Once the problem is identified, a typical authority should be able to issue a statement recognising that a child has a problem. A parent who believes that his child suffers from it applies to the authority. It takes many months in most authorities' areas before recognition follows.

Following recognition, what happens depends not on the needs of the child in question but on what facilities are available in an authority's area. Hardly any are available under most authorities; a few are available in some. A child with this condition, needs a certain type of tuition in order to overcome it, but authorities say that all they can do for the present is recognise the problem. The parent who knows what can and should be done sees that the private sector of education has the proper facilities—if he or she can afford the payments. Most cannot, so the problem goes untreated.

The education system must be made by statute to recognise the problem, and every education authority must then provide the required facilities. Such facilities have already been developed and shown themselves successful. They transform a child from a person who has great difficulty reading and spelling to someone who can

[Mr. Peter Walker]

read normally—and probably spell normally, although there is a long transition period—and who can pursue any type of career.

These children are not, as is often suspected, mentally handicapped or retarded. They are often of higher than average ability. By our failure to tackle this problem, we are losing 340,000 children—one in every class in the land—whose careers will be blighted and who will not achieve the happiness and fulfilment that they should.

As a former Minister, I have dealt with many Adjournment debates, and I am sure that I will be told this evening that a great deal is being done. I know that the Minister is consulting a number of expert authorities on spelling, on exam problems and so on. But the Department and education authorities have been discussing and considering this matter for 20 years. Some, but in my judgment very little, progress has been made.

In this pre-election period, I hope that there will be a competition between the parties to promise most in this respect in their manifestos. There is no reason why Governments of either complexion cannot promise that every teacher training college will begin to teach new teachers how to identify dyslexia and provide the teaching to overcome it—and carry out that promise within the lifetime of a Parliament.

That Government should be able to ensure that every education authority has the facilities to provide that which is required to overcome the problem. They should be able to ensure that, at the age of five, every child is tested to ascertain whether there is such a problem and immediately to identify it. If a Government put their mind to the problem, in five years we could have the perfect system for dealing with dyslexia. We could have a system under which never again would children and parents go through ghastly anxiety, terrifying problems, colossal misery, feelings of failure and immense frustration, which are the result of a complete approach never having been brought to the problem.

I shall be delighted to hear all that is going on, but I want from any Administration that governs this country a determination that in a few years the problem will have been tackled. Aston university has 10,000 case studies. A department was established, and over 20 years it became the expert authority. It was then closed down. The department no longer exists, but the case studies remain to be examined. I speak of an area of neglect within which there has been much human misery and much lost opportunity for coming generations, and the problems should be tackled.

11.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): I am sure that the House will wish me to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) on his persistence over 30 years in articulating the problems of his constituents and on the service that he has rendered this evening in enabling us to discuss an issue on which he has spoken so knowledgeably and, if I may say so, so passionately.

It is no secret that some well-known public figures have suffered from dyslexia. For example, Susan Hampshire and Angharad Rees have overcome their difficulties admirably to carve out successful acting careers. It may be less well known that some major historical figures are also believed to have suffered from the same condition. Such leaders in their fields as Hans Christian Andersen, Leonardo da Vinci, Auguste Rodin, Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein are reported to have suffered from dyslexia. I think that my right hon. Friend and I can agree that it is important that as many children as possible leaving school should have acceptable literacy skills. As Francis Bacon said nearly 400 years ago,

"Reading maketh a full man. . .and writing an exact man."

Our success as a nation depends upon our ability to communicate properly and effectively more than ever before.

It is remarkable that in the face of all the evidence, including the facts that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester and the *Daily Express* have brought before us, there are some who do not accept the existence of dyslexia. I assure my right hon. Friend that I do, as does my Department. Some confusion arises from the different definitions that seem to abound. Dyslexia is in reality an old term which is today used in different ways, perhaps to the extent that the current understanding of the term has supplanted the original meaning. For some years, as my right hon. Friend implied, my Department scrupulously avoided using the word, and used instead the longer and more deliberate term "specific learning difficulties". Some local education authorities still do that as a firm matter of principle.

In any event, dyslexia is now generally taken by most in the field to be difficulty in learning to read or handle numbers, despite general intelligence at least within the normal range, a generally supportive environment and freedom from sensory disabilities of vision or hearing that could account for the difficulty. Whatever the learning difficulty is called, any child with such problems will have difficulties in environments that are book based or in those in which, for example, the decoding of road signs, maps or instructions of any sort are practical necessities.

Schools and society properly value those who acquire a good standard of literacy skills, but it is precisely those skills which dyslexic people find so difficult to master. Thankfully, most professionals and authorities involved today have a more responsible attitude towards helping such children. I am glad to say that we are now a long way from the bad old days when dyslexic children were destructively labelled as stupid or plain bone idle.

I shall mention three specific points that my right hon. Friend raised—teacher training, provision for dyslexic children and methods of reading. I shall deal first with teacher training. Specific training is now available for serving teachers of pupils with dyslexia. The training of teachers of pupils with special educational needs in ordinary schools and training to meet the special educational needs of students in further education with learning difficulties have both been priority areas supported by the Department through the local education authority training grants scheme since it came into operation in 1987. The Department has also sponsored the production of an audio-visual pack designed to assist teachers in ordinary schools to identify children with special educational needs. One module of this is specifically concerned with dyslexia.

My right hon. Friend is specifically concerned with courses of initial teacher training. They are now required

to equip prospective teachers to teach the full range of pupils that they are likely to encounter in an ordinary school and to introduce them to ways of identifying children with special educational needs, including dyslexia. However, while we aim to ensure that all teachers receive a general introduction to dyslexia and other learning difficulties during their initial training, further specialist training is best reserved for experienced teachers.

That said, we have shared the widespread public concern about the teaching of reading generally. Last week my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State asked the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to undertake an inquiry into the preparation of student primary teachers to teach reading. Dyslexia is one small part of the literacy issue. CATE does not have a remit to look into special educational needs in particular, but it has been asked to carry out a full inquiry into the training of teachers to teach reading, and to provide advice on the criteria that we apply in accrediting teacher training courses and the guidance that we give to institutions on the matter.

In view of what my right hon. Friend said, it would be right for that inquiry to reflect what has been said tonight. I shall refer the debate to CATE. We look forward to practical and sensible advice on the subject from the council by the end of the year.

There is currently a debate about precisely which methods of teaching are best for children with dyslexia. It is for local education authorities to develop an appropriate framework for provision and for the teachers on the spot to decide on and to use the methods appropriate for the individual children in their class. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made that point the other day, when he told the Select Committee that he did not care which methods were used as long as they produced the result. But of course that proviso is all important. It is the result that counts.

Each method has its own approach and requirements of children. It is clear, for example, that the look and say method—the famous Janet and John books—which assumes that children learn best by recognising the shape of words rather than having them broken down into individual sounds, requires certain abilities and memory functions on the part of the child. Obviously that will not be suitable for all children, although it has its place. Much has also been said in the media about the "real books" approach, which relies on the attractions of books written primarily for their stories rather than on accommodating any particular reading technique. This method assumes that children are motivated best by understanding the meaning of what they read and must find it fun. It was revealing to hear of a teacher the other day insisting instead that this should be called the "good books" approach. Trollope would probably have agreed. He is supposed to have said:

"Of all the needs a book has the chief need is that it be readable."

However, I wonder whether Lewis Carroll's Alice was taught to read by the real books method in an educational Wonderland, as I recall her saying

"What is the use of a book . . . without pictures".

This approach, used in conjunction with other methods, may be suitable for some able children with no impediments to their learning. However, I have my doubts. Children may be eager and ready to learn. They may enjoy hearing stories and browsing through picture books. But they do not teach themselves. They cannot learn to read without skilled teaching. It is a wrong-headed fallacy of our times that the role of the teacher should or can be passive—that she or he should support, approve and encourage but never explain, instruct, question or correct, as preached by some disciples of "real books". Luckily, there are not many of them. Her Majesty's inspectorate found only a very small number of schools concentrating exclusively on "real books". I am reassured to some extent by that, because, first and foremost, as I said, reading must be taught. It cannot be picked up by osmosis.

The phonic method, which needs to be taught in that sense and requires children to memorise different consonant and vowel sounds and to break words down into their individual components, has many merits. There is, of course, the need later on to cater for the innumerable exceptions in our language and each child's degree of phonic readiness needs to be assessed individually. I believe that the phonic method has much to commend it, and it is a very appropriate element for some children with learning difficulties. But even in cases where a phonic approach can bring success, teaching should not sensibly be based on that method alone.

The main message from HMI is that no one method should be cherished as the holy grail to be pursued by all. The recent HMI report on "The Teaching and Learning of Reading in Primary Schools" found that the most effective teachers used a mix of methods to teach reading and that their teaching was carefully planned and structured. However, they invariably included phonics alongside other methods. An exclusive concentration on any one method of teaching reading, whether it was "real books" or phonics, was associated with higher levels of failure among pupils. I know, too, that the multi-sensory approach, which employs visual and auditory methods reinforced by tactile devices, has been preferred by many teachers of dyslexic children for some years. It has clearly had its successes, too. Whichever methods are adopted, it is important that the ethos of the whole school is flexible, positive and encouraging.

I turn to provision, which I suspect most interests my right hon. Friend. As he stressed, early identification of the signs of dyslexia is important. It is no good finding out that a child has dyslexia at the age of 14. However, it is open to some doubt whether LEAs would be able to pick up literacy problems—let alone dyslexia—at or before the age of six. I hold this view because reading and writing are not generally taught systematically to a sufficiently high level at that point for deficiencies, unless marked, to become obvious or testable. It is both the blessing and the curse of dyslexia that it is not as obvious to the beholder as, say, a physical disability.

As soon as learning difficulties are identified, however, schools and education authorities have a legal obligation to take action. Schools will often be able to make suitable provision from within their own resources. Where they cannot, LEAs must make an assessment and draw up a statement where appropriate.

The duties of all governors, schools and LEAs towards pupils with special educational needs are spelt out quite clearly in the Education Act 1981. It is for local education authorities and school governors to identify children who have, or may have, special educational needs, including those with dyslexia. In county and voluntary schools, governors must use their best endeavours to secure that the

[Mr. Michael Fallon]

required provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. They must also make sure that teachers in the schools are aware of the importance of identifying, and providing for, any of their registered pupils who have special educational needs.

What has come to be called a "whole school approach" is necessary for children's special educational needs to be met effectively. For schools to meet the challenges before them, it is crucial that clear and coherent policies be set in place at the different class, school and LEA levels. Such policies should cover all aspects of SEN provision and should be based on a realistic assessment of the current costs of provision. They should also set out direct plans of action and indicate the duties and responsibilities of all involved in the service. Effective monitoring and evaluation of these plans is essential to their success.

When LEAs make assessments or draw up statements of SEN under the Education Act 1981 they must take educational, medical and psychological advice. If a statement is drawn up, it must stipulate clearly the provision, in terms of human or material resources, which is required to support the child and to give access to as near to a full curriculum as possible. Once a statement is prepared—I accept my right hon. Friend's point that there may have been too much delay in the preparation of such statements—the LEA is obliged to meet the provision specified.

Under the same Act, a parent has the right to ask the local education authority to carry out an assessment of his child's needs. The authority must comply with that request unless it is, in its opinion, unreasonable.

The process of drawing up a formal statement necessarily takes some time. However, parents are right not to accept sluggishness if it occurs in these cases and right, too, to press for faster action by authorities if they are not satisfied with the way that the process is being handled. My Department recommends that the whole process, from initial notification to the drawing up of a draft statement where necessary, should normally take no longer than six months.

My right hon. Friend might like to know that about two thirds of the appeals to the Secretary of State against an LEA failing to make a statement, or against the content of a statement, concern dyslexia.

It is not for my Department to make provision, but clearly Ministers have a responsibility for what is taking place. I do not treat that responsibility for oversight lightly. Indeed, the Department has taken its interest so far as to fund some substantial research projects in the past and now. The Department funded four research projects 10 years ago and we are currently funding a total of £250,000 over three academic years to support the work of the dyslexia centre of the Harris city technology college. It is the intention of the Harris CTC Trust that the approach of the dyslexia centre in the CTC should be innovative, particularly in relation to the use of information technology in approaching this work. The results will be widely disseminated and should achieve national significance.

I should like to say a word or two about the proposed spelling penalty of up to 5 per cent. in GCSE examinations. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council suggesting this in January. In its reply, SEAC said that it has agreed with the examining groups that for 1991 all candidates will be warned that they

"are expected to use good English".

SEAC has also undertaken to initiate further work with examining bodies about additional steps that can be taken for 1992 and subsequent years and to report again to the Secretary of State in July and December.

When my right hon. and learned Friend wrote to SEAC earlier this month accepting those proposals, he made it clear that he would look to SEAC to be more specific in its further reports on the way in which marking schemes should take account of bad spelling, on the use of computer spell checks and on the possible need for changes in the arrangements for ensuring that handicapped candidates can compete on an equal basis with their peers.

I hope that my right hon. Friend is persuaded of my interest in and commitment to this hugely important area. Like him, I regard it as essential that we put an end to linguistic discrimination, and consign the lexical bar to the past. The issues of race and sex discrimination are serious and well known to the House, but discrimination against any person because he cannot read, express himself clearly, be understood or understand his own language is just as subtle and hidden a form of discrimination, and just as pernicious for that. It is, therefore, crucial that as many of our children as possible leave school functionally literate, and I am confident that the structures are in place to achieve just that.

A debate such as this serves to remind us that we must pursue that target with more vigour than we have in the past.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 18 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 25 April.

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 25 April.

HOOK ISLAND (POOLE BAY) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 23 April.

Mr. Speaker: As the next six Bills have blocking motions, I shall put them together.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (LEWISHAM, ETC.) BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 25 April.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 23 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Policies (Impact)

1. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what indices he relies upon to measure the impact of his policies upon the economy of the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. David Mellor): The Government use a wide range of indicators.

Mr. Maclennan: I recognise that the paucity of the information on regional matters, including regional unemployment—so startlingly increased today—shows that the Government are having difficulty managing fiscal aspects of the economy in the regions. Would not decentralisation of government to the nations and regions of the United Kingdom increase and improve economic performance?

Mr. Mellor: That does not follow. On unemployment, it is interesting how well the Scottish economy has been holding up compared with what has been happening further south.

Mr. Leighton: Is unemployment one of the indices? The Prime Minister said that he wants a classless society, which I understand to be an opportunity society. Has the Chief Secretary seen the news, out today, that the Government have destroyed all opportunities for 100,000 people, that there are now over 2 million people with no opportunities at all and that that figure is rising rapidly to 3 million? What is he going to do to apologise to those 2 million or 3 million people for whom the Government have destroyed all hope of opportunity?

Mr. Mellor: The other statistics that the hon. Gentleman will not have failed to see are that 26·5 million people are in employment and that the number of jobs in Britain has increased by over 3 million in the past eight years. The rise in unemployment is regretted, but there is no reason why, as the upturn recommences, employment should not grow. It is not just the Government who might have something to do about that. What about the hon. Gentleman's friends in the trade unions and their attitude towards wage bargaining? Some of the wage increases that are being sought at a time of difficulty for many companies can result only in higher unemployment.

Mr. Ward: Will my right hon. and learned Friend contrast the effect of a Government taking positive action to get the economy right with the actions of their predecessor, when Labour Members were responsible for near bankruptcy?

Mr. Mellor: That is absolutely right. All the key indicators in the 1980s showed a great recovery from the problems of the 1970s. Unfortunately, the Labour party has not learnt its lesson. Only yesterday it reiterated its proposal for a national minimum wage. Even if that led to only half the differentials being eroded, it could lead to 750,000 more people unemployed. Since Mr. Bill Jordan said that the differentials of his members will not be eroded

at all, that could add 1 million to the dole queue. The Labour party has nothing much to teach us about managing the economy.

Mr. Butterfill: One of the indices that certain expert economists seemed keen on a little while ago was the pound's parity within the exchange rate mechanism. They said that we had entered at much too high a level and that this would cause terrible damage and prevent us from cutting interest rates. Should not those people be eating their words now?

Mr. Mellor: There is no doubt that we have been able to live within our place in the ERM. In our six months of membership, interest rates have fallen from 15 to 12 per cent., which is less than the average level of interest rates since 1979.

Gross Domestic Product

2. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average annual growth rate for gross domestic product at factor cost from 1979 to 1991 using his Budget forecast for gross domestic product growth in 1991.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Maples): 1¾ per cent.

Mr. Orme: Does the Minister agree that that figure does not compare favourably with the record of the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979? The unemployment figures disclosed today, and the further decline in manufacturing industry, are partly responsible for the problems that we face. What will the Government do to rectify them?

Mr. Maples: My hon. Friends will be amazed that the right hon. Gentleman should give me the opportunity to remind the House of the terrible state of the British economy in 1979 after five years of socialist mismanagement. Public spending was out of control, public borrowing was more than 5 per cent. of gross domestic product and there was incipient hyper-inflation. It took a little time to sort that out, but between 1981 and 1991, under this Government, the economy grew at just under 2¼ per cent., compared with 1·4 per cent. between 1973 and 1979.

Sir William Clark: Will my hon. Friend make a conjecture about what would happen to gross domestic product if income tax were increased from 50 to 59 per cent., with an income surcharge of 9 per cent., giving a total of 68 per cent? Would not that terribly affect our gross domestic product?

Mr. Maples: My right hon. Friend is right. It would be a rerun of the last half of the 1970s, when annual capital formation fell to one third of 1 per cent. a year, manufacturing output declined by 1½ per cent. a year and inflation averaged 15½ per cent.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Minister reflect on the significance of his answer that growth under the Government is 1·75 per cent. below the trend growth of the previous two decades? Is not that ample proof that the so-called transformation of the economy is complete rubbish? Growth is well below 2 per cent. and negative growth is causing high, dramatic unemployment, from which our people are suffering.

Mr. Maples: I said in answer to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) that we inherited an enormous problem. What happened in the first two years of this Government can be laid at the door of five years of socialist mismanagement. In the 1980s, the British economy grew faster than the German, French or Italian economies, investment and manufacturing productivity grew faster and we were on top of a league which, during the 1960s and 1970s, we were bottom. What is the difference? In the 1960s and 1970s we had Labour Governments.

Charities

3. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from charities about the value added tax increase in the Budget; and what reply he has sent.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Francis Maude): We have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that charities estimate that the increase in VAT will cost them £33 million a year, bringing their total VAT payable to about £250 million. Help the Aged alone will have to find an extra £90,000 a year. This was an otherwise excellent Budget, so will my hon. Friend reconsider this most unconservative tax on charities?

Mr. Maude: European obligations mean that there is little flexibility in the extent to which zero rating of VAT for charitable purposes can be extended. Tax reliefs for charities amount to about £800 million a year, including about £150 million of reliefs on VAT. Charities benefit to a considerable extent. It is worth putting it in context: the cost of the increase in VAT to charities is no more than a quarter of 1 per cent. of charities' annual turnover. In almost every Budget since the Government took office, we have done something with tax to help charities, as we did this year.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware of the effect of the increase on cancer research work at the Paterson Institute in Manchester? Does he know that its vitally important and humane work has already involved it in paying more than £1 million in VAT and that it faces a charge of £200,000 more, every penny of which has been raised from private donations? Is not that a worrying comment on the Government's approach to voluntary funded cancer research?

Mr. Maude: I do not believe that it is. I am sure that the work about which the right hon. Gentleman speaks is excellent and is fully supported by the Government. I have spoken about the total amount of tax relief given to charities and I believe that it should be given. I have also made it clear that any Government, Labour or Conservative, have only limited flexibility, because of obligations within the European Community. I see no scope for making the changes that the hon. Gentleman suggests. The amount of voluntary giving to charities has doubled in real terms since 1979, and that is admirable.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Although it must be true that the modest increase in VAT will not benefit the incomes of charities, will my hon. Friend make it clear that no fewer

than six specific measures have been introduced in the past five Budgets, which have had a massive effect on the amount of charitable giving?

Mr. Maude: That is entirely right. As I said, the amount of charity giving has increased and the Government have sought to encourage charitable giving by means of the gift aid scheme, which we introduced last year and extended this year, and the payroll giving scheme. They have been effective incentives to people to give generously. Everyone in the House will agree that it is good news that people have responded so generously to those incentives.

Value Added Tax

4. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy not to extend the range of goods and services subject to value added tax.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): I have no plans to extend the range of goods and services subject to VAT.

Mr. Madden: Bearing in mind the burden of VAT, which means that the average family now pays £19 a week in VAT, and the fact that many people on low incomes, including pensioners, are having to pay the full VAT increase to finance the £140 reduction in the poll tax yet will not receive the full reduction, will the Chancellor of the Exchequer give a firm assurance to all families with children that items that are currently zero-rated, especially children's shoes, will continue to be so after 1992?

Mr. Skinner: What about whips?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) knows more about them than I do.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) asked me to give an assurance and I have stated our policy. He will know that the extent of VAT is the subject of discussions within the European Community and the Council of Finance Ministers. We have made it clear that we regard the protection of zero rating as essential. Because basic necessities are exempt or zero-rated, we consider that it is right to make that switch in the Budget, which has been well received. It means that the poorest families will not suffer in any way.

Mr. Mans: Bearing in mind the comments of the Financial Secretary a moment ago, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he would be prepared to make concessions on the VAT paid by charities, were it not for the restrictions imposed by the EEC?

Mr. Lamont: As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said, we already have many reliefs—worth up to £800 million—for charities. That must be contrasted with the £35 million additional burden that the Budget placed on charities. Every year, the Budget contains additional measures to help charities, just as it did this year.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Chancellor recall saying last summer that the underlying rate of inflation was important because it left out the distortion of housing costs? Will not his VAT poll tax surcharge further increase an already worrying underlying rate? Does not that show two things? First, as last year, the Government are running risks with inflation and secondly, when the Prime Minister spoke of taking inflation by the throat, he meant that he was force feeding it.

Mr. Lamont: I should be interested to know whether the hon. Lady would reverse the VAT switch that we made in the Budget, because Labour has been extremely equivocal on that point. Inflationary pressures in the economy are measured by the underlying rate of inflation, producer prices, and the gross domestic product deflator. When one strips out one-off additions such as the VAT addition, it is clear that underlying as well as headline inflation continues to fall.

Mr. Watts: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the considerable support for the maintenance of zero rating and for his policy of shifting part of the burden of local services from the local taxpayer to central taxation? Is he aware that there would be considerable support for taking that principle further, to avoid the need to reintroduce an unpopular property tax? If my right hon. Friend did that, he would share the credit for having taken part in the abolition of two unpopular taxes.

Mr. Skinner: Come on, crack the whip.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) seems to be obsessed with a certain subject—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us return to the question.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful for the support that my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) gives to the change that we made in the Budget, but he must wait for the local government finance proposals, which we shall announce shortly.

The Gulf

5. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate for the cost of military action in the Gulf so far.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Dalyell—I am sorry; I was thinking of other things. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Mellor: Will you tell the House what you were thinking about, Mr. Speaker. No? I am disappointed, Sir. I shall have to answer the question.

The latest estimate for the addtional defence costs, to be spread over several years, is that they are expected to be of the order of £2¼ billion.

However, I expect the bulk of these costs to be covered by cash contributions generously pledged by other Governments. In particular, although the Ministry of Defence's expenditure in 1991-92 is likely to be about £1½ billion above its planned level, I do not expect any significant net claim on the public expenditure reserve in the current financial year. Total cash contributions made or pledged by other Governments now total £2 billion, including the recent most generous pledge—which I am pleased to confirm and welcome—from the Government of Saudi Arabia of $1 billion.

Mr. Dalyell: I apologise to the Minister for not having brought the report to his attention earlier. I had to check it because it was so incredible. Given the wealth that is going up in flames, does not the Treasury agree that it is beyond belief that Red Adair is complaining that he

cannot get six bulldozers? He asked for a minimum of eight, but only two work. He is threatening to pull out. Do not the British Government have some responsibility—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Well, they do. Do not the British Government have some responsibility; should not they say to the Kuwaitis that, with such wealth being lost, they should do something about tackling the fires, as that will grow more difficult as times goes on?

Mr. Mellor: As always, the hon. Gentleman is courteous in phrasing his questions. As he knows, I have no responsibility for that matter. I shall draw it to the attention of the Foreign Office. No doubt, if there is anything in it, it will be looked at. This is not a part of the British Government's responsibilities.

Coinage

6. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *509-10*, what recent representations he has received about his planned changes to the coinage.

Mr. Maples: Before it was decided to introduce the new 5p and 10p coins, the Royal Mint undertook extensive consultations with interested parties and the general public. We have received a few recent representations about the planned introduction of a new smaller 10p coin and copper-plated 1p and 2p coins in September 1992.

Mr. Speller: My hon. Friend received some representations on this matter. I have received representations from people who use fruit or stamp machines or coin-operated machines, such as those for tube tickets. First, one coin was changed, but now three more are to be changed. Every change adds to the operating costs of the people who own coin-operated mechanisms. Does my hon. Friend find, as I do, complete distaste among constituents for any change in the coinage, particularly with regard to Europe in the future?

Mr. Maples: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. There was an extensive period of consultation in 1987 before the changes were announced. Among the people consulted were those in the vending industry, who were given two and a half years' notice and coins with which they could test the machines. We have agreed to delay the introduction of the further three new coins from June until September 1992. The industry has welcomed that and the fact that all three new coins will be introduced at the same time. Such changes inevitably impose costs on the vending industry which, in many cases, it will pass on to the customers. However, it would not be appropriate for the taxpayer to compensate the industry for that, if only because it is difficult to distinguish between changes that are the result of changes in the coinage and changes that are caused by other matters.

Mr. Ian Stewart: When my hon. Friend next considers further possible changes or additions to the currency, will he discuss with the Master of the Mint, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, the possibility of introducing a £2 coin for general currency, along the lines of those that are already used for commemorative purposes, as soon as the size slot occupied by the 10p coin becomes available for that purpose?

Mr. Maples: I hear what my right hon. Friend says. I am sure that he will be agree that there are almost as many views about what form the currency should take as people giving them. At present, there are no plans to make any further changes, other than those that have been announced. As he knows, there is a £2 commemorative coin, but the consultation did not reveal any desire or need for a £2 coin or for any changes other than those that we have announced.

Corporation Tax

7. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rate of corporation tax in the United Kingdom; and what is the average in EC countries.

Mr. Maude: The main rate of corporation tax will be 34 per cent. for 1990 and 33 per cent. for 1991, down from 52 per cent. in 1979. The European Community average, excluding the United Kingdom, for 1990 is 40·2 per cent. Germany's rate is 50 per cent.; Belgium's is 43 per cent. and France's is 34 per cent. Britain and Luxembourg now have the lowest main rate of corporation tax in the Community.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend accept that not only is that exceptionally good news for British business men, because it means that they can retain a greater proportion of their profits for reinvestment in their own businesses, but it ensures that the British Isles is a far more attractive place for overseas investment than anywhere else in the European Community?

Mr. Maude: That is correct. It is worth noting that 41 per cent. of investment by the United States in the European Community comes to Britain, that nearly 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in Europe comes to Britain and that there is more German investment in Britain than in any other European Community country. That shows that we have created an extremely favourable environment for business here in Britain, which is beneficial for this country. This year's Budget alone released £1 billion which would otherwise have been taken by the taxman, but which is now left for businesses to use for investment, if that is what they think right.

Mr. Duffy: Although cuts in corporation tax will undoubtedly produce an increase in investment by the mid-1990s, could not the Chancellor have chosen other measures if he wished to produce a surge in investment, which is presumably desirable at this point? Would not a more fundamental measure for boosting investment in the short term be the introduction of investment allowances?

Mr. Maude: We have had that before. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman might suggest, the real surge in investment occurred immediately after we abolished 100 per cent. capital allowances. Between 1986 and 1989, investment increased by no less than 43 per cent. to record levels. That was at precisely the moment when investment allowances of the sort to which I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring had been abolished.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the corporation tax level in this country is a good reason for us not to try to harmonise around some mean in the European Community, but to set an example for others to follow? When they begin to follow, we shall have already

got ahead of the game by attracting inward investment by companies which know that this is the best place for them to base themselves in the single European market.

Mr. Maude: The record entirely supports my hon. Friend's point. We should be aiming for a tax system that is simple and has low rates. That is what people and businesses want; it is what makes for a successful economy, and it is what we shall continue to seek.

Miss Hoey: Is the Minister aware that in no other European country are the national governing bodies of sport required to pay corporation tax? There has been a strong lobby in this country for our national governing bodies not to have to pay it either. Is the Chancellor considering removing that requirement?

Mr. Maude: As the hon. Lady knows, we have given the matter careful consideration. She brought a group of representatives from the sporting bodies to talk to me about it earlier this year; however, we do not think that such a move will be possible.

Businesses

8. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what benefits will accrue to businesses from the measures announced in the recent Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cuts in corporation tax for businesses right across the spectrum and the measures that I announced to improve companies' cash flow will provide considerable help for businesses. In total, the Budget gives over £¾ billion to businesses this year.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reaction of business to his Budget is summed up best by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, which said, "We are delighted"? His measures on corporation tax and VAT will give added confidence to industry as inflation falls and business optimism grows.

Mr. Lamont: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am not sure that I agree with him entirely, however. All the business representative organisations gave the Budget a warm welcome. The president of the CBI said that it was "a Budget for soundly based recovery, for saving and for investment".
The Institute of Directors said that it "addresses the immediate economic ills of business as part of an imaginative long-term fitness campaign".
Whatever Opposition Members may say, the Budget received a strong welcome from those who know about business.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: I welcome the number of clauses in the Finance Bill that deal with business taxation. Is the Chancellor aware, however, that it is estimated that perhaps £2 billion of the amount that he will receive from corporation tax will be a tax on inflation? That will seriously affect the cash flow of a number of companies. Cannot the Chancellor take further action to help companies at serious times?

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting that we should bring back stock relief—that we should adjust the tax system to accommodate inflation. I do not agree with that approach; I think that the correct policy is to reduce inflation.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the swingeing increase in excise duty on fuel is highly inflationary and very damaging to a vital part of our economy—the hauliers? All goods need to be taken from the point of production to the point of use.
The amount that the Chancellor is giving business by way of reductions in corporation tax may well be more than offset by the increases in the uniform business rate, which takes account not only of inflation and the phasing out of transitional relief, but of the revaluation which has hoisted rates throughout the country.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "Friend."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have a stop to this pointing.

Mr. Skinner: He is not a therapist.

Mr. Winterton: I am not a banker.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has made another significant intervention from a sedentary position. Hon. Members have always wondered what made him so malicious and malign—we now realise that he has a deep-seated problem.
My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear hear!"]—should consider the increase in excise duties alongside the freeze in vehicle excise duty at the same time, which means that the increase in transport taxes is very much less than my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Beith: If business confidence has been as greatly boosted by the Budget as the Chancellor believes, why are firms laying off workers, thus producing record unemployment figures?

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the increase in unemployment reflects activity over many months and unemployment figures lag behind the general performance of the economy. I am still confident that, as I predicted in my Budget speech, we shall see an upturn in the second half of this year.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend take pride in the fact that the reduction in corporation tax and the carry-back of losses announced in this year's Budget have greatly assisted companies to weather the recession?

Mr. Lamont: I very much agree with that. As I said, that was the reaction of the main organisations that represent businesses. I believe that the Budget was well received by business generally.

Interest Rates

9. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

14. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Bank base rates are 12 per cent.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Chancellor consider undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the number of small businesses and their employees who have fallen victim to the Government's high interest rate policy? Because of the

importance of small businesses to the Scottish economy and to the rural economy in general, will he ensure that interest rates are taken into consideration combined with the importance of the business rate, which in Scotland runs at 58p in the pound as opposed to 38·5p in the pound in England?

Mr. Lamont: Insolvencies in 1990 were under 1¼ per cent. of the total stock of businesses. That should be kept in context, because there has been a dramatic rise in the number of new businesses formed in recent years. What really matters to businesses is getting inflation down. It is clear from the figures that the Government's strategy against inflation is succeeding month by month. We must not let up because it is most important for businesses.

Mr. Salmond: The people will have noted the Chancellor's view that the economic damage suffered because of high interest rates has been so slight. Is not the truth that the damage has been not only severe, but wholly futile, because the Scottish economy has been dragged into an unnecessary recession by an interest rate policy designed for the economic conditions of the south-east of England? Whatever combination of the Chancellor's predecessors he chooses to blame, what responsibility will he accept for the economic blunders of the past few years?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman will recall that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury drew attention to how well the Scottish economy has withstood the recession that has affected the rest of the country. As I said to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), there is no gain for business in policies designed to accommodate inflation which is what the hon. Gentleman appears to want. He talks about the recession here as though there were not also a recession in the United States, in Canada and in several other countries.

Sir Giles Shaw: I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments on interest rate policy, but does he agree that businesses are anxious to know that the progressive nature of the half percentage cuts month by month is also part of that policy? Will he comment on the extent to which we shall be able to maintain such a policy for the United Kingdom and not have it deflected by European requirements?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot anticipate or reveal the future trend of interest rates as I see it. I have made it clear that further reductions in interest rates must depend on progress month by month against inflation. Business and the House very much welcome the fact that, far from our being boxed in by membership of the exchange rate mechanism, we have reduced interest rates by three points since we joined the ERM and by two points since December.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that as the pound in the ERM has behaved so well and successfully, and as the Treasury target of 4 per cent. inflation by the end of the year is well set to be reached, there is scope for further interest rate reductions in due course?

Mr. Lamont: I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I do not reply further to the point that I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw).

Child Benefit

10. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives from the Trade Union Congress to discuss child benefit.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend meets representatives of the TUC from time to time in a number of different contexts.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the Minister appreciate that when the Chancellor recently increased child benefit by 25p for second and subsequent children, his generosity was not appreciated by the country because people would like him to explain what that 25p will buy in terms of food and clothing for children?

Mr. Mellor: To qualify for the 25p for the second child, one has to have a first child for whom an extra £1 was given. The total benefit to the family in that tranche alone was £1·25. Expenditure this year on child benefit will be more than £5 billion compared with under £2 billion when the Labour Government were in office. We have nothing to be ashamed of in our record.

Sir Robert McCrindle: Notwithstanding the rather carping criticism by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), will my right hon. and learned Friend take it from me that the announcement by the Chancellor in the Budget on child benefit was warmly welcomed by those of us who, over many years and without, dare I say it, much encouragement from former Chancellors, have testified to the continuing need to maintain child benefit? Will my right hon. and learned Friend also accept our pleasure that we now have a sign that child benefit will not be allowed to wither on the vine, as many of us had feared?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. The fact that child benefit is to be uprated in line with inflation is worthy of my hon. Friend's commendation. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and to others who argued the case. He may be interested to know that the efforts of the Government and of Conservative Members during the past decade have meant that expenditure on families with children has increased by 32 per cent. in real terms during the 1980s. He may also be interested to know that expenditure on families with children fell by 7 per cent. in real terms when the Labour party was last in power.

Mr. Boateng: Why, with the United Kingdom lagging behind the rest of the European Community on child benefit—fourth, fifth or seventh depending on the age and number of children—do the Government continue to dither on whether—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Oh yes, dither. Why do the Government continue to dither about whether they expect women to stay at home or to go out to work? Is not the challenge to ensure that women have a real choice and to give them the level of child benefit and employers the level of nursery taxation to enable women to have that choice?

Mr. Mellor: I enjoyed that question. I am not sure that it shed much light on the debate, but I enjoyed it. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the upratings in child benefit announced in the Budget, as well as those that took place this month, have been a substantial contribution to assisting families with children including, interestingly, the poorest 25 per cent. of families, who, in the uprating

announced in the Budget, will not suffer clawback on their family credit arrangements. The Labour party costed its shadow Budget on the basis that it would claw back the increase in child benefit from those who were in receipt of income support.

Mr. Batiste: Although it is obviously right for my right hon. and learned Friend to consult the TUC on this and others matters, may I ask him to confirm that the Government have no intention of returning to the bad old days of beer and sandwiches, as now advocated by the Labour party? Does he agree that attempts at corporatist planning damaged the economy in the past and would do so again?

Mr. Mellor: I said that my right hon. Friend "meets" the TUC; the word "consultation" was not used. My hon. Friend is right to suggest that the Labour party has a formidable task if it is to explain precisely what its cosy little arrangement with the TUC would do to the economy.

Value Added Tax

11. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish any available information on the impact of the 2·5 per cent. value added tax increase on a low wage economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: Any increase in the rate of VAT will bear less heavily on poorer households than on the better-off because of the extensive zero-rating of necessities.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that, apart from growing unemployment, increased costs—I am thinking especially of clothing and telephone bills—will have an effect on people earning low wages and those on low fixed pensions?

Mr. Maples: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Budget increase in VAT was accompanied by a substantial reduction in the community charge. A married couple benefiting from that reduction would have to spend more than £13,000 a year on goods subject to VAT before being worse off. However far down the income scale one goes, one will find that people are better off because necessities are not subject to VAT.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 April.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House. I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Leighton: Has the Prime Minister noticed the growing chorus of concern and complaint, from organisations like the London Chamber of Commerce and the London tourist board, about the shabby state of London, the increasing congestion and the deteriorating quality of life? Why is it that London, alone among the great cities of the country and among the capital cities of the western world, has no democratic authority to give strategic guidance or leadership to the city? For example, should we bid for the Olympics? There is no forum in which to discuss the matter. Does the Prime Minister agree that it is time for new thinking? Surely the Prime Minister, who has had a number of addresses in London, should put his mind to this question.

The Prime Minister: If parts of London are scruffy, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, it is because they have Labour local authorities.

Sir Peter Hordern: Is not this a very sad day for the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he is putting a question to the Prime Minister.

Sir Peter Hordern: Is not it the case that the rate of inflation is falling fast, that mortgages are being reduced as of today, that sterling stands firm in the exchange rate mechanism and that the largest rescue operation in modern times—the one to assist the Kurds—is now going strong? Are not these things due entirely to the initiative and leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? Does not the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) face another five years of hard and fruitless labour?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the Prime Minister answer only the hon. Member's first question?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I think that he underestimates the record of the Leader of the Opposition. The right hon. Gentleman has lost practically a record number of elections and will in due course lose another.

Mr. Kinnock: On the question of records, may I ask the Prime Minister whether he agrees that today's record rise in unemployment is a personal tragedy for those people who have lost their jobs and a personal failure for him? Does he agree that anyone who has been the cause of so many other people losing their jobs should lose his?

The Prime Minister: I certainly share with the right hon. Gentleman very considerable concern about the people who have lost their jobs; we all share that concern. However, although the right hon. Gentleman is against unemployment in principle, he supports in practice policies that would create it—not least, as a Welsh Member, failing to be here earlier this week to vote for the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, which would provide 25,000 jobs.

Mr. Kinnock: The reason why I was not in the House on that occasion was that Her Majesty did me the enormous honour of inviting me and my wife to spend the night with the royal family at Windsor castle. I thought that the Prime Minister's many advisers might have drawn his attention to the Court Circular.

I heard what the Prime Minister said in his efforts to rebut the charges relating to unemployment. Since he became Prime Minister, 330,000 more people have lost their jobs, all as a direct result of his economic policies. Is not it obvious that he is truly the Prime Minister of unemployment?

The Prime Minister: I trust that the right hon. Gentleman will now confirm to the House that he will support the Government Bill on Cardiff bay which will provide 25,000 jobs. While he is about it, perhaps he will explain why he wants to introduce a minimum wage, which would cost 1 million jobs in this country.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is not it significant that the first group that my right hon. Friend was able to persuade of the merits of his bold initiative for safe havens in Iraq was the Heads of Government of the European Community? Did not that strengthen his hand a great deal in persuading President Bush, who was initially reluctant to agree to that initiative? Does not that show the potential and importance of European political co-operation?

The Prime Minister: We have worked very closely throughout this matter with the European Community, the United Nations and the President of the United States. I believe that that coalition of forces has now provided the right answer to deal with the immense tragedy that we are currently seeing in Iraq.

Q2. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hogg: Is the Prime Minister proud of today's unemployment figures? Do they represent what he calls the bottoming out of the economy or the bottom falling out of the economy? Which is it? Does he have any bold and heroic initiatives to help the growing army of unemployment?

The Prime Minister: The policies that the hon. Gentleman and his party support would create a level of unemployment never previously seen in this country. The way to ensure secure employment is to bring inflation down and keep it down, and that battle we are winning.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the people of Scotland realise that there are more people in work today in Scotland than at any time and that they are earning much more money, their take-home pay in real terms being 30 per cent. above what it was in 1979? There is no point in hon. Members shaking their heads; these are facts.

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the British people respect the leadership that he has provided during the Gulf war and in proposing policies which have resulted in troops being assembled to provide safe havens for the Kurds?

The Prime Minister: The people of Scotland also know that across the United Kingdom there are substantially more jobs now than there were in 1979, that the rate of unemployment in this country is below the European average and that in the past year we have had more jobs than we have had for many years—*[Interruption.]*—and far more than we ever had under the last Labour Government.

Q3. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 April 1991.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will the Prime Minister find time today to consider the problems of the upland hill farmers in my constituency and elsewhere who, on top of crippling interest rates and pitifully low livestock prices, are now having to face paying for the disposal of the carcases of their dead animals? What does he intend to do for family farms to keep employment in the countryside in my area and elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, some time ago my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced substantial increases in hill livestock compensatory allowances. They were well received by the agricultural community and should specifically help farmers similar to those in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Michael Brown: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it was this Government who gave the opportunity to trade unionists to vote in secret ballots, this Government who gave the opportunity to council house tenants to buy their homes, this Government who gave people the opportunity to opt out of local education authority control and this Government who gave people the chance of better opportunities generally?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The only opportunities that people will get from the Opposition is the opportunity yet again to do what their trade union leaders tell them to do, what their council leaders tell them to do and what any future Labour Government might tell them to do.

Q4. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 April 1991.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity finally to dispel allegations of dithering by announcing decisively what the country wants to hear, which is that there will be a June general election? If, as I suspect, he is still not clear in his own mind on that subject, will he be issuing a consultation document?

The Prime Minister: I can tell the hon. Gentleman crisply that when we hold the election we shall win it.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Q5. **Mr. Higgins:** To ask the Prime Minister, further to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing on 4 December 1990, *Official Report*, column 170, when he intends to complete his consideration of the case for compensation for British nuclear tests veterans and their widows; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: An independent study is currently being conducted. The Government's position is that they are ready to pay compensation if there is firm evidence that participation in the United Kingdom's nuclear test programme caused the cancer.

Mr. Higgins: The Prime Minister will recall that in answer to a previous question he gave a sympathetic and urgent reply in response to the plight of haemophiliacs. This case is clearly more complex, although in many respects it is even more deserving. Hon. Members who, at their surgeries and interview evenings, see constituents suffering from appalling cancers who were given no protection from the atomic tests in the south Pacific, believe that action is long overdue and that compensation should be paid urgently. Will my right hon. Friend proceed with his inquiry with the greatest possible speed?

The Prime Minister: I assure my right hon. Friend that we shall proceed in that fashion and try to ensure minimum delay. The practical problem is the limited number of appropriate medical experts. Nevertheless, I shall do what I can to ensure that the report is produced as speedily as possible.

Mr. Orme: If the Cabinet agreed this morning on the poll tax provision——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that this is a definitive question.

Mr. Orme: But, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that it would be right to have a second bite at it. The question before the House is about nuclear tests. Perhaps we had better move on.

Engagements

Q6. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 18 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Maclennan: Can the Prime Minister explain, in the light of the discussion that he had this morning, how any local tax which combined the poll tax and the rates could possibly be related to ability to pay?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that we propose to publish early next week, with exemplifications, the way in which we think that we should proceed in terms of local government taxation. He will find no difficulty in seeing the answer to his question then.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that with the Soviet Union still in turmoil it would be folly for the United Kingdom unilaterally to dispose of its independent nuclear deterrent so long as other potential aggressors possess theirs? Does he agree that those who in the past have been passionate supporters of unilateral nuclear disarmament should not be trusted by the British people with the defence of our country?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely. The maintenance of an independent nuclear deterrent is absolutely vital to the future security of our country. I am surprised that some others are less consistent in their principles on this point.

Safe Havens (Iraq)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the assistance which our armed forces are already providing to the relief effort for the Kurds in Iraq and our plans now to support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's proposal for the establishment of safe havens in Iraq.

The Royal Air Force has now been operating in Turkey for 10 days, delivering supplies in the most difficult conditions. Hercules aircraft have already delivered more than 240 containers to the refugees in the high mountains. More recently Chinook helicopters have significantly increased our capability to reach the most inaccessible places and to continue operating in severe weather conditions. Yesterday, when bad weather meant that little else could operate, one Chinook alone made no fewer than eight successful supply missions. In addition to the existing three Chinooks available for this operation, two more Chinooks reached Turkey yesterday and a further four are due to arrive today. This will treble our heavy lift capability and, with our continuing Hercules effort, will now comprise a really significant supply capability.

The next priority, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said yesterday, is to get the refugees down from the mountains and into the temporary safe havens which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister proposed. That will not happen unless the refugees have confidence that they will be safe from Saddam Hussein. I can now tell the House the steps that we are taking to provide that security as quickly as we can and to initiate Operation Haven, as it is being called.

At the same time as the Foreign Secretary was making his statement yesterday, a team from my Department was completing the initial planning with the United States commanders, and we have been in close touch with the French Defence Ministry as well. We are particularly grateful also for the excellent help of the Turkish Government in these efforts.

A reconnaissance and advance party left this morning to prepare for the arrival of the first elements of our forces which will leave within the next 48 hours. I have decided that these forces will be based mainly on 3 Commando Brigade of the Royal Marines. The Royal Marines are particularly well suited for rapid deployment and trained to operate in mountain areas. The brigade will include specialists in engineering, water supply, communications and medical and hygiene personnel. It will include substantial logistic support to sustain these operations, which are being conducted in very difficult terrain and weather, and well forward from the main airhead. They will also have Royal Navy Sea King helicopters which normally operate with the brigade. The brigade commander, Brigadier Andrew Keeling, is with the advance party which is arriving now at Incirlik. The present plan is that the bulk of the brigade will be based in Turkey with units rotating into Iraq.

The camps will probably take the form of a number of tented villages around a central distribution point and the aim will be that, so far as possible, the Kurds should be assisted to organise themselves within the camps with our forces providing the security.

The House will recognise that this is not an ordinary military operation. We are here engaged in humanitarian relief on a massive international scale when time is of the essence. It is a temporary arrangement to provide shelter and supplies to hundreds of thousands of people who desperately need them and to give them the confidence that, in these havens, they will be safe. That is our purpose and every effort is now being devoted to achieving it as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I am sure that the whole House will thank the Secretary of State for his statement. We are already indebted to the RAF for the sterling work that it has undertaken.

Can the Secretary of State tell us the size of the contributions from the United States and France? Does he think that the Franco-British contribution could have been sufficient on its own? I know that it is difficult, but can he give any estimate of the likely time that our troops will have to serve there? Will he bear it in mind that many right hon. and hon. Members recall that British troops were sent into Northern Ireland for a humanitarian purpose in 1969 and are still there.

Will the Secretary of State explain the rules of engagement, expand upon what he said and confirm that the aim will be to protect the refugee camps once the people have been brought down from the mountains? Can he assure the House that those camps will not become guerilla bases as that could easily happen if armed Kurds are allowed to take their weapons into refugee camps? Will he give us some idea of the nature of the air support that will protect our forces?

Finally, I note what the Secretary of State said about the RAF heavy-lift capability. In the event of its becoming inadequate for the purposes of the operation, will he look to civilian and other sources of heavy-lift support to carry on that vital work? I repeat that we welcome the Secretary of State's statement and wish our troops a speedy and effective solution to this dreadful problem.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) for his tribute to the RAF, which was very well judged. All right hon. and hon. Members have seen the conditions and the terrain over which our forces are operating. It is interesting that their skills will be shown not least by the Sea King helicopter pilots in 3 Commando Brigade who are trained to operate in the mountains where their particular skills and courage will be shown to great advantage.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we were doing enough and whether the French and British could cope on their own. The reality is that at present I am talking entirely about the Turkish border with Iraq, but there are also huge problems on the Iranian border, so we need all the help we can get. In that connection, I was pleased to hear from the Netherlands Defence Minister this morning that it is likely that the Netherlands will wish to join and contribute to the relief operation. That is excellent news.

I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an answer about the length of time, but I think that he is not challenging in any way the need for this humanitarian action and we are grateful for his support.

Obviously, we do not disclose rules of engagement in public, but they include the right to self-defence. That is implicit in them at all times and when our forces are

involved in that task we shall ensure that they are equipped and work under rules and regulations that enable them to protect themselves properly.

We are not prepared to see camps becoming guerilla bases. They are intended for humanitarian purposes to save lives. We will not allow armed Kurds to use them as bases from which to pursue their campaigns, not least in the interests of the security and safety of our own forces who are guarding those camps. It would be most unsatisfactory if those camps contained factions of armed men who could put our people in a very dangerous position.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will understand it if, in a developing situation, I give preference today to those hon. Members who were not called yesterday or on Monday.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): Having watched the Royal Marines in training on moors, in mountains and in the Arctic over some years, may I commend the choice of these excellent, elite troops? None could do a better job and I hope that they will set a standard that other nations will follow.

Mr. King: I know my hon. Friend's close interest in the Royal Marines. As she knows, they have just returned from an exercise in the mountains of Norway and are very ready to climb another mountain.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I pay tribute to the Prime Minister for his work on this matter, but express great reservations about the setting up of these camps. If a solution can be found from any talks between the Kurdish leaders and the Iraqi Government and an agreement requiring an international guarantee can be drawn up, would the Prime Minister be prepared to go to the United Nations to seek a resolution providing powers for the enforcement of such an international guarantee?

Mr. King: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It is well judged. My statement merely shows the speed with which we are carrying out my right hon. Friend's initiative and our determination to make sure that it is implemented.

The hon. Gentleman expressed reservations. I do not know his proposal or whether he has an alternative way to remove people from the high mountain areas in quite appalling climatic conditions where we are close to the last few minutes of getting people on the mountains down into areas in which they have some chance of survival. Far from having reservations about my right hon. Friend's initiative, I believe that it is the only possible way in which that can be achieved.

The hon. Gentleman put certain hypothetical proposals about the outcome. That does not fall directly to me. I made it clear that we are in phase 1. We are now looking to the situation in which we can move to phase 2 during which people can return to their homes in safety and confidence. It is not our purpose to see those people permanently established in temporary camps in the mountains. The initial purpose is to save lives, but it is not the long-term solution.

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Will my right hon. Friend pass to his staff in the Ministry of Defence and to our services all down the line our renewed thanks for the speed, efficiency and professionalism that we have come to expect from them when they are responding to a crisis? While we get on with the immediate task and, given the exemplary leadership shown by the Prime Minister and the Government in moving ahead of world opinion in this matter, will my right hon. Friend, possibly through the military commission in the United Nations, make every effort to get more robust support from that organisation so that we can repeat the success of the relief of Kuwait with the full United Nations authority in carrying out this very important humanitarian task?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks from a position of considerable experience. All those concerned in my Department and the military side have moved with exemplary speed to initiate this activity. I assure my hon. Friend that he will see things happening very fast in the hours and days ahead. It is right to recognise that many of our friends and allies are also moving with considerable speed to make their contribution. Obviously, the United States is important and we are in close touch with the French. I mentioned the Dutch, and the Germans are also making their contribution. Turkey is the host nation and I am grateful to the Turkish Government for their support. I understand that Prince Sadruddin of the United Nations has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Iraqi Government about the operations of the United Nations agencies in Iraq. I think that we shall now start to see the United Nations agencies playing an active part as well, which is what we wish to see.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Secretary of State's account of the professionalism of the Royal Air Force entitles the House to have the confidence that all our forces will prove more than adequate for the difficult and sensitive task that has been entrusted to them. Does the right hon. Gentleman also agree that we would be right to be concerned about the safety of our forces? Can he assure the House that, if any of our forces or those in their care come under any threat, all military means at the disposal of the allies will be used to neutralise that threat?

Mr. King: We have given the Iraqi Government a clear warning that our purposes are entirely humanitarian and that we are determined to ensure that those to whom we bring aid can be safe. We have given the clearest warning that that activity is not to be interfered with. I give the hon. and learned Gentleman the absolute assurance that were there to be any such attempt to do that, it would be dealt with very severely indeed. I say that at the Dispatch Box to ensure that anyone listening who may be uncertain about the matter is left in no doubt whatever.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will our forces going to Iraq have the use of airfields in that country during the phase, when they go in and thereafter?

Mr. King: The initial base is Incirlik. That is the main airhead from which we are operating.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is leaving today for Turkey and Iran, with a team, to see in what ways we can help the Iranians with their tremendous work for the Kurdish refugees. We shall be anxious to see what facilities may be available to help in that way.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Secretary of State accept that the aim of eventually restoring the Kurds to their homes must be the basic reason behind any action undertaken by the Government? But would not it have been better if the Ministry of Defence had foreseen that, at the conclusion of hostilities, many thousands of people in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and on the Iranian borders would be in need of medical assistance? It was not hidden from our knowledge that that would be the case. Why, therefore, did the right hon. Gentleman's Department, at the cessation of hostilities, arrange for thousands of pounds worth of medical equipment, including saline drips and hypodermic syringes, to be systematically destroyed in Saudi Arabia? Why did his Department refuse the request by the Saudi authorities for those medical supplies and undertake an orgy of destruction—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] I have photographic evidence should the House wish to question it. I have photographs of British troops destroying medical equipment that could have been used to help to relieve the ordeal of the Kurds. I have asked an important question; I hope that the Secretary of State can answer it.

Mr. King: The charge that the hon. Gentleman makes is very serious. I am amazed that he should make such a charge against the medical staff—the nurses and doctors who went out to save lives and bring medical help to those who suffered injury during the campaign. The hon. Gentleman gave me no notice of his question. I take the matter very seriously, although the hon. Gentleman seems to be more interested in performing a publicity stunt in the House than in drawing the matter seriously to my attention so that it can be looked into.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): All those who have been appalled at the scenes of horror among the Kurdish refugees owe a great debt to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for what he has achieved and for the statement. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State take steps to ensure that representatives of the United Nations are present as early as possible, that they have access to the villages where the Kurdish people lived previously and that they play a part in helping them to resettle?

Mr. King: That is certainly our objective. We are moving very fast. We had taken the decision before it was certain, for example, that the memorandum of understanding would be signed today. That memorandum of understanding is good news because it means that the agencies can now start operating in Iraq. We shall be looking to the agencies to take over the operation of the camps at the earliest possible time while we ensure that the camps are safe.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We appreciate that the need for speed and particular skills makes it entirely appropriate that our forces should be deployed in the way that the Secretary of State described. But does he appreciate the desirability of replacing our troops as soon as possible with a multinational United Nations force? The Secretary of State also referred to the rules of engagement of the troops to be deployed there and said that they included the right for them to defend themselves. Will he also confirm that the rules include the right for them to defend the camps at which they are deployed?

Mr. King: I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that they will have appropriate rules of engagement to do the job which they are going there to do. I also assure him that we wish to see it become a United Nations operation as soon as possible, but he will understand why we have not held up the achievement of that further objective in the interests of the absolute need for speed.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the integration of command in the Gulf war and the other collaborative arrangements made among the allies were one of the principal factors which led to the success of the coalition. In view of the fact that there is now a new leader of collaboration in the new enterprise, can he assure the House that sufficient attention is being paid to ensuring that there are proper integration and proper collaborative measures to ensure that there will be no muddle should an untoward event take place?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance of the command and control arrangement. We are discussing it and the advance party which is going out will be talking about it. We shall run the operation from the joint headquarters at High Wycombe, but the operation on the ground, which was coming under the European command of the United States forces in Europe, is moving to Turkey, with a United States lieutenant-general in command. We are considering the best way of integrating with them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Secretary of State said that the havens were being set up principally on a humanitarian basis. The second phase of the policy is to get the Kurds back to their towns and villages. Presumably the third phase is for the United Nations to take over. In that process, is not it conceivable that his people will tell him that one of the reasons why the Kurds have been engaged in a continual battle against the Saddam regime is that, notwithstanding what has happened recently, they believe that they should have their own homeland, called Kurdistan? Once the Government get involved in another country, as is the case in this instance, they will have to take a view about that. Do the Secretary of State and the Government agree that Kurdistan should be set up in that region? Now that they are involved, I think that they will have to make that decision at some point.

Mr. King: Obviously those issues, which have existed for a long time, will arise. If we are to engage now in a debate on them, that can only obstruct the establishment as soon as possible of the relief operation that we wish to see. My concern is exclusively to bring immediate assistance and relief to people who are on the very edge of their lives and whom we need to help quickly if they are to be helped at all.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): We must all congratulate the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend on the speed and efficiency with which they have mounted the operation. It is early days yet, but has my right hon. Friend given any thought to the large number of units that wish to be associated with the exercise? In doing so, will he reach an early conclusion about how frequently he will turn the units round so that other units may have the opportunity to get experience in that part of the world?

Mr. King: With his knowledge of the armed forces, my hon. Friend puts his finger on one of the most moving

experiences for me in what is happening. It is a case not of finding units that are willing to go but of facing the anger and disappointment of those that are not asked to go. Certainly we shall take into account the point which my hon. Friend has made because there is tremendous enthusiasm and willingness. Some of the Chinook pilots to whom we have paid tribute, who have only recently returned from the Gulf and who were on leave, volunteered to return from leave because they were anxious that their resources and skill should be used.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Although we accept the two-stage approach announced by the Secretary of State, does he agree that the entire area has seen a series of systematic rebellions and upheavals by the Kurdish people in Iraq, Turkey and Iran over 70 years and that we bear the largest share of responsibility for that because it was this nation which betrayed the Kurdish people and denied them a Kurdistan 70 years ago? Does he accept that, as well as doing all that must be done now, the only long-term solution that will bring peace and security to the Kurds is for them to have the right to determine their own future which every other people should have?

Mr. King: Those issues will no doubt continue to be debated by the House and my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. My statement today dealt exclusively with this urgent and critical task. Nobody in the House underestimates how short time may be to bring help to avert what could otherwise be an absolute catastrophe.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the speed and professionalism with which the Government and Britain's armed forces respond to such crises and challenges, whether combat or humanitarian, command the admiration of the world? Can my right hon. Friend say something of the logistics involved and the medical back-up that will be provided?

Mr. King: I am grateful for the tribute that my hon. Friend has paid to our armed forces. The logistics are being worked out now. It will be difficult to operate in an area without much of the infrastructure that we would seek, but we shall have substantial logistical back-up and medical and hygiene teams will be available. We are looking at the scale of that, which will depend partly on what others provide, what is available there and what the United Nations agencies can provide. That is what the reconnaissance advance parties are working on now.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): If the term "temporary arrangement" is not to haunt the Government and the nation, do the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister accept that the only effective way of persuading the Kurds from the mountains and, more importantly, back to their towns and villages will be real and genuine progress towards establishing a self-governing, autonomous Kurdistan guaranteed by the United Nations?

What discussions have taken place with Iran and what role will the United Nations play in securing the safe havens? Will there be joint United Nations and non-United Nations forces? If not, when will the United Nations become directly involved in the responsibility for security and administration of the safe havens?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary say yesterday that our policy is to support the Kurdish pursuit of an autonomous region within a democratic Iraq and not an independent Kurdistan. Having said that, I do not think that anybody in the House who knows anything about the area or the background does not realise the problems and all the reasons why it would have been much safer to have stayed out of this entirely. We are not staying out because the humanitarian needs of hundreds of thousands of people are of overriding urgency and we must act. I believe that it is the overwhelming view of the House to support the Prime Minister in that determination.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister took an extremely important and courageous initiative in proposing a safe haven in the first place? Does he also agree that those who were stupid enough to criticise what he did and to suggest that it was gesture politics were talking through their hats? Furthermore, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister deserves all the support that Conservative Members and the House can give him to ensure that this courageous decision comes to a satisfactory conclusion?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. These are tough decisions to take. We are embarking upon major undertakings, but we believe that they are right. This is the only way in which the help could have been brought as effectively as it will be now.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his choice of the Royal Marines to assist the Kurds. I know from contact with the Marines in my constituency that their skills, expertise and dedication will be a match for any task given to them. Will the Secretary of State further clarify the details of the operation that will be undertaken and will he come to the House as soon as possible to give details of the chain of command? Will he assure us that the welfare of the men and communication with their families back home will remain a priority throughout these operations?

Mr. King: We paid much attention to communications. We shall, first, establish the aid agencies to ensure that supplies get through. Satellite communications have been established in the area by our first Royal Air Force forces and we shall try to ensure that the forces involved are able to maintain them. I shall seek to keep the House informed as this rapidly moving scene develops.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is possible only because we have high-quality armed forces available to do the job and because the Government have the political resolution to send them? Does he further agree that it is hypocritical of those who opposed the use of force against any of Saddam Hussen's excesses to criticise the quality of our aid to the Kurds?

Mr. King: This is a further occasion—we have seen it in other emergencies—when we have good reason to thank the quality, calibre and capability of our armed forces. They are undertaking challenging missions that nobody else could do. That would not be possible unless the Government were prepared to invest in training, equipment and pay for those forces year after year.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is not it vital that we make the sharpest possible distinction between humanitarian aid and the establishment of safe havens, which I and the overwhelming majority of British people support? Does the Secretary of State agree that, whatever the outcome of the Kurdish wish for automony, the political promotion of any group in Iraq, be it Kurds, Shi'ites or anyone else, must be a matter for the people of Iraq when they are free from the criminal tyranny of Saddam Hussein? All that we need do is provide aid to ensure that human beings—men, women and children—do not continue to exist in the present conditions.

Mr. King: That is certainly our purpose, and I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of it. It is the overwhelming view of the House and of the country that it is necessary.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring the attempts of some newspapers, and certainly tonight's *Evening Standard*, to sow distrust among the allies—the British, French and American Governments—who have worked together so splendidly on this operation, in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister played so notable a role?

Mr. King: It is encouraging, as the area and the Turkish bases are on the fringes of NATO, to see that quick and immediate co-operation has developed among the principal countries involved.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): May I commend the Prime Minister for his initiative in the provision of safe havens for the Kurdish refugees? I wish the venture every success. However, despite the Secretary of State's reluctance to enter into discussion on self-determination for the Kurds, does he recognise that if the Kurdish refugees are to be persuaded to leave this difficult terrain they will need some guarantees about their future? Will he at least ensure that there is an international peace conference to consider this at an early date?

Mr. King: My purpose is to determine that whatever the future may be for the Kurdish people there are some Kurdish people able to enjoy it. I am putting it bluntly, but the situation is as serious as that. Anyone who has any knowledge of the conditions, of where the camps are and of the altitude in the mountains knows that time is not on our side. That is why it was imperative to get them down from the mountains. We have no guarantee that it will succeed, but we believe that it is the best approach to the initial phase of saving the Kurdish people.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the House is most impressed by the speed with which he has put this operation into effect? Will he pass on to the Royal Air Force the House's praise for the airmanship and skill being shown by the helicopter and Hercules air crew, and by the ground crew serving them, in carrying out this operation in difficult terrain and weather?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has knowledge of the services. We sometimes take them for granted and when we switch on our televisions we expect to see the services doing their job. Most people do not begin to understand the incredibly difficult circumstances in which they operate, the speed with which they arrived at their destination and the accuracy of the work that they are now doing in countries that they have never seen before. I have had the opportunity to see at fairly close quarters that incredibly impressive operation.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister accept from one who has consistently supported the Kurds that humanitarian assistance is welcome and desperately needed? However, will he turn his attention again to the long-term political question? Unless the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination is recognised, the civil war in that region will continue. There is a great danger of foreign forces ending up deciding the future of the countries in that region interminably, as part of a civil war. Does he agree that the Kurds have been denied their right to self-determination for too long and that it is time that their rights were recognised?

Mr. King: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear our position on what a fair future for the Kurdish people should be. The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not ducking the question, but identifying the critical first priority. I do not think that he challenges that. His questions are academic unless we succeed in phase 1, which is to save the lives of the Kurds in the high mountain areas, who probably now number more than 1 million. They are living in unsuitable climates and at unsuitable altitudes and will not be able to survive for much longer. It is a pressing priority to get them down into a climate and in circumstances that give them some prospect of survival.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there has been a huge sense of relief in the House that the decisive lead given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has met with such an overwhelming professional response from our ground and air forces? Would he care to comment on the number of military personnel currently involved and, if he has any idea, of the civilian backup that will doubtless be needed to assist in running the camps? Having started with such commendable zeal with the safe havens, could there be a demand for similar activity lower down, in Iran and so on, and are the operations flexible enough to deal with those?

Mr. King: In the first air and helicopter deployment some 350 service men were involved. That will rise fast now, with further helicopters arriving in the past two days and with further supplies and logistic support. I shall check the figure, but it must be about 600 now. My hon. Friend mentioned the announcement of 3 Commando Brigade. The number will be between 3,000 and 5,000, depending on logistic support and the resources that we find there. The matter is now under active consideration by the advance recce party, which I sent this morning and which is due to arrive in exactly five minutes time. That will be one of the first questions that they look at. My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the needs faced in Iran, which is why my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is on her way there now. We shall wait for her reports on how we can help.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the Secretary of State aware of the great concern and generosity of the United Kingdom public when they have seen the plight of the Kurds? They have given thousands of tonnes of foodstuff, medical supplies, blankets and clothing to organisations such as British Aid for the Kurds. That organisation is experiencing storage problems and difficulties with moving from storage the goods that

have been collected so that they can be taken to the area where they are needed. The goods that are stored in Northern Ireland present a particular problem. It is important that a partnership is opened between the Government and such organisations to ensure that the material that has been donated goes where it is needed. If we send troops only to protect the Kurds, who are freezing, starving and dying, there is a limit to the activity in which we are engaged. Therefore, will action be taken by the Government to co-ordinate activities and to work with those voluntary organisations?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's point is extremely important. It is vital that the goods that are given through the generosity and good will of the British people are properly delivered. The services are playing a major part in ensuring that those goods are not wasted and that they can be delivered where needed.

The Minister of State—my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is sitting beside me—will have taken note of the hon. Gentleman's question. The Ministry of Defence is more concerned with delivery at the other end. It is important that the whole channel works, and I shall ensure that that point is looked into.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I welcome this positive move. How many military doctors, nurses and other medical staff will accompany the Royal Marines? Does my right hon. Friend agree that at this critical time our military medical staff can play an important role in helping the Kurds in these dreadful conditions?

Mr. King: There certainly will be some medical staff. The degree to which we reinforce that will depend on the advance party's report on the work that the Red Cross and other agencies can do.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): As the Kurds were betrayed after the first world war, why should they trust the British Government now? The Secretary of State speaks eloquently about humanitarian needs, and the Opposition agree with him, but the overall issue must be addressed. The Kurdish people have a right to a homeland. There should be ongoing negotiations with the Turks, Iranians, Syrians, Iraqis and perhaps the Soviets. Clearly the issue will not go away. In some respects, aid is a red herring. We must get down to a political solution to the problem, just as we must get down to a political solution to the problem in Northern Ireland. If we understand that, we can have some respectability. The Government do not have such respectability. It is only because of pressure from below that they have been forced to react. That is the reality of this issue.

Mr. King: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting in that typically idiotic contribution. Perhaps he believes that the people should stay on the mountain and die because they do not believe that the camps are provided in areas where they may have a chance of survival. That is strange advice.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Will my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister accept the heartiest congratulations from my constituency on the speedy work that is being done? As they must be aware, there will be much whingeing and carping over the next few months. They must be steadfast in their resolve. On the logistical side of the operation, will there be a role for the Merchant Navy and the Royal Navy? Will there need to be safe supply routes in the future from, say, Aqaba to the camps?

Mr. King: I am not unused to people seeing difficulties and dangers and whingeing, as my hon. Friend described, about actions that we took when those people thought that they were right. We are taking action now because we believe that our actions are right, and the overwhelming majority of people who have any sensitivity agree with us.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I realise that this matter is not directly the responsibility of the Secretary of State, but is he aware of any proposals to locate officials from the Foreign Office and the Home Office in the safe havens to process applications for political asylum in this country by Kurds who feel that their lives are threatened by Iraq?

Mr. King: I am not aware of any such proposals at the moment, but we shall obviously be working closely with the military commanders out there and with the representatives of the Overseas Development Administration on relief. If any further questions on that arise, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will address them to another quarter.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that once again the Royal Air Force has demonstrated the wisdom of having crews that are constantly in current operational flying capability, and that the helicopter crews gain much of that experience from search and rescue work in the United Kingdom? Will he accept from me that his choice of the Marine commandos is welcome in Tayside and that 45 Commando, which has its home in Angus, is very popular? As a member of the mess for many years, I recognise the skill——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Well done, but come on.

Mr. Walker: I recognise that the Marines have a special capability and quality, especially when operating in difficult mountainous terrain and in winter conditions, which makes them the right people to send in the present circumstances.

Mr. King: I appreciate my hon. Friend's close connection with a number of units. I wonder whether we can find a unit with which he is not connected, but that might be——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What evidence is there that Iran, China or Russia, which knows how difficult it was to take its army out of Afghanistan having put it in there, will agree that this operation should become a United Nations operation? If we want to help the Kurds quickly, do we not at least have a duty to explore the proposals that have been put forward by Saddam Hussein, however unpalatable that may be? Since that charlatan Peter the Hermit preached the first crusade, has any western Christian military operation in the near east ever had any success in the medium or long term? Finally, when the Secretary of State turned to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and said, "Very severely indeed" if there are difficulties, he did not, did he, mean nuclear weapons?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's contributions to these serious issues become more and more erratic and more and more frivolous and do less justice to the grave situation that we face. I wish that he would come down from the high cloud on which he sits and address the reality of the position. What contribution his words have made to helping to save the millions of Kurds whose lives are now at risk, I totally fail to see.

Business of the House

4.18 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week, which will be as follows:

MONDAY 22 APRIL—Until seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

Remaining stages of the Coal Mining (Subsidence) Bill.

Money resolution and Ways and Means resolution relating to the Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill.

TUESDAY 23 APRIL—Remaining stages of the Ports Bill.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order.

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL—Remaining stages of the Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill.

Motion on the Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order.

THURSDAY 25 APRIL—Remaining stages of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 26 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 29 APRIL—Second Reading of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill.

The House will also wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that European Standing Committee A will meet on Wednesday 24 April at 10.30 am to consider European Community Document No. 8745/90 relating to sweeteners for use in foodstuffs.

[Wednesday 24 April
European Standing Committee A
Relevant European Community Document
8745/90 Sweeteners in foodstuffs
Relevant report of European Legislation Committee
HC 29-ii (1990-91).]

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is it not disappointing that the Leader of the House has not yet found time for a debate on criminal justice in Britain? Given the important and, in some cases, shocking events of the past few months, may I remind him again that hon. Members on both sides of the House would welcome the opportunity of such a debate.

We have been told that the Cabinet apparently reached a decision today about the Government's alternative to the poll tax. Is it not curious that no statement has been made in the House? Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that any announcement made next week about the future of the poll tax will be made first in the Chamber of the House of Commons rather than at some press conference? Will he also assure us, if it is possible—which I doubt—that all the various options will not be leaked by the Secretary of State for the Environment in the meantime?

Is it not shameful that, while the Government have dithered for months trying to paper over the cracks in the Cabinet and the Conservative party on the poll tax, unemployment has risen so disastrously and dramatically above the 2 million mark? Should not the Secretary of State for Employment have had the courage—the guts—to come to the House and make a statement today about

the biggest rise in unemployment since records began? Should he not have told us what the Government intend to do about it?

Is it not now clear beyond peradventure that it was a disastrous error for the Government to cut investment in training, as they did in the Budget? May we at last debate their public expenditure proposals so that we can hold Ministers to account for their calamitous mismanagement of the economy, which has resulted in today's disastrous unemployment figures?

Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Government have done a U-turn and have abandoned their proposals to implement the remaining parts of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986? Is it not curious that the Government—who have said for some time that they will implement the remaining provisions of an Act which was put on the statute book after some excellent work by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and others, and which brought so much hope to so many people with disabilities and to their families and carers—now apparently intend not to proceed? Sir Brian Rix, the chairman of Mencap, has described their decision as disastrous for disabled people. Is this really the Government's intention? May we have a statement about it as soon as possible?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman will know, during this Parliament we have had many opportunities to discuss various aspects of criminal justice and to extend the discussion widely to all the aspects of crime to which he referred. I shall bear in mind what he said about the need for a debate, but, as the business statement shows, we have a very busy programme next week: obviously there will be no opportunity then. He will know that I try to respond to his requests—although it is not always possible to do so immediately—and to find time for the debates for which he asks.

I am a little surprised by the hon. Gentleman's implication that we should have said something about the community charge this afternoon. He will know that his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) took exactly the opposite line in a letter to *The Times* yesterday, suggesting that it would be strange indeed for us to make an announcement this afternoon; he was very critical of the idea. We are completing the consideration following this morning's discussions about the Government's proposals, and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear, we shall publish the documents early next week.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be a statement when we have completed the final consideration. Let me make it clear what I mean by "final consideration". We shall publish the consultative documents, which must be printed and put together in the light of today's discussions. I should have thought that that was in no sense a matter for criticism. His hon. Friend would have thought it odd if the documents had been published this afternoon.

I wholly reject the hon. Gentleman's charge that we have been dithering for months. Our highly effective review has been conducted at a greater speed than most reviews and certainly at a much greater speed than any conducted by the Labour party. When the documents are published, the hon. Gentleman will see that an immense amount of effective work has been done in coming to conclusions.

The hon. Gentleman requested a debate on unemployment. The Government have taken many measures over a number of years—not least this year—to deal with unemployment. I assure him that we shall not follow the Labour party in pursuing the policies that it announced earlier this week—a national minimum wage, a jobs tax on companies, acceptance of the entire social action programme immediately if Labour ever took office and a strikers' charter. I assure him that all four policies would add greatly to unemployment, and we shall not follow them. It comes ill from him to comment on unemployment when the Labour party confirmed its intention—if it got the chance—to take action on those issues, which would increase unemployment. He knows that employment levels in this country are well above what they were even four or five years ago, and unemployment is still below the European average.

It will be possible to debate some of these issues during economic debates, on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill and during the debate on public expenditure for which the hon. Gentleman asked and which I have promised. It is important to have the Second Reading of the Finance Bill first, and I hope that it will be possible to debate public expenditure soon after that.

I shall consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health about the remaining provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that I am reluctant to curtail business questions, but there is great pressure on business today and I must put a 10-minute limit on speeches. I ask hon. Members to ask single questions about next week's business, not about general matters.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on charities? I was saddened by the fact that during yesterday's debate the Labour party made clear its dislike of charities. Surely the public want the role of charities to be strengthened and improved.

Mr. MacGregor: I pay tribute to the excellent charity work that my hon. Friend does. I cannot promise a debate in the near future, although I hope that there will be many opportunities for him to raise the issues that he wishes to raise during, for example, debates on some of the measures that we shall consider.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Atlantic treaty parties are meeting next week in Madrid starting on Monday? Last October the House was told that the Government were against mining in the Antarctic. There are now rumours that the Government have changed their mind. Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that no change will be announced at the meeting in Madrid until it has first been announced to the House?

Mr. MacGregor: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says. He knows that we have played a leading role in these issues, and there is to be an Adjournment debate on the Antarctic next week.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the Leader of the House consult the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and ensure that the right hon. Gentleman makes a statement in the House about the alarming position whereby vital security documents are being leaked from the Garda in the south of Ireland? At least one man among those mentioned has been murdered by the IRA as a result. There is now another report that a second document has been leaked and another man in the community is under threat. Will the Leader of the House bear in mind that, when that happened on the other side of the political divide, the Royal Ulster Constabulary ensured that all the people whose names were on documents were visited and warned? Will he ensure that the RUC does that on the Protestant side of the community, in view of the grievous and serious spate of murders taking place in our Province?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not familiar with the report to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention. I will, of course, discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland as soon as I have the opportunity to do so.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to make a statement urgently to explain why the procedures set down by his own Department have not been followed in relation to the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate on Culloden school, which was made public on the same day as it was sent to the local education authority and to the governing body, and was leaked to *The Mail on Sunday* several days earlier? Will the right hon. Gentleman please ask the Secretary of State to explain how the problem of the school will be helped by allowing it to be used as a political football in this outrageous manner?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not wish to comment on the hon. Lady's views of the matter. I will draw it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend look at early-day motion 685?

[That this House supports the invitation issued by the Prime Minister to the honourable Member for Dagenham during the debate on Tuesday 27th March, Official Report, column 975 to place in the Library a copy of the Labour Party document entitled Fair Rates; recognises that only when it is accompanied by detailed financial information can the impact of these proposals on each household be calculated; and emphasises that the absence to date of any such supporting figures renders worthless all claims concerning its alleged advantages.]

I and many other hon. Members invite the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) to produce the figures on which the Labour party's policy on the poll tax is based. I am sure that Labour Members would welcome the opportunity for a debate. If my right hon. Friend is minded to find time for a debate, will he check carefully with the Leader of the Opposition in case he is dining in very high places?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that there are many questions to be asked—indeed, they have frequently been asked—about the Labour party's figures on the matter. I have taken note of early-day motion 685 and, so far, we have had far from satisfactory responses. It is clear that there is fudge, double counting and, probably, a complete lack of understanding and knowledge. My hon. Friend is on a good point. I do not have the slightest doubt that when we look at our own consultative document on the finance provisions for local government, the contrast between the two, in terms of accuracy and clarity on the one hand and fudge and double counting on the other, will be clear.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Can I press the Leader of the House about the Government's decision to dump sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which has caused such widespread anger and dismay among disabled people and their organisations? Does he recognise that the Government's decision rips the heart out of an Act which became law with total all-party and ministerial support? Indeed, does he know that sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Act were redrafted specifically to meet the wishes of the Government? Ought there not at the very least to be an oral statement next week about a decision that not only brings the Government into contempt but demeans Parliament itself?

Mr. MacGregor: I try to keep abreast of every possibility for answering questions on business statements. However, I am not aware of this matter, and I have already said that I will draw the point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Will my right hon. Friend find an opportunity next week for the House to express its views on the future of London zoo? Many of us would deeply resent any more taxpayers' money going into the zoo and are amazed that those who run the zoo should seek to threaten us by saying that if more taxpayers' money is not available animals will be killed.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has already made his point. I was going to say that he must find another opportunity to make his point because I can see no chance of Government time being given to the matter next week. My hon. Friend will know that in 1988 the Government announced a further £10 million for London zoo—£5 million of which, I understand, has still not been spent. We have made it clear that, in view of that contribution—and there may be contributions by other means to animal research—the Government do not intend to provide any more money.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Unlike the Leader of the House, I shall not quote what the Labour party's manifesto says about unemployment because we are dealing specifically with the business for next week. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider providing time to debate early-day motion 576?

[That this House calls for a full parliamentary inquiry into the financial and administrative actions of the Mid-Glamorgan Training and Enterprise Council and other training and enterprise councils in Britain; notes with concern that the officers of the Mid-Glamorgan Training and Enterprise Council are making wide ranging decisions without consultation with members of the Board; that these Board members are only called upon to endorse the actions of their paid officers; further notes that the decisions made by these officers are not only causing disruption to trainees on courses but are taking away training managers' future involvement in training and are causing great financial

hardship for training companies, particularly in respect of long-term leasing arrangements, capital investment &c. that these companies have had to make in order to give proper training facilities; and, in view of this, calls for adequate financial reimbursement to be made to cover these costs.]

We face escalating unemployment. More than 2 million people are out of work, yet 7,000 devoted trainers operating within the training and enterprise schemes that we have had for the past 10 years have lost their jobs. In my constituency, CATO—community activities and training in Ogmore—of which I have been chairman for 10 years, has had 40 devoted trainers dismissed and 400 trainees displaced. This House must be given an opportunity to discuss the matter. The Leader of the House need not tell us that we should look to our manifesto. He should consider the escalating unemployment and the deprivation that families suffer as a result of it.

Mr. MacGregor: When general issues of employment or unemployment are raised, it is highly irrelevant to draw attention to the proposals in the Labour party's document, which would be extremely damaging to employment prospects. Indeed, what the Oppostion propose would destroy or seriously affect a large number of jobs.

With regard to the early-day motion that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, he will know that the training and enterprise councils operate under a contract with the Department of Employment. Under that contract, they are required to meet a number of financial and managerial obligations. Within those obligations, it is for the TECs themselves to make their financial and managerial decisions, including decisions about the selection of training providers in their areas.

I cannot comment on the case to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I can say that I see no opportunity for a specific debate on the early-day motion. The hon. Gentleman will have other opportunities to raise the matter. Indeed, he has done so at considerable length today.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Will the Foreign Secretary make a statement about his recent visit to China? There now seems to be some doubt about the future of the new Hong Kong international airport. Surely the House should be given some information about the status of an engineering project that is even larger and more expensive than the Channel tunnel.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, although I doubt whether it would be appropriate for a statement to be made next week. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will provide the House with further information when he thinks it appropriate to do so.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House have a look at the motion in my name that is down for debate next Monday? Given that it is number three, it may not be reached. Will the right hon. Gentleman adopt a more serious and concerned attitude to the question of unemployment? Will he pay attention to what hon. Members have said today and attach more seriousness to the situation than the Prime Minister did? As the deputy Leader of the Opposition said this afternoon, the unemployment figures announced today are the worst on record. Unemployment damages lives. It damages families and the confidence of people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must not say now what she might say if a debate were arranged.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Leader of the House please make time for a debate on this very serious subject? May I draw attention to the fact that the House of Lords has reported on the effects of unemployment in manufacturing industry? Next week's business programme is light, and we could easily have a debate.

Mr. MacGregor: I must say to the hon. Lady that it is certainly not a light programme next week; it is a heavy legislative programme.

Obviously this is not an appropriate moment for me to indulge in a policy debate on unemployment. I should have thought that it was clear from the measures that we have taken, our determination to get inflation down to the levels of our most successful competitors overseas, which is clearly a key consideration in terms of unemployment, and our quite accurate criticisms of the Labour party's proposals that we take this matter extremely seriously. A number of opportunities have been taken to debate general economic issues, which have a bearing on unemployment, in the past few weeks and there will be further opportunities in the coming weeks.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Did my right hon. Friend say in answer to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that the publication next week of the documents abolishing the poll tax would not be accompanied by a statement from the Secretary of State? I think that the House will want to discuss this matter very soon.

Mr. MacGregor: No. I said the opposite: there will be a statement.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Has the attention of the Leader of the House been drawn to early-day motion 518 in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and 171 other right hon. and hon. Members?

[That this House views with concern the recent Newsnight exposé of serious flaws in the evidence which led to the conviction of four members of the Ulster Defence Regiment; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to have the case referred to the Court of Appeal.]

May we have a statement on this issue from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland next week, as there is growing concern in Northern Ireland that there are political measures abroad which are impeding justice being given to servants of the Crown?

Mr. MacGregor: As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, the content of the recent "Newsnight" programme which featured the case of the UDR Four is being considered in conjunction with the dossier on the case which was presented to the Secretary of State on 10 January of this year. The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has been asked to conduct further inquiries into a number of matters. This process will inevitably take some time. For my right hon. Friend to use his discretionary power to refer the case to the Court of

[Mr. MacGregor]

Appeal he would have to be satisfied that significant new evidence existed. I will draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I wonder whether the Leader of the House could arrange an early debate on the Rochdale, Oldham and Manchester railway line, which is under threat of closure. It is of paramount importance to my constituency and I think that we ought to find time to debate it. I am sure that the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) will share that view.

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, there are ways of his finding opportunities to debate the matter in the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 697 on the matter of Japanese whaling, signed by 171 hon. Members of all parties in the House?

[That this House registers its abhorrence at the Japanese slaughter of a further 327 Minke whales in Antarctica for so-called research; is outraged that over 13,000 whales have been slaughtered in just five years of the International Whaling Commission's indefinite ban on commercial whaling; is gravely concerned that Iceland, Norway and Japan have threatened to leave the International Whaling Commission this year; is aware of the strength of public opinion within this country and in Europe against the slaughter of whales; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to press for a permanent and enforceable ban and to initiate complementary legislation within the European Community Common Fisheries Policy which prohibits the killing of whales for commercial, research or fisheries management purposes.]

It points out that the Japanese are continuing to slaughter whales under the guise of so-called scientific work. Great concern has been caused throughout the House by the letter sent to certain hon. Members by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which clearly seems to indicate to many of us that the British Government are about to allow a motion for the resumption of limited commercial whaling. I shall be very grateful if the Leader of the House is able to take advice now, go to the Dispatch Box and say that there is no chance whatsoever of the British Government's agreeing with the Japanese, the Icelanders or the Norwegians about the restoration of even limited commercial whaling. May we have a statement or a debate on this very important issue next week?

Mr. MacGregor: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree, the Government have been taking a lead in these matters. I am grateful to hear him confirming that. I assure him that we will continue to take a lead in pressing for the proper conservation of whales and in resisting any whaling research that cannot be fully justified. The interpretation which I think he has put on my right hon. Friend's letter is not right.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) will next week be seeking leave to introduce a ten-minute Bill to reform Sunday trading? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the shopping centre of the Thorp Arch trading estate in my constituency is now threatened with closure as a consequence of the Leeds council's decision to seek injunctions to prevent trading on Sunday, when over half the traders' business is done? It is some years since the Government attempted to reform the mess of Sunday trading. Cannot the Government take urgent action to save important jobs and provide a service for consumers which is very much valued?

Mr. MacGregor: I can confirm that there will be a ten-minute Bill next week that will deal with some aspects of the Shops Act 1950, but I have to say that it is some very specific aspects of it.

On the general question of Sunday trading, I am sure that my hon. Friend will know of the great attention that the Government have been giving to these matters over some time and the review that we are continuing to conduct in consultation with all those affected. Equally, he will know of the difficulties in reaching an agreement which can achieve a consensus in the House to enable us to reform the laws, which I agree need reform. The difficulty is to find a way of doing it with which most people can agree.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I am sure that all hon. Members would wish to congratulate the Parliamentary Commissioner on the splendid work he did on Barlow Clowes. He has obviously had a long, well-deserved rest since then, and I am concerned that it has taken over two years for him to look at the complaint that I have made against the Welsh Office and referred to him. I am worried that my constituent may not survive to the end of this century, and I am wondering whether the Leader of the House would be prepared to look at the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner and perhaps arrange a debate so that Members who have had experience similar to mine may have an opportunity to debate the matter.

Mr. MacGregor: My responsibilities extend only to finding time for a debate on the general work of the Parliamentary Commissioner. I cannot promise a debate in the near future because there are a number of other matters for which time will have to be found next week and beyond. However, I will bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's request.

With regard to the specific case, I am sure that the hon. Member will pursue it with all the vigour at his command and, if he considers it absolutely necessary, will find an opportunity to raise it in the House.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Member for Billericay in her place when the business statement was made? No? I will call the hon. Lady later.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 691 on Japanese fighting dogs, signed by hon. Members of all parties?

[That this House draws attention to the proposal to import a second Japanese Tosa dog for breeding purposes; notes that this species of dog grows to 17 stone and was originally bred for fighting; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to propose amendments to the law so that the import of new breeds of dog may be prohibited if it is against the public interest by virtue of the size, nature and purpose

of the animal and so that, where appropriate, even where dogs are imported conditions may be attached to import licences as to the custody and breeding of such animals.]

It is based on very good investigative journalism by the *South London Press*. Will there be a chance to debate that motion next week? If, as I expect, the Leader of the House says no, will there at least be a statement by a Home Office Minister on the consultation paper on the breeding, custody and import of Tosa dogs before this country is invaded by another load of Rottweilers mark 2, to the danger of the population? Will the Leader of the House ensure that a statement is made next week?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the concern about this matter. I cannot promise a statement next week—in fact, there will not be a statement next week, I think——

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): They are as big as the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. MacGregor: Bigger, actually—almost as big as the hon. Gentleman. These are rather more serious matters than that intervention would imply and I understand the concern, but I do not think that there can be a statement next week. The Government are currently considering their responses to the consultation paper to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

There are significant difficulties in seeking to control the import or breeding of specific breeds of dog or, as in this case, cross breeds. Legislation is already in place to deal effectively with any dog which presents a danger to the public and to ban those who have such dogs from keeping a dog in future. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is keeping the position under review, and I will certainly draw to his attention the concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Speaker: I am now told that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) was here for the statement. I confess that I did not see her. I call Mrs. Gorman.

Mrs. Gorman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologise; I was moving around, I must admit.

Will my right hon. Friend find time next week, or as soon as possible, for the House to discuss the serious matters revealed by the case of the Orkney parents and the children removed from them, especially following the similar tragic circumstances in Rochdale and, before that, in Cleveland, since I doubt whether Opposition Members will wish to use some of their time to debate the subject, given their dedication to social workers and reluctance to criticise them?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that the protection of children from harm is a matter of the highest importance, and hon. Members in all parts of the House will agree with that. But, as she will know, the Orkney case is subject to an appeal and is therefore sub judice. Therefore, it would be improper for me to comment on it now, and that would be the difficulty about having a statement or debate next week.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): In view of the reply that the Leader of the House gave earlier on the question of Antarctica, and as a letter has been circulated to hon. Members saying that New Zealand members of Friends of the Earth are claiming that the United Kingdom's position on the issue will be a major impediment to the successful protection of Antarctica, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he is aware that his remarks gave a different impression? Will he arrange for a statement to be made to the House on Monday explaining precisely what the position of Britain will be at Monday's conference in Madrid?

Mr. MacGregor: Ministers have made clear their position on Antarctica. I have seen and received a number of letters from them in response to constituents' concerns about the issue.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Far be it from me to suggest to the Leader of the House that a possible ban on the importation of cross-breed dogs could be dealt with by the hybrid Bill procedure, but in his statement on the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill yesterday morning—when he, like me, was in a semi-comatose state and when I think he was busking from a non-existent music score—the right hon. Gentleman said that he intended to introduce the Bill this Session, although I understand that he has talked subsequently about it possibly being in the next Queen's Speech.

Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether it will be done by the hybrid Bill procedure and whether it will be in this Session or, in the normal way, on the single day permitted for the introduction of hybrid and private Bills at the beginning of the next Session? Will he confirm that, if the Government and the promoters have two goes to pass the Bill, my constituents and other objectors will have two goes to oppose it?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot speak for the hon. Gentleman, but I assure him that I was not in a semi-comatose state yesterday morning. I said—and I make the position totally clear now—that we were making it a Government Bill and that we intended to get on with it as quickly as possible. I said, in response to the hon. Gentleman's letter asking whether we intended to introduce the Bill this Session, that we hoped to do that. We are now considering the Government Bill following the failure of the private Bill.

The Secretary of State for Wales has made it clear that he will consult widely on the Bill, and he is now doing that with great speed. We are having to consider the drafting of the Bill. The question whether it is hybrid is not for me, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are getting on with it with great speed and that we hope, if possible, to introduce the Bill this Session. That is our intention, and there would, of course, be opportunity for all to comment on the Bill.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): May I underline the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for a debate on the criminal justice system in the light of the recent series of disasters? The right hon. Gentleman said that there had been many opportunities to discuss the subject, but he is mistaken about that, and Mr. Speaker will confirm that we have repeatedly been told that the cases involved are sub judice.

The Government have decided to set up a royal commission. The Leader of the House will find that there is support on both sides of the House since the issue is not particularly politically controversial between us. Will he try to find time so that we may debate what many people outside the House realise is a serious situation?

Mr. MacGregor: I did not think the hon. Gentleman had particular cases in mind, and in his opening comments

[Mr. MacGregor]

I thought that he was referring to the situation in general. I cannot add to what I have already said on the subject. I shall bear in mind the request.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A number of hon. Members are now rising who were not rising before. Will they ask brief questions, please?

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House provide time next week for a debate on early-day motion 717 concerning safety at sea and the fishing boat Marigold?

[That this House notes that fishermen's lives continue to be put at risk by the provisions of the iniquitous eight day continuous tie-up and that the fishing boat Marigold sailed from Peterhead harbour on Wednesday 17th April into a forecast of deteriorating weather conditions; sympathises with these fishermen who are being forced to sea in poor weather through economic pressures and their families who have to suffer the anxiety of waiting on their return; and demands that the Government now reconsider their support for a penal policy which does not conserve a single fish but increases the risks for fishermen at sea.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, as we speak, the Marigold is at sea in force 8 gale conditions, having put to sea yesterday from Peterhead, against an adverse weather forecast, due to economic pressure and the Government's eight-day tie-up regulations? May we have a debate in which, for once, the fisheries Ministers will treat the communities with some respect, in which we shall be told what we are to say to the families in their anxiety about the fishermen, and in which the Government will have an opportunity to abandon their disastrous tie-up regulations before they cause a fishing tragedy at sea?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that was a European Community decision taken by the Council of Ministers. As we have debated the issues recently on more than one occasion, I cannot promise time to debate general safety at sea matters in the near future. But if the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a particular case, with Ministers or in the House, he has ways and means of doing so.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Early-day motion 711 is about British aid to the Kurds.

[That this House pays a warm tribute to the efforts of all non-governmental organisations providing relief to the Kurds, in particular the British Aid for the Kurds organisation which was formed by Lorraine Goodrich of Devon, who had previously organised parcels for the British troops during the Gulf campaign; notes that such bodies have provided a focus for the widespread, generous and humanitarian public concern for the Kurds, who are dying at the rate of a person a minute; further notes that the organisation has been overwhelmed by the response of the public, who have given tons of much needed clean blankets, ground sheets, warm clothes and tents; congratulates the National Courier Network and Track 29 for agreeing to transport these free of charge to the airport where they can be taken to be distributed to the Kurds by the Red Crescent; recognises the pressing need for medical aid and urges the Government and medical companies to give such bodies immediate and generous assistance; presses the Government to make space available to British Aid for the Kurds in its warehouses and other storage facilities for material donated for the relief effort; understands that the relief operation cannot be left to private initiative alone but requires massive, immediate assistance by the state; and therefore calls upon the Government to provide or arrange free transport in Britain and to the front-line for relief material and to make a much increased contribution to the international effort to save the Kurds.]

I raised the matter with the Secretary of State for Defence because a crisis exists in getting aid to the Kurds. For example, people were expecting an aeroplane in Belfast tomorrow to take 150 tonnes of medical supplies, 200 tonnes of other material and 35 medical specialists from burns units, some of whom speak Kurdish, to the area. There is a great crisis, but only Iraq Air seems to be offering assistance. May we have an early debate to discuss the problem? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we need co-ordination on the part of the Government to assist, and act as partners with, those who are collecting valuable materials for which the Kurds are waiting?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not give the wrong impression and suggest that not a great deal is happening. He must know that the British Government and various Departments and organisations have been doing much to get supplies to the Kurds. We have been in the lead in many matters concerning aid to the Kurds and the other issues that were discussed earlier today. That is why I say that I hope the hon. Gentleman will not give the wrong impression.

As for the work of British Aid for the Kurds and the materials that it is trying to get to the area, the Overseas Development Administration has been in close touch with it and has assisted in speeding the flow of its supplies to benefit the Kurds. There is a great deal of activity and effort on all those matters now.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I press the Leader of the House for an early debate on the unemployment crisis and urge him to warn the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Employment not to blame unemployment on the unemployed, the trade unions and even the weather, for if they were to do so that would be seen as grossly insulting to the 2 million men and women who are now unemployed? If the Prime Minister cannot think of anything to do to combat unemployment, may I suggest that the cuts that are now being made in training programmes and which are denying training to the long-term unemployed and other vulnerable groups in places such as Bradford and York should immediately be reversed to enable those people to receive training and obtain skills so that they may have some hope of getting a job again?

Mr. MacGregor: Within the confines of the business statement, I have dealt as much as is reasonably permissible with issues relating to Government action on the unemployed and the dangers of the Labour party's proposals in that respect. I have nothing to add to what I said earlier, when I made it clear that there have been many opportunities to discuss economic matters and that there will be further opportunities to do so in the coming weeks.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there may be a major

diplomatic development relating to the Kurds in the next seven days? In view of that, may we be assured that when the Minister for Overseas Development returns to this country she will make a statement so that we may have an opportunity to debate the matter further?

Mr. MacGregor: That is a reasonable request. We are anxious to find every opportunity, when appropriate, to make statements in the House on those important issues, and I shall give very sympathetic consideration to the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week on the textile industry? Given the alarming increase in unemployment, does he realise that that industry is labouring under grave difficulties and high interest rates? The problem of the multi-fibre arrangement has not yet been resolved; it comes up for renewal in July. Can the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that, if no adequate safeguards against imports from 26 developing nations are produced at the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations, the MFA will be extended? That is vital to the retention of the British textile industry which is centred on towns such as Bradford, where it still employs 14,000 people directly. Will the Government stand up to the Common Market in the negotiations? It seems intent on abandoning textiles to the wiles of the GATT.

Mr. MacGregor: One reason why we pressed so hard to reach a conclusion on the GATT negotiations in the Uruguay round within the original timetable was that the MFA would run out at a certain point and it was necessary to find other arrangements. The hon. Gentleman well knows what we proposed to deal with that.

I do not think it would be appropriate to have a statement now. We are continuing to do everything possible to bring the GATT negotiations to a successful conclusion in due course.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): We had 30 hours of parliamentary time wallowing in the Cardiff mud——

Mr. Speaker: Order—a question please.

Mr. Dalyell: —and not a sausage of Government time since the third week of January on Iraq and the Gulf. Will the usual channels—for this question concerns them—recognise that ministerial statements, however frequent, are no substitute for debate? It is only in debate that those who believe in unpopular causes, such as at least exploring Saddam Hussein's proposals and questioning the attitude of Iran and the Soviet Union, can make their point.

Did the Leader of the House approve of the abuse with which my polite question was treated by the Defence Secretary?

Mr. MacGregor: The general issue of the Gulf and all its ramifications has been dealt with in statements and in many debates and a great deal of time has been allocated to it. We have certainly fulfilled our obligation to keep the House fully informed and to allow Government policy on the matter to be thoroughly surveyed by the House. We shall continue to do that.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman described the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill as he did. It was a private Bill, and it is one of the responsibilities of this House to give enough time to private Bills. It so happens that the barrage proposals are of great significance to the economy of south Wales, so it was right to allow them that much time. I regret that it was not possible to reach a conclusion on the Bill because of opposition by some Labour Members to it. That has delayed the people of south Wales in benefiting from the barrage.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House accept that from time to time Parliament must reflect the fears and wishes of constituents about the issues that affect them? In that context, it is important to ask him again to review what he has already said about unemployment. Another 112,000 people have been added to the more than 2 million people on the pile of human misery, as today's figures show. If the right hon. Gentleman cannot guarantee a debate on unemployment next week, may we have one the week after that? If he cannot do that, let us have a debate on top directors' pay increases of 47 per cent.

Mr. MacGregor: We have had many opportunities in the House to debate economic matters, which include unemployment and employment issues, in the past few months. We shall continue to have such opportunities. I suspect that there will be a chance before long to debate economic matters for another full day. I have already given a commitment to find time before long for a debate on public expenditure. There are many opportunities to raise such matters and I do not want to avoid them. Measuring employment in this country against employment in many other Community countries and against where it stood only a few years ago shows that our actions and their effects compare extremely favourably with the policies of the Labour party, of which the hon. Gentleman is a member. So I am happy to have these matters debated; we have been debating them fairly regularly and we will continue to do so.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft European Communities (Employment in the Civil Service) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Agriculture

[Relevant documents: European Community Document Nos. 6649/90 relating to the checks and penalties applicable under the Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies, 6672/90 relating to irregularities and the recovery of sums wrongly paid in connection with the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy and the organisation of an information system in this field, 7320/90 relating to information on rural development initiatives and agricultural markets (MIRIAM) and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on European Legislation on 16th April (HC 332-ii).]

Mr. Speaker: I have not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and his hon. Friends, but the matters covered in it may be referred to in the course of the debate.

As I said earlier, a large number of right hon. and hon. Members want to participate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] I therefore propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm in the hope that all hon. Members who want to speak will be called. If those who are fortunate enough to be called before then will bear that limit in mind it may be possible to relax the limit.

5.5 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5032/91 ADD1, ADD2 and ADD3 + COR1 relating to prices for agricultural products and related measures (1991/1992), 4549/91 relating to the development and future of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 2/90 on the management and control of export refunds; and supports the Government's intention to seek a price settlement that respects budgetary discipline and is consistent with the agricultural guideline, and to negotiate for further changes to the Common Agricultural Policy that make it more market-orientated, reduce its costs, lead to great integration between agricultural and environmental policies and apply fairly throughout the Community.

Today we are discussing farming, which means that our debate is about the countryside, because our countryside is made by farmers, it is maintained by farmers and its future depends on farmers. So when we talk about the future of agriculture we are talking about the future of our countryside, which matters to the whole population, not just to the few who live in our rural areas.

This fundamental point is often forgotten when we debate agriculture in the House. It is easy to concentrate on the inequities of the common agricultural policy or on the changes needed to the silkworm regime, but we must not forget the role that farming plays in the life of this country. Farmers not only provide our food—they are at the heart of our rural communities and are the guardians of the landscape which is such an important part of our national heritage.

Even though most British people live in towns and suburbs, they still care deeply about our countryside—a fact that the Conservative party instinctively understands. Our roots come from the countryside, so we want to ensure that the rural part of our nation continues to give the urban and suburban parts of it the sort of green lung that is so necessary for their health.

There is no doubt that farmers face a period of great uncertainty. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), when questioning me in the Select Committee the other day, gave me the chance to remind the Committee, as I now remind the House, that the basic change that has taken place has not been our joining the European Community or any particular system or change in system—it has been the move from a world in which the West was afraid of shortages of food to a world in which those who can afford it can buy as much food as they need. The change from shortage to surplus has fundamentally altered the picture for agriculture.

Throughout the Community farm incomes are under pressure at a time when the Community has never spent more on agriculture. Therein lies the great challenge: we are spending more on agriculture than ever before, yet our farmers are finding times tougher than ever before. Continuing high levels of production, lower levels of consumption, including exports and falling world prices, are the background to spending on the common agricultural policy which is likely to be about 30 per cent. more in 1991 than in 1990.

The fact that expenditure on agricultural support can reach record levels at a time when farm incomes are under severe pressure everywhere is eloquent testimony to the bankruptcy of the Community's current policies, which clearly must change—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Not just current—always.

Mr. Gummer: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. The policies were designed to deal with problems of shortage, which they did extremely well, but those are the least successful sort of policies for dealing with surpluses. They are the victims of their own success.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Can my right hon. Friend explain how it is that we spent 1 per cent. of gross domestic product on agriculture in 1960, 0·5 per cent. when we joined the European Community in 1973-74 and 0·25 per cent. now? How does that square with the claim that we are spending more than ever on agriculture?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend must recognise that spending on food falls proportionately in a richer society, and that the number of people involved in farming has fallen sharply in Britain and in the rest of the Community. The proportion of GDP spent on agriculture is not a proper comparison. If my hon. Friend looks back to the 19th century, he will find that the proportion of GDP spent on agriculture was very much higher because food loomed much larger in the budget of a rural society than it does today. That is not a proper measurement.

The message that I put forward is not new. Successive Ministers of Agriculture have said the same thing. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in the Community in pressing for reform of the CAP. We have had some notable successes, but a great deal more needs to be done. This afternoon I want to spell out, in a positive manner, what needs to be done. The documents before us bear strongly on that.

The answer to the question as to what changes are needed is very clear. First, we need to analyse the Community's current policy properly and, curiously enough, there seems to be a general agreement on that analysis. Most people would agree that prices under the CAP are too high. It follows that prices need to be reduced, so sustained reductions in the overall level of

support must remain central to any reform of the CAP. It cannot be sensible to allow the system in Europe continually to provide prices way beyond what is realistic.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Hear, hear.

Mr. Gummer: Despite the worry of getting such support from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), let me put my point clearly. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East would agree with me that world prices are no indication of the prices that could be charged, for they are merely dumped prices. We have to look for realistic prices which provide a reasonable return to those who produce food reasonably efficiently. Obviously, we cannot expect our farmers to produce food as cheaply as those who do not have pollution restrictions, consumer protection demands, planning arrangements and environmental restrictions that increase their costs. We cannot expect them to produce food at the same price as those who have none of those restrictions. Therefore, we have to have realistic prices. However, it would be ridiculous to say that the prices we have at the moment are realistic, so a continuing downward pressure on prices is a necessary part of any sensible policy for reform. That is accepted by the National Farmers Union as well as by the Government.

Secondly that reduction in support must be at a pace which permits the industry to adapt and be on a fair and equal basis across the Community. Those two considerations are essential. The pace must be one which can be accepted by the industry and the coverage must be across the entire Community. We must have no more attempts to reform the common agricultural policy by dealing with northern countries and ignoring southern countries. We must insist that the whole Community be brought under the same scrutiny. In the same way, cuts in support in the Community must be matched by reductions applied by our competitotors outside the Community which is why a GATT agreement to reduce levels of support and protection worldwide remains so necessary.

We have to remind the press in the United Kingdom yet again that we in the EC are not the only people who support agriculture. The United States of America has an enormous bill for agricultural support every year. Smaller countries such as Switzerland, Norway and Finland are among the largest supporters, proportionately, of their agriculture. Japan spends much more on agricultural support than the countries that are normally pilloried. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce all that support across the world. Otherwise, in seeking a more sensible system, the Community will simply remove its markets elsewhere. So prices must be reduced at a speed which the farmer can accept, in circumstances in which that reaches the entire Community and when there are matching cuts in the rest of the world.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Will my right hon. Friend make it clear whether he is talking about prices to the farmer at the farm gate or prices in the supermarkets? He will be aware that there is a great difference between the two and that that is a matter of some concern to our farmers. Will he make that distinction?

Mr. Gummer: I am talking about agricultural prices in terms of the European Community, so we are discussing prices at the farm gate. My hon. Friend is perfectly right to draw attention to the fact that as a proportion of a family's spending the price of food has not risen anything like so fast as other parts of the retail prices index, and farmers have played an important part in ensuring that prices in the shops are lower than they would otherwise have been, but that does not mean that the fundamental amount of support does not now give rise to considerable worries.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Cutting prices will, of course, benefit the consumer and by reducing the cost of the CAP will benefit the taxpayer. Price cuts also provide the most economically efficient way of dealing with surpluses. In time, they would not only reduce production, but stimulate consumption. I never understand those in the European Community who tell me that we should have co-responsibility levies which would do nothing more than tax the farmer without reducing the end price so that there would be no extension of the market. Those of us who want to sell more products want to get the advantage of price cuts rather than the disadvantage of co-responsibility levies.

Of course, in today's circumstances there is no possibility of making price cuts which would have that immediate effect upon the reduction of production which would be necessary. It would be quite impossible to do that and it would be quite wrong in any circumstances. Therefore, we need measures which act directly on the level of production, but they must complement and not substitute for action on prices. There are those who try to suggest that by managing the market efficiently one can get out of the problems of having to reduce prices, but that means keeping the price up to the disbenefit of the consumer and the taxpayer without allowing the farmer to come closer to the market. Managing the market in the way which is sometimes suggested would destroy the impact of consumer preference upon the farmer and the producer. It is important for our farmers, who have the advantage of being so efficient, to be closer to the market.

We must act directly on the level of production, although that direct action must complement and help the price action rather than compete against it.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall give way in a moment to the hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a well-known agriculturist from the centre of Wales. If he does not know what I mean, it shows that he has not been present at any agriculture debates that I can remember for a long time. When I went, to his constituency and informed his constituents of this, they were most surprised as he had not mentioned it.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. May I point out to him that any further reductions in the price guaranteed by the European Community to the African, Caribbean and Pacific cane sugar producing countries for raw cane sugar would have a disastrous effect on those developing economies? That was put to me on Monday by representatives of Caribbean countries. I urge the Minister to look sympathetically at those developing countries.

Mr. Gummer: I have considerable sympathy for them and the hon. Gentleman should acquit me of any opposition to their cause. I have always stood strongly for them. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is the only Ministry in the Community which insists that any submission to Ministers affecting developing countries should carry a compliance cost for developing countries. That is an internal rule of my Ministry and I do not think that it is paralleled anywhere in Europe. I should like to see the Commission take the same view.

The price of sugar in the Community is too high. It is proposed that the price should be reduced but it would be odd to reduce the price to our own producers and to say to producers elsewhere with whom we have an arrangement that is favourable to them—they get the same price as Community producers—that their prices will not be reduced at the same time. Many producers outside the agreement work on a greatly depressed sugar price, partly because of overproduction in the Community and Community prices. Although the hon. Gentleman's argument is superficially attractive, it must be taken in the context of the need for a very much wider change in the world's sugar system. I cannot wait for that to be corrected before doing something about the wildly unrealistic price of sugar in Europe. Quotas are the first area to be tackled in direct action on production.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I hate to disappoint the right hon. Gentleman, but whatever visit he paid to Mid Wales passed unnoticed—at any rate, less noticed than the visit by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who has discussed these issues with farmers on a number of occasions. We are grateful for that but he was unable to satisfy them. What is the Minister's message to people in a constituency such as mine with a high percentage of people employed in agriculture? Is not his only message that his attitude towards farm prices means that there will be burgeoning unemployment in agriculture in Mid Wales? His message is that he intends to do nothing about that.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. and learned Gentleman should be kind enough to listen to my speech before showing his ignorance of our policy, which he has never been present to listen to or argue about. *[Interruption.]* The hon. and learned Gentleman should tell his constituents that his interest in agriculture is so great that he has not asked questions or been present for agriculture debates. He has been present on far fewer occasions than his hon. Friends.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I took part in the last agriculture debate about six weeks ago in which my hon. and learned Friend intervened. The Minister should check *Hansard* because he is misleading the House.

Mr. Gummer: I greatly respect the hon. Gentleman and I am happy to withdraw my allegation for that occasion. The attendance in agriculture debates by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) must be few, otherwise he would know what I am offering farmers.

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food chooses to attack me for allegedly failing to attend certain debates. I ask him to withdraw that remark unless he is able to tell the House which debates he alleges I have not attended.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I am sure that the Minister will be responsible for his own comments.

Mr. Gummer: I have no doubt that the information that I could give to the House and will give to the hon. Gentleman would make my point quite clearly. If he listens to my speech he will have to withdraw his allegation about what I am offering farmers. To interrupt the beginning of a speech in such a way shows that the hon. and learned Gentleman does not want to hear the rest of it. That is because he knows that the Government's policies are clearly so much better than those that he propounds and that he cannot stand against them.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am sorry to take this matter further, but I would like to make it clear to the right hon. Gentleman and to the House that my constituency depends heavily on agriculture. I am interested not in the right hon. Gentleman's fourth-form musket-style debating, but in the agricultural community that I represent. His allegation is quite wrong, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) made clear. I ask the Minister to withdraw his remarks unreservedly and not merely assert that somewhere he might be able to find some evidence to back a quite disgraceful personal allegation.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to get out of what he knows to be true, and he does so because he made an unsuitable intervention and was not prepared to hear what I had to say about our policies on agriculture.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend the Minister remind the silly Liberals who claim to be friends——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are at the beginning of the debate and it is high time that we returned to the subject before the House.

Mr. Gummer: We must deal with the matter not only by price cuts but by restricting overproduction. The first area in which that can be done is the area of quotas. It is remarkable that the Community is proposing in the price-fixing arrangements to cut the dairy quotas by so much less than is necessary that it will store up future trouble for our farmers. That is a real problem. A quota system is primarily intended to bring supply and demand into some kind of balance. To have a quota system with all its disadvantages, problems and freezing and not to use it in the one way that it can be used is foolish.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Mon): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall not give way on that matter as I wish to make progress and you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have asked me to continue.

We must also look at new ways to restrict production, and the first of those must be an extension of set-aside. The Community proposes such an extension, but in very narrow terms which are not acceptable environmentally and do not cover the whole Community. Set-aside must be shared by the whole Community and not merely by those

of us, such as the United Kingdom, who see it as necessary. I am not prepared to have parts of the United Kingdom set aside so that other Community countries can produce more. We need a system that is properly based on national targets for the area of land to be set aside in each member state. It must also be environmentally friendly.

We have already improved our own regulations and I hope that with the spreading of the countryside premium scheme to the whole country, after we have taken into account the pilot scheme in the eastern counties, we shall be able to improve it further. The Commission has so far not been prepared to go as far as it should down that route.

I have spoken about the issue of restricted production, but we must make fundamental changes in other areas. The intervention system needs to be considered, particularly for high-value products such as beef, which has been turned into a low-value product by freezing it for intervention. That cannot be a sensible way to proceed on beef production. The Community should look for an alternative system of support, and one option might be improved premium arrangements. We cannot continue to take into intervention large amounts of beef, the influence of which hangs over the market in the succeeding year. At the present rate, we shall have a million tonnes of beef in intervention hanging over the market unless we do something about the problem.

A similar problem is the tobacco regime, which costs us £1,000 million per year. It is no good suggesting that we should not discuss crops that we do not grow; on the contrary, we should consider them carefully. We know the economic and social importance of tobacco-growing to the regions involved. I have recently been to Greece and seen it for myself. But why should the Community spend money on producing unsmokable tobacco? That may have some health advantage, but I cannot think of any other advantage. At present, money is being spent to produce tobacco that no one can smoke, which is then burnt to allow more money to be spent on producing tobacco that no one can smoke. That is not a sensible policy and I wholly support the Community's desire to move from that position, both by a reduction in support for tobacco in general and by encouraging cultivation of kinds of tobacco that can at least meet the unfortunate demand of those in the Community who wish to smoke.

Action also needs to be taken to curb expenditure on the production of other Mediterranean products, such as wine, olive oil and cotton. The reform of the common agricultural policy must not be confined to the north of the Community.

Those changes are necessary but they are not, of themselves, enough. If the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, with whom I had an unfortunate altercation earlier, had waited, he would have realised that they are only the first part of the policy that we have propounded at Question Time and in numerous debates throughout the past year.

The second major part of our policy involves helping farmers to become protectors of the environment. The CAP will need to take much greater account of environmental considerations. We need policies that will both preserve and improve our countryside and safeguard our wildlife. Respect for the environment must become an integral part of the Community's approach to agriculture.

That is already happening in Britain but, unfortunately, the only part of the Budget that I can use for such purposes is the 20 per cent. over which I have control. The expenditure of the 80 per cent. controlled by the European Community as a whole does not yet take proper account of the environment and is not fundamentally driven by environmental concerns. I look to the rest of the Community to follow the Government's lead on environmental thinking and action. That is starting to happen. The French Government have undertaken a programme very similar to ours, albeit under a new name. The Germans and others are taking similar steps and I am pleased that the environmentally sensitive areas pioneered here are now a fixed part of the common agricultural policy.

Some progress has been made: steps have been taken —the lead has been given. But progress has been very slow, and spending on the environment still accounts for only a tiny proportion of overall spending on the CAP. There is a good case for some redirection of spending from agricultural support to measures that benefit the environment. It is essential, however, that any new environmental policies recognise the diversity of environmental features in the Community. We want common rules and principles, but we want each country to be able to make its own decisions about the kind of steps that we should like to be taken. That is necessary because of the wide-ranging environmental needs of different parts of the Community.

We must ensure not only that our environmental policies assume greater prominence but that environmental considerations are taken fully into account in the development of Community support policies. We are setting the example by greening the hill livestock compensatory allowances, and next time round they will include the new green element. We obtained permission from the Community to do that and we hope that others will follow our example.

Such policies would enable us to preserve and recreate the full diversity of our countryside—wetlands and pastures, moors and woodlands. They would provide not only better protection for the environment but a more stable framework for farming in this country and in the Community as a whole.

The Community's future agriculture policy needs also to recognise the regional diversity of the Community and the vital role that agriculture plays in certain areas where farming is the only real economic activity and source of employment. It is sad that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery did not wait to hear this part of my speech before intervening. It is essential to maintain farming in such areas not only to preserve rural communities but to conserve the countryside. In such areas, there is a case for special help to preserve what would otherwise be unviable farms.

That is not a new policy. In disadvantaged areas, such as our own hills and uplands, the Community is already committed to maintaining agriculture.

Mr. Alex Carlile: It needs money.

Mr. Gummer: By saying that, the hon. and learned Gentleman reminds the House that he has forgotten the considerable extra amounts given by the Government to his constituency and others, which were welcomed by farmers. That is another agricultural fact that the hon. and learned Gentleman seems to have missed.

[Mr. Gummer]

In pursuit of that policy, I increased the hill livestock compensatory allowance by 14 per cent. on average this year. Total HLCA payments in the United Kingdom now amount to £142 million in a full scheme year.

Mr. Carlile: It is not enough.

Mr. Gummer: It is all right for the Liberal Democrats to say that it is not enough because they know that they will never have to foot the bill. That is the easiest argument. They argue for more and more to be spent but never bother about the bill. No doubt the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery finds this boring because I am giving the House the facts rather than the fantasies that he presents to the electorate.

I have outlined the ways in which we believe that the Community's agricultural policies should be changed. Many other ways of reforming the CAP have been suggested, but most of them would treat the symptoms rather than the cause. I have mentioned those who want to extend compulsory restrictions on production. The key element of that idea is that such restrictions would reduce surpluses without reducing prices; indeed, supporters of the policy usually want prices to be increased. But we cannot have a policy that gives farmers the right to charge ever higher prices while placing greater restrictions on the amounts that they can produce. That would not be a sensible policy. It would not help farmers react to new developments and would make farming less able to adjust to the demands of the market.

Then there is a suggestion that we ought to reduce production by means of nitrogen quotas. How would we allocate those quotas? There are wide variations in usage, as nitrogen requirements can vary widely from field to field, and even within fields. Allocation on a flat-rate basis would be unfair and allocation tailored to individual circumstances impossible to administer. We would have nitrogen-running. There would be a black market in nitrogen because it is so valuable. I cannot believe that that is a sensible answer to the problem.

Then there are the proposals put forward by Mr. MacSharry for the reform of the CAP. I do not want to enter into those discussions again because the House knows my views and because I now know that the official Opposition agree with us that the MacSharry plan is not one that we can in any way accept. I am sorry that the Farmers Union of Wales does not seem to have recognised the effect that the plan would have on its own members. It is the one body that appears to want Mr. MacSharry's views to prevail. I hope that it will think more carefully about its own membership. There is no doubt that its farming members would lose out considerably. There would be a direct transfer of help from Wales to Ireland. Those are facts, not fantasy, and I hope that the union will reconsider its view.

There is an objection to Mr. MacSharry's proposals even more important than their fundamental discrimination against the United Kingdom. MacSharry would want to try to hold up the natural changes that have been a feature of farming ever since it began. One cannot bribe people with more and more money every year to stay on wholly uneconomic plots. If we tried to do that, we would never be able to meet the bill, and we should never be able to provide the incomes which, with rising incomes elsewhere, those concerned—however distant—would demand.

Therefore, the MacSharry proposal is wrong in its fundamental principle. It does not face the fact that agriculture has been developing ever since it started and that people have been leaving the land, even in those countries that have done a great deal to support the smallest of farmers, such as we have not seen in this country for a century. Even in those countries such farmers have found increasingly that the living which they can make and the work which they have to do are not attractive any longer.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I will not give way as I am afraid that if I do I shall be in real trouble with you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The number employed in farming in the Community has fallen by some 75 per cent. in the past 30 years. People simply do not want to spend their lives trying to farm small, uneconomic holdings. I am referring to holdings which we find not in this country but only in some of the southern European countries. For example, in the milk sector Welsh farms would be very much damaged were there to be a MacSharry plan. Welsh farmers would find their ability to produce transferred directly to their competitors on the other side of the Irish sea.

In the papers before us we have a wide range of issues to consider. I should not like the House to avoid consideration of the whole problem of the special report of the Court of Auditors on export refunds, which is document No. 2/90, nor Community documents Nos. 6649/90 and 6672/90 on fraud. I wish particularly to draw attention to the fact that the United Kingdom has fought hardest against fraud in the Community and that we see fraud as one of the major ways of discrediting the common agricultural policy. Therefore, we are most concerned to do something about it.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I cannot give way—I must make this point.

I am particularly worried about the way in which the press has reported these matters. Of course, Britain reports more effectively than any other country. We want to stamp out fraud but the press suggested that because we report more cases there must be more cases in the United Kingdom. We want to encourage other countries to report the cases of fraud which they have. Although a large number of cases are reported in this country, the amounts involved are tiny compared with those reported elsewhere.

If I may give the House the figures, in 1990 of all cases reported, 24 per cent. were from the United Kingdom but they accounted for only 1·5 per cent. of the total value involved. We must remind the rest of the Community that fraud undermines the credibility of the common agricultural policy. Therefore, it has to be dealt with much more effectively than heretofore.

Mr. Gill *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: If I were to give way to my hon. Friend, others would feel much aggrieved for I have refused to give way to them.

I return at the end to the problems of price fixing. I want to explain to the House the curious argument going on at the moment as to whether the budget can be ameliorated or made easier by a roll-over arrangement. I see that my right hon. and hon. Friends have underlined that in their proposed amendment to the motion.

The cost of German reunification is substantial and it would be odd not to suggest that we do not expect it to arise again. It is a once-off cost. I also have to tell the House that it is already included in the budget. We cannot have it twice. Having agreed that it is in the budget, and having agreed only at the end of last year that we should not need an increase in the budget, we do not need to increase the budget. That is why the United Kingdom Government, with our Dutch friends, made it clear that it is not a satisfactory means of proceeding.

If the common agricultural policy is to be reformed, we must stop putting reform off until next year. We have to start this year. The CAP price review this year has to reflect the priorities which I put before the House at the beginning. I repeat to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery that those priorities mean moving at a pace that the agricultural community can accept towards more realistic prices. They mean using mechanisms which do not counteract that for the reduction of production, including the proper use of such quotas as we have, without their extension, and the use of set-aside and of extensification. They mean turning the emphasis upon the environment so that farmers can be rewarded for the job that they do in looking after the countryside. They mean insisting that those policies which manifestly need root and branch change, like the intervention system for beef and the tobacco regime, are so changed.

The priorities mean all those things, not next year, not the year after, not when we have got some deal from GATT, but starting the process now in the price fixing. That is why the Government have supported the vast majority of the proposals of the Commission in the price fixing. That is why we insist that we move sharply in that direction and indeed have suggested that we should move faster. It is also why we have insisted that the level playing field be established. That is why I am not prepared to have "a third, a third, a third" reduction in the agri-monetary changes.

We deserve now to get the alignment which our farmers ought now to have. That again is an earnest of the changes which ought to take place, must take place and will take place before the end of 1992 and the completion of the single market. If we do it a third, a third, a third, we shall give the Community the chance to say at the end, "We cannot solve the problems—we have no alternative to green money." That would be wrong and contrary to the agreement.

Therefore, I hope that the House, in reading and considering the documents before it, will do so with a common view that what we need is change in the common agricultural policy now—change at a pace which is acceptable, change which puts the environment much more central to the whole policy, change which respects the need for more realistic prices, change which uses mechanisms for control of production such as we have and extends that into set-aside which will benefit us all. Above all, we need change which bears on every country in the Community and not merely on the United Kingdom, and change which bears upon the Community's competitors and not just upon the Community. Such a change would give confidence and a future to British agriculture. That is the change that the Government propose and which must come about in the common agricultural policy.

5.47 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): We are having the debate on this series of Community documents against the background of an agricultural community that is very confused, that is lacking certainty and that seeks confidence. I thought that the Minister missed a good opportunity to reassure the farming community. It was only in the last five minutes or so that he showed that, slowly and surely, the arguments of the Opposition over the past four years are beginning to find fertile ground.

I am very pleased that the Minister has made some move along those lines. If there is any certainty at all in British agriculture, it is that it is in a mess; Conservative Members will accept that. At the annual conference of the National Farmers Union in February farmers claimed that their incomes were the lowest since the war.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud) *rose*——

Dr. Clark: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to get past my first sentence before intervening. I may give way later.

Yesterday we had the publication of the Government's own document which confirmed that there had been a reduction in agricultural incomes. For every day that the Minister has sat at his desk in Whitehall place, 16 farmers and six farm workers have left their farms. Conservative Members know that confidence and morale in agriculture are at their lowest ebb since the second world war. In addition, the balance of payments deficit on food has now reached £6 billion. In their 12 years in office, the Government have managed to double our food trade deficit. It is not a pretty picture.

The decline in farming has taken place when there has been no world trade war nor adverse climatic conditions. Therefore, the responsibility can be placed firmly and solely on the Government's shoulders. For 12 years now they have been driving farming unrelentingly towards disaster. Farmers have every reasons to complain. In fact, I know that that is the official Government view. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is reported in the *Lake District Herald* of 6 April as telling the Penrith and Border Conservative Association in Wigton that that was the case. Therefore, there is no disagreement between the Opposition and the Government because we both believe that farmers have every right to complain about the Government.

The problems facing the agriculture industry are being affected not only by the Minister's individual portfolio but by the Government's general policy of maintaining high interest rates. That has probably affected the farming industry much more than any other industry, especially in view of the Government's policy in the early 1980s of encouraging farmers to borrow and over-capitalise. The Minister's speech today did not have the bravado that he showed last year and I can understand why. In the corresponding debate last year he said:

"The Government have presided over the largest reform there has been in the common agricultural policy, and very much greater reform than anybody thought was possible. There is no doubt that most other countries in the Community have now come to accept what was a United Kingdom initiative—that is, a common agricultural policy

[Dr. Clark]

increasingly designed to meet supply with demand rather than supply with surplus."—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. 792.]

How hollow those claims appear today.

The Minister returned today to the theme of matching supply and demand which, as we both acknowledge, is the key to the debate. But it has not worked. Intervention stores in Europe are filling up with surplus food. For example, there are 710,000 tonnes of beef in intervention stores, 343,000 tonnes of butter, 347,000 tonnes of milk powder and so on. That is despite the fact that we have been selling thousands of tonnes of butter to the Soviet Union, with similar sales of cheese to Japan, at knock-down prices, all paid for by the poor European taxpayer.

All that has occurred before we face the inevitable changes that will be forced upon British agriculture by the GATT round and the proposed changes in the CAP that we are discussing now. There will be changes just as surely as night follows day.

The Labour party welcomes the potential changes, seeing them as an opportunity to create a more prosperous agriculture based on sound environmental principles and the supply of good-quality healthy food. I wish that the Minister had used his opportunity today to sell that line in a positive manner. The fact that the GATT negotiations have come to a head when the CAP budget reaches breaking point is, in a sense, most appropriate.

It is clear that the 1988 reforms were shallow and simply have not worked, as we predicted in the House at that time. It is interesting to read the *Hansard* of spring 1988 and wonder what became of the then Prime Minister's extravagant claims of achievements in the reform of the CAP. They were doomed to failure from the start, so their failure now has come as no surprise.

There is one important point on which the Labour party agrees with the Government and that is the insistence that this year the EC must not breach the CAP legal budget limit. That limit was agreed only three years ago and was announced to the House by the then Prime Minister as a legally binding document. Now, at the first puff of smoke, some EC Ministers want to breach the budget. The Government have a power of veto which I hope they will use if necessary. The Minister will have the Opposition's backing if he does so.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one reason why the budget is being overshot is the import of beef from eastern Europe, which is swelling the intervention stores and costing the EC budget far more than was originally expected? Is it not true that that problem needs to be tackled head on because British farmers are paying, in part, for the unification of Germany?

Dr. Clark: Obviously, the import of beef from eastern Europe has caused some problems with the EC budget. However, as the Minister explained, the imports from east Germany were included in the budget. The Commissioner assured me that that was so and the Minister has agreed with it today. I concede that there may be some point in it, but it does not have the significance that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) suggests.

Mr. Gummer: I do not want to miss the one true point made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). If people think that they can obtain beef from eastern Europe, it will have a depressive effect on the price. There is no doubt that the price of beef has been reduced considerably, not just by the imports but by the fact that people think that there could be such imports. That means that traders are able to push prices down. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor has a point which is outwith the budgetary considerations. It is a price consideration and it has indirectly increased the amount of produce going into intervention because of the depression in prices.

Dr. Clark: I shall not follow the Minister down that route.

I want to make the main point about the budget. It is right to remind the House of the cost of agricultural subsidies in Europe. The growth rate is truly alarming. In 1989 the cost to the taxpayer was £17·4 billion. In 1990, the cost had escalated to £21·7 billion and the figure now proposed is £23·1 billion. The Minister has already referred to an increase of one third in the budget and there was a suggestion at the meeting of Finance Ministers last week that, unless a firm stand is taken now, farm subsidies will increase by 50 per cent. in the two years between 1990 and 1992. It cannot go on. We hope that the Government will stand firm on that point.

It has been argued that the budget limit should be breached because of the unification of Germany, but that point has been answered fairly and squarely by the Minister today.

Having said that, any consensus must end because facts prove beyond a scintilla of doubt that the Government have been negligent of United Kingdom farmers and that consumers and environmentalists have suffered in the process. As the Minister knows, it is not only the taxpayer who foots the bill for the CAP, but the consumer. The consumer is the major loser in the CAP. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimated that the total cost of the CAP in 1989 was £59·6 billion. A total of £33·1 billion was due to higher food prices and £26·5 billion was due to taxation. Consequently, the average household of four was contributing as much as £14 a week to the cost of the CAP in 1989 and since then the cost has increased.

I shall take the argument a little further. When the Minister moved the motion today he made great play of his commitment to environmental forces. That is quite right. We have argued all along that agriculture is about more than simply producing food and retaining the rural community, important though they are. It is also about preserving our environment. I wish that the Minister would match his words with actions.

I made a calculation of Ministry expenditure on environmental issues, such as on environmentally sensitive areas, research and development and capital, farm woodland and nitrate grants. It amounted to less than 7 per cent. of the total budget and it simply does not match the Minister's commitment.

I tried to find justification for that and was taken by a MAFF press release of 27 March. I thought that we had seen Valhalla, because in bold type it is headed

"MAFF Headquarters To Green Up Its Act".

That claim was sustained by the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Ripon (Mr. Curry), was to plant a tree—one tree to green up the Ministry.

Mr. Lord: For a start.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman says, "For a start." We are well into the 1990s; hon. Members have been arguing for more environmental measures by the Ministry of Agriculture, so we must be well past a start. The Minister will have to raise his ambitions if he expects to be taken seriously by environmentalists.

The Opposition violently disagree with the Government's policy of slashing expenditure on research and development. We have debated the Government's shortsighted policy on so-called near-market research many times. Only last week, evidence showed that the Government axe is to be wielded further. The Agricultural and Food Research Council faces a 50 per cent. cut in funds for replacement and new equipment. We learnt that the number of scientists on AFRC's payroll will fall from 2,084 in March 1990 to 1,470 in March 1992, in addition to the thousands of research scientists who have been made redundant by the Government. To destroy one seed corn is recognised as folly by farmers throughout the world and I wish that the Government would take notice of that.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): As a farmer, I was beginning to become rather excited because the hon. Gentleman said that farmers are not getting enough for their products. He confused me by saying that the taxpayer is paying too much. Will he increase prices so that I get more, or will he renege on what he is saying about taxpayers and make them pay more?

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman had listened, he would be aware that I was arguing that farmers have had a raw deal and that the CAP is probably the most inefficient method of delivering money to farmers. For every £3 that taxpayers pay into the CAP, only £1 goes to farmers. In theory, we could halve agriculture subsidies, and by directing them more accurately could increase some farmers' incomes. I shall develop that point later.

Another manifestation of the Government's handling of scientific research is bovine spongiform encephalopathy. I know that the Minister is upset by my comments on BSE, but I must raise the matter with him again. Last year, Dr. Harash Narang, a Government scientist working on Tyneside, felt that he could contribute to solving the problem of BSE. He is an acknowledged expert in detecting Creutzfeld-Jakob disease, having worked with a Nobel prize winner, Professor Gadjusek. Using the electron microscopy method, he had been able to detect scrapie in sheep and was confident that diagnostic techniques could be adopted for BSE. After visiting MAFF's central office at Weybridge, he was encouraged to apply for a £20,000 grant, which he did. That money was entirely for travel and subsistence; he was receiving none of it himself. After initial encouragement, his formal application was refused. Fortunately, a benevolent Tyneside business man, Mr. Ken Bell, heard about that and was so impressed that he put up the money.

The Ministry—I say this with sadness—was not to be outdone and systematically set out to scupper that research. For example, after months of delays, samples of cattle brain were offered for experimental work at £150 each. After parliamentary questions, the price was reduced to £50. I rang local abattoirs, which were happy to supply the brains for £1·50. That delay was an example of trying to price Dr. Narang out of the market.

Fortunately, Dr. Narang proceeded and his diagnosis was 80 per cent. successful. I understand that his work has been stopped because of his superiors' failure to file an application with the Health and Safety Executive for him to continue his research.

Today, I received a copy of a letter showing that Dr. Narang is seeking permission to take his work to the United States of America. He says:

"I have live plaques on agar plates which are drying. This material is very valuable to me and therefore if you . . . have no objections I will do the necessary process at the National Institute of Health in the USA."

Is the Minister trying to force British scientists abroad? That work will be privately financed and will not cost the Government anything. As the Minister knows, Dr. Narang's diagnostic tests for BSE have proved 80 per cent. correct. He is at an advanced stage of working on DNA fingerprinting for BSE and has a scientific paper on that awaiting publication.

The Minister wrote to me today—I received the letter while I was on the Bench—arguing that he was not prepared to support Dr. Narang because,

"Quite simply, an effective post-mortem test for BSE already exists."

The right hon. Gentleman knows that that is not true. When we pressed him on why he was not prepared to follow the recommendations of the Tyrrell committee and carry out random sampling of slaughtered cattle to judge the extent of BSE, he said that was not possible or practical because it would take too much scientific expertise and time to pursue.

I understand that, because it takes between six and eight weeks to get a positive result. Doctor Narang achieved a result within two hours of being telephoned by MAFF to pick up the brains, process them, carry out the analysis and get the result. Such scientific expertise should be encouraged rather than frustrated.

I cannot prejudge Dr. Narang's results, but I know that as so much is at stake with BSE it would be shameful of the Minister to continue to frustrate such scientific effort.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman has given a good example of the Government's attitude to ongoing scientific research. I am sure that he is aware of their attitude to research that has taken place. They decided a little time ago to give the intellectual property rights to research that they owned—patents and copyrights—to the British Technology Group. They now propose to privatise the group without taking steps to retain the intellectual property rights—invaluable research and discoveries that have been made at public expense by researchers working, to the Minister's credit, with the encouragement of the Ministry. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, at least, the Government should ensure that those property rights do not pass as family silver when BTG is privatised?

Dr. Clark: The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a fair point, which I accept. One of the greatest condemnations of the Government is that, although they were headed for almost 12 years by a scientist, they are the most anti-scientific Government that Britain has known. We shall rue the day that we drove so many scientists abroad and killed so much scientific initiative.

[Dr. Clark]

The Labour party regretted—as did the Minister—the breakdown of the GATT talks early in December. It is in Britain's interests to liberalise world trade, in the industrial as well as the agricultural sphere. Whether the European Community likes it or not, there will be changes. The Government are extremely complacent and seem to have failed to comprehend the full consequence of the failure of the GATT talks and a subsequent trade war in industrial goods. Such an industrial trade war would be disastrous for Europe and the United Kingdom. Britain exports 19 per cent. of what it produces and Germany exports 26·7 per cent. of what it produces. However, Japan exports only 9·9 per cent. and the United States a mere 7·4 per cent. The United States and Japan are much more capable of withstanding a world trade war in industrial goods than Britain or the EC.

To be even more graphic, one can see the most immediate impression on Germany, especially since 6 December when Chancellor Kohl was reinstated as head of Government. He faces the problem that most of his farmers are part-time and many earn most of their income from factories. Imagine the scenario of a West German farmer employed in a plant supplying BMWs or Mercedes and faced with the dilemma of either losing his job in that factory because of a world industrial trade war or receiving reduced subsidies for his farming. That is why the EC must make changes and why we need to have an agreement on the GATT talks.

Most nations want to work towards eliminating agricultural subsidies. The Minister was right that not only Europe but many other countries subsidise farmers—especially the United States of America. However, the difference between the United States and Europe is that the United States has offered to reduce its agricultural production support by 70 per cent. over 10 years. The EC's response was a paltry 15 per cent. over the same time limit as was laid down by other countries.

Mr. Gummer: That is not so.

Dr. Clark: The Minister knows that it is correct. If we wish to avoid a damaging industrial trade war, further concessions must be made on the agricultural subsidy fund. Faced with that problem, the EC should use the GATT negotiations as a positive vehicle for major and fundamental reforms of the CAP. The competitive position of European agriculture could then be maintained and the difficulties of European farmers minimised.

In a sense, the European Commission has covertly recognised that by approving the publication of Commissioner MacSharry's plan. The significance of the MacSharry proposals are not in the details that they contain but in the fact that the Commission is proposing fundamental changes for the first time since 1967. I happen to agree with the Minister that the detailed proposals of Commissioner MacSharry are unacceptable, not only to United Kingdom farmers but to United Kingdom taxpayers.

The Labour party differs from the Government in that we believe that Britain should take the initiative in tabling alternative proposals. In so doing, we would shift the debate to our territory. When I pressed the Minister on that at a previous Question Time he said that he could not do so because it would be unconventional and unethical. However, it has been done previously. For example, when the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, trying to resolve the problems of European monetary union and a single currency, he tabled alternative proposals which changed the area of the debate. There is no principle to say that it cannot be done, so why does the Minister refuse to publish his proposals on CAP reform? Other organisations have followed the Labour party's example of publishing alternative sets of ideas—organisations as diverse as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds—*[Laughter.]* The Minister may laugh at such organisations——

Mr. Gummer: No, at the Labour party paper.

Dr. Clark: —but the RSPB, the Countryside Commission, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales, English Nature, the Association of National Park Officers, the National Consumer Council and—this might hurt—even the National Farmers Union, the Scottish National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales have produced alternative proposals.

The Minister often talks about what is wrong with the MacSharry proposals but does not say how he wants the CAP to be reformed. I hope that his speech was not an attempt to spell out his position on CAP.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I have followed the debate throughout and may have missed the hon. Gentleman saying what the Labour party proposes.

Dr. Clark: I shall do so if the hon. Gentleman will give me two minutes—*[Interruption.]* Two minutes to get to that point.

If other organisations have found the resources to publish alternative proposals, why are not the Government prepared to do so? I am sad that the Minister appears to be unable to make up his mind. Is dithering becoming infectious?

Even the European Commissioner, who came from the ranks of the Conservative party, has a different attitude from that of the Minister. Leon Brittan was critical of the Minister's attitude toward the MacSharry proposals and said:

> "It is quite inappropriate and indeed out of character for Britain simply to dismiss the whole plan out of hand. The Commission plan, however flawed it may appear to some eyes, does represent a serious attempt to tackle the central problem of too high prices that lies at the root of all the CAP difficulties."

Why are the Government so reluctant to press for proposals fundamentally to reform the CAP? The Minister knows that the CAP is nonsense. It does not help British farmers, consumers or taxpayers. The Labour party has argued repeatedly that it is an inefficient agricultural support system. I have already explained why it is so inefficient. Our farmers and consumers get a raw deal and we end up subsidising the food of consumers in other countries that are our industrial competitors.

The Labour party believes that we should grasp the opportunity to begin a process of breaking the link between production and subsidy. The market should be the means by which farmers primarily obtain their production income—*[Interruption.]* The Labour party has been advocating that policy for the past four years and I wish that the Government would see the wisdom and light of our proposals, which would provide better support

for farmers and a fairer deal for our consumers. Farmers might then become more responsive to consumers' demands. Moreover, we might not have to import quite so much food that can be produced in Britain. I remind Conservative Members that our deficit in food was £6 billion last year.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): The hon. Gentleman is wrong.

Dr. Clark: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain. He refuses to do so because he knows that I am right. To be exact, the figure is £6·1 billion. About half that food could be produced in Britain. Our policy would reduce our import bills for food.

The Labour party still believes, as I think does the Minister, that we need to retain farmers in the countryside. We need to retain the aesthetic quality of our landscape. It is important for our tourist industry, for economic reasons. It is important that we keep people living in our rural areas and that we reinstate and retain the quality of our natural habitats. We must persuade farmers to pursue their activities in a less intensive and more environmentally friendly way.

We believe that a system of "green premiums" paid to farmers throughout the United Kingdom to farm in an environmentally positive way would not only be a much cheaper way of supporting agriculture but would meet wider approval in this country. British people are not getting a good deal out of agricultural policies. The beauty of pursuing this policy in Europe within a GATT framework is that it could be phased in and would be accompanied by comparable reductions in subsidy support amoung our agricultural competitors throughout the world. That is the best way of achieving the level playing field—to which the Minister referred—for which our farmers so longingly call.

Given that British farmers constantly proclaim their efficiency, I cannot see them having much difficulty in competing with the rest of the world on level terms. Furthermore, our proposals are compatible with the GATT negotiations in that provisions are made there for non-production payments to farmers under what is termed the "green box". Our proposals are also compatible with the shift of EC support systems under which MacSharry appears to be moving from production to area/direct income payments. Surely the time is now ripe to pursue and reinterpret the concept of direct payments.

Once upon a time, the CAP was the only common factor in the EC and was thus the sole symbol of European unity. Now we have many other common policies—social, industrial and monetary. Thus the symbolism of the CAP is less important. We once had a CAP of six nations, centred on France. This body will soon stretch from the Arctic circle to the shores of north Africa, from Asia Minor to the Atlantic. I doubt whether a tight common agricultural policy encompassing such diverse types of agriculture can be maintained. Changes are needed.

Already, there has been repatriation of some agricultural activity to the nation states—the Minister referred to that. We should build on it. There is no reason why the Commission should not determine how much each nation state may make available to its farmers in non-production support, with the actual terminology of what constitutes direct support in broad terms being left to the nation states. The French may choose to make social payments to retain their small peasant farmers—so be it—whereas our preferred option should be to make those payments in the form of our "green premiums" for sound, positive environmental management.

If the Minister would stop dithering and advocate a more positive and fundamental reform of the CAP along the lines which I outlined, he would do a lasting service to not only the British farmer but the British consumer and environmentalist.

6.23 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I have considerable sympathy for the plight in which my right hon. Friend finds himself in his role as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. There can be no doubt that the farming community is in serious economic difficulties. Those of us who have been attending these debates for many years have heard that statement before, but I think it is acknowledged now that in almost every branch of agriculture, with the possible exception of the dairy sector, matters are extremely difficult except for those on the best land, those who own their land or those who are in special circumstances, such as horticulturists.

Mr. Gill: Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) is on record as saying that farmers have cried wolf too often?

Mr. Wiggin: Like my hon. Friend, I believe little of what comes from the Liberal party. Having fought the seat of Montgomeryshire twice, I must say that one of the predecessors of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) did not often come to agriculture debates either. Although we enjoyed that matter, we will not get into it now.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I should like to hear much more about policy and much less about personalities.

Mr. Wiggin: I beg your pardon, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, I find that such matters occasionally get raised on the Floor of the House.

On the one hand, my right hon. Friend the Minister is expected by farmers to help them maintain a prosperity that is not being made available to them, for reasons which he clearly set out. On the other hand, he is sent to Brussels with strict instructions from our Treasury in no way to breach the agreement that was reached in Brussels by a British proposition in 1988 that the budget for agricultural produce should not be increased. My right hon. Friend made light of those difficulties. I have considerable respect for the way in which he presented the case.

My right hon. Friend the Minister set out well the merits of and reasons for keeping farmers in our countryside. This matter is not just about the prosperity of agriculture but is about people and communities, about the environment—which we used to call "the view"—and many other factors. We all agree that we must keep agriculture, forgetting that there is almost no product of British agriculture that cannot be produced more cheaply, for geographical or other reasons, elsewhere in the world. Everyone who thinks about this matter accepts that there must be some artificial support for the agriculture of northern Europe, and perhaps for that of southern Europe as well, although I confess that I am less of an expert on that area. I acknowledge my right hon. Friend's point that

[Mr. Wiggin]

if the CAP is reformed it must be reformed throughout the Community as an important part of the concept of a combined Economic Community.

My right hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, and the Comissioner has been shaken by the fact, that the cost of subsidising surpluses in 1991 looks like being 30 per cent. more than in 1990. Those who attack the CAP do so on slim grounds. The CAP has been successful—far too successful. One may think back to the days when Europe was hungry, when agriculture was not prosperous. If one looks at the results of the CAP, one must say that it has achieved its objectives. But one may look at the cost of the surpluses and the damage that they have done to the world market. It must be within the wit of man to achieve the commendable objectives about which my right hon. Friend the Minister spoke and to deal with the problem of surpluses.

I fall out with my right hon. Friend the Minister on prices. I do not have a postbag full of letters from housewives complaining about the price of food. The housewife today gets a greater choice of food at a higher quality, and at what she sees as a reasonable price than at any time in history. The Community is ring-fenced with a tariff, and this is a clever way of transferring some money from the consumer to the producer relatively painlessly. Woe betide Governments who change those well-organised tax systems, as we recently witnessed elsewhere.

The Select Committee on Agriculture has visited the United States and Canada to discuss cereals. One question was difficult to answer. We were asked, "Why have you ruined the world market in cereals?" I said, "Tell me more," and was told, "We used to send 5 million tonnes of cereals to Europe each year. We do not complain if you choose to grow them yourselves—if you can—but we do complain if you then put 3 million tonnes on the world market at prices that are subsidised by the European taxpayer." The effect of doing so has halved the price of wheat on the prairies and upset the delicate balance between agriculture and industry. The GATT round highlighted that problem.

We must find some way of dealing with the surpluses. I have heard some extremely persuasive arguments which suggest that it would not only be as cheap but far more politically acceptable if we were to take much more seriously the proposition that we can convert some of those surpluses into other things, even at a cost. I acknowledge that if I were to say, "Let us burn them", that would be politically unacceptable, but there is an argument for so doing.

The plight of the British farmer, of the French farmer —indeed, of all farmers in northern Europe—should not come as a great surprise to anyone who has studied the progress of the price reviews of the past few years. What has happened has not been accidental; it has been completely deliberate. As the surpluses grew, it was envisaged that, by methods of price, one could drive out to the margins those producers who are unable to be economic. But what really happens? There is misery across the industry with young entrepreneurs, who may have borrowed the most, being in the greatest trouble. Meanwhile, the farmer who owns his land, who has become inefficient but who has a low standard of living, can continue to survive. I find it difficult to say that that is a good way of reducing our total production.

I was intrigued by the Minister's comment that one increases demand by lowering prices. I question that view in a market where there is already 100 per cent. supply. In fact, there is more than 100 per cent. supply in relation to demand because we could not eat any more if we wanted to. This country is extraordinarily well fed and, even if prices were halved, I doubt whether consumption would rise by a fraction of a per cent.

The solution in which I have had a lot of interest over a long period is to allow each producer to produce some part of his yield at a profit. I have always argued that quotas have carried out that task extraordinarily efficiently. I know that there are arguments against quotas for cereals, which are a key product, being the raw material for the production of most meat. The National Farmers Union has produced an extremely interesting paper on nitrogen limitation, which is controllable. It is possible to prevent a black market—one cannot simply set up a nitrogen plant in the backyard. Nitrogen limitation would encourage natural farming, if that is a good thing, and I am prepared to accept that it is. We should not cast to one side any of the alternatives.

In favour of quotas, I should like to point out what has happened to some special products, such as hops. Hops had a strictly controlled quota market in which the quota was saleable and transferable. That industry managed to reduce its production by half without disruption. I know that the introduction of milk quotas caused difficulty. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) would say, "Hear, hear" to that, but it is a fact that the quotas are now working. Although the Commission is being weak in not simply turning the control to zero instead of allowing continuing overproduction, I acknowledge that it is a fine point to argue. None of my dairy farmers has complained about the quota system. That is especially true of those who sell their quota, which is now an extremely valuable asset, and I see nothing wrong with that.

Turning to sugar, I must declare an interest because I am a consultant to British Sugar. Sugar has been produced on a quota for many years and sugar beet producers will say that they would be extremely unhappy if that system were to change. I shall not speak at length about sugar because I am sure that others are better qualified to do so. However, the proposal to cut 5 per cent. off the sugar price does not bear inspection. It will not save the Commission one penny. Although the big interests—the confectioners and the brewers—would argue that a cut in the sugar price would be beneficial, I must assure my right hon. Friend the Minister that the amount that would be saved would never be reflected on the shelves in the price of confectionery or of a bag of sugar. Sugar has a competitive market in Europe. We produce only half of what we grow in this country. My right hon. Friend knows all the arguments, but, coming from where he does, I hope that he will fight that proposal more vigorously.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred in an intervention to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It is interesting that they, too, will take a massive cut in what is, effectively, foreign aid. That cut was not made up on the last occasion and the cost will have to be found. Therefore, cutting the sugar quota as proposed will actually cost money.

I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall not take up any more time, except to say that if we allow our agriculture to decline, what is sure, historic and a fact is that industry after industry will follow. Agriculture is, and always has been, one of our nation's key industries, as a consumer, a supplier and as a provider of that greatest and most important of products, our food.

6.36 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Over the years, I have had the opportunity of speaking in our agriculture debates and I know that many hon. Members of all parties were disappointed when the Minister lost his temper earlier and tried to discredit my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who conducts his business in the House and in his constituency excellently. Now that the Minister has cooled down a little, I hope that he will write to my hon. and learned Friend to apologise for what he said.

Today is a sad day for agriculture because we have just been told by the Minister that he is in favour of further cuts in its financial support. Whatever views we hold politically, that is sad news, Nothing could better illustrate the changing fortunes of agriculture and its present crisis than a conversation that I had recently with a prominent farmer in my constituency. He is now the vice-chairman of the Cardiganshire National Farmers Union. We were discussing the state of the industry in Wales and its effect on the social structure of the countryside, when he said, "My grandfather came to Cardiganshire as a farmworker in 1902. My father became a tenant farmer in 1939. I myself became an owner-occupier in 1986—and now my son is planning to get out of farming."

I found that story incredibly sad, but it is a pattern that is being repeated not only in my constituency, but throughout the United Kingdom, as farm incomes fall and thousands of agricultural holdings can no longer be regarded as viable units. Farming families that have established themselves over the generations are faced with having to leave the countryside. I have been told that about 100 farmers a week in Britain left the land last year, following the worst period for agriculture since the end of the second world war. In the Welsh county of Dyfed alone, about five farmers a week are giving up their farms. A report this week confirmed that 3,000 farm jobs were lost in Wales over 10 years, with redundancy figures set to increase for the foreseeable future.

That, inevitably, affects the support industries and rural services such as local shops, schools, garages and small businesses. High interest rates—although they have fallen a little—the growing cost of production and the threat of a sharp decrease in support have all added to the pressures, creating a downward spiral in agriculture and the rural economy throughout Britain.

In Wales, where most farming is in the livestock sector, farming income fell last year by 23 per cent.; that followed a decline of 28 per cent. in 1989. In the United Kingdom as a whole, incomes are at their lowest for 40 years. That is not a very good record for the present Government. Surely it is the duty of the Minister of Agriculture to go to Brussels and try to persuade his friends to look after British farming much better in the next few years. We have a long-term problem, but our short-term financial difficulties are even greater.

Mr. Lord: Let us be fair to the Minister. Did not the Minister of Agriculture have far more power to influence matters for good or ill after the last war than he has now?

Mr. Howells: I do not think so. The Minister of Agriculture is the Minister of Agriculture, and is fully responsible for looking after British farming. If he cannot do the job as well as the British farming industry wants him to, let us give the Liberal party the opportunity.

Another farmer, who also chairs the NFU in Cardiganshire, made an interesting comparison between the earnings of different people in his village. According to him, the doctor, the accountant and the bank manager all earned about £1,000 a week; he and farmers like him were lucky to earn £1,000 a month. That, too, should be food for thought for the Government of the day.

Particularly galling for those involved in the industry is the fact that British farmers are suffering the effects of factors well beyond their control. They have brought their farms up to date; they have increased production when encouraged to do so; they have tolerated milk quotas; they have generally adapted to changing circumstances. The industry has been pretty well rationalised. Now, the only item that is over-produced in this country is cereals. Production of the remaining commodities is below self-sufficiency levels, allowing for a level of imports which I consider quite substantial.

Many British taxpayers and consumers believe that our farmers are over-producing and that we are responsible for the surpluses in the Community. They take heed of what the Minister is saying, but it is not true; we are not over-producing. British farmers have been penalised by the Government's attitude. Let me tell the consumers who will read the *Official Report* tomorrow that we produce only 93 per cent. of the beef required in this country, 94 per cent. of the lamb and sheep meat, 98 per cent. of the pig meat, 42 per cent. of the bacon and ham, 95 per cent. of the poultry, 93 per cent. of the eggs, 81 per cent. of the milk and dairy products, 56 per cent. of the sugar from beet, 89 per cent. of the potatoes, 88 per cent. of the cauliflower, 35 per cent. of the tomatoes, 41 per cent. of the apples and 24 per cent. of the pears.

People should realise that the problem is not the fault of British farmers; it is the fault of their counterparts in Europe. It is the duty of our Minister of Agriculture, and our Government, to look after British farmers. They are to be asked again to accept a reduction in prices—I do not know what the Minister will advocate; it may be 2 per cent. or 4·5 per cent., according to what I have been told, but it is up to him to tell us when he winds up the debate—in an EC budget that has failed to take into consideration the current weakness of the dollar and the inevitable costs involved in the reunification of Germany.

Our Minister of Agriculture has enthusiastically campaigned in Europe for cuts in the budget, when he knows perfectly well that the industry at home is in the worst crisis since the war. Nothing that he has done during his time in office has been calculated to restore confidence. His belief in free-market economics overrides any concern that he may have for the future of a viable agriculture industry, and for the social fabric of rural Britain.

I am a farmer myself, and I have lived in the same village since I was a child. Over the past 20 or 30 years, every one of us farmers in that village was willing to pay a high price for every parcel of land that came on the market. We were all competing. Today, 50 acres of land is

[Mr. Howells]

for sale in our village—accommodation land. Not one farmer is interested in buying it. That is our message to the Minister and the Government; the farmers are not interested. They have lost confidence, and something must be done soon.

The Government are letting down British agriculture badly and the Minister is not lifting a finger to stop the downward trend. He has got rid of guaranteed prices and has failed over the years to take the opportunities available to him to pay the maximum allowed under EC rules. The guaranteed-price system operated very well in this country.

Let me repeat what I said in our previous agriculture debate. I had the privilege of being vice-chairman of the British Wool Marketing Board for 11 years. We did our best for sheep producers in this country, but unfortunately the Minister of Agriculture decided to do away unilaterally with the guaranteed price for wool after this year. What will happen to our sheep producers in the next 12 months? The price of wool will be halved. There is no need for that. It is entirely the Government's policy; it has nothing to do with the EC. It is all a great shame.

The Minister has failed to take any steps to encourage young entrants into farming. Liberal Democrats take that issue very seriously. In a time of crisis and change, the right hon. Gentleman has allowed agriculture and food research funding to be drastically cut. No wonder that farmers and their families, and all who live in the British countryside, are totally disillusioned by this Tory Government. When the Monmouth by-election is called, the Minister and his colleagues will realise that Monmouthshire's farmers will not vote for the Tory candidate this time simply because the present Government have neglected them.

We all recognise that the common agricultural policy is in need of thorough reform. Indeed, it is about time that we stopped the practice of allowing 80 per cent. of the support to go to only 20 per cent. of the farmers. The Government, however, have yet to produce any constructive proposals that will ensure a healthy British agriculture within a sensible European framework.

Farmers in this country must now be helped through a period of dramatic transition and allowed to compete at the same level as other European farmers. If reductions in support are necessary, they must be achieved carefully and gradually. Resources should eventually be switched from over-production in Europe to direct income support. Help must be targeted towards the medium and small family farms.

One of the most important aims of any policy must be to stop the relentless drain of people away from the land. As a nation, we cannot afford that loss. We need the farmers as a producer of fairly priced, wholesome food, as a guardian of the environment and as one of the elements that could provide the impetus for rural regeneration.

For the past 10 or 15 years I and members of my party have been well aware that the Secretary of State for Wales has full responsibility for agriculture in Wales, just as the Secretary of State for Scotland has full responsibility for agriculture in Scotland.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Howells: I believe that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has full responsibility for agriculture in Southend.

Mr. Taylor: I am a friend of the Essex NFU. Does not the hon. Gentleman think that Gladstone would have been ashamed of him? We have heard realism from the Conservative Front Bench and from the Labour party, but the hon. Gentleman is living in a cloud if he believes that a policy of putting in more and more money will help farmers. Does not he realise that the Liberal party's policy would drive farming to ruin?

Mr. Howells: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the farming community is very much indebted to members of my party. If the hon. Member for Southend, East had had his way a few years ago, British farmland would today be rated. He introduced a 10-minute Bill, but even his colleagues voted with us, including the then Prime Minister. My advice to the hon. Gentleman is not to blame the Liberals, but to look after the farmers of Southend.

The Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales should go to Brussels. We have heard the excuse from Ministers so many times that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has full responsibility for Britain within the Community. We are aware of that, but the other two Ministers are duty-bound on behalf of the farmers of those two countries to go there, even if only once a year. However, they have not been, which is a great pity.

Mr. Gummer: So that the hon. Gentleman will not be unhappy, I can tell him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland was with me at the negotiations in Brussels on only the previous occasion.

Mr. Howells: I am delighted at the change of heart. The Government have listened to what we have been saying for some time.

We all talk about MacSharry's plans and hon. Members of all parties condemned his present proposals during our previous debate. However, MacSharry's proposals are not dead. He will introduce new proposals in the summer and if we do not accept them there will be another set. My advice to the Minister and to everyone involved in agriculture is that we should work with MacSharry and not oppose him on every occasion. In the end, we have no alternative but to work with the Commissioner who has full responsibility for agriculture. In 1992 there will be a free market economy and we shall have to trade even more with our friends on the continent.

I wish to deal with the problem of slaughterhouses. At present Great Britain has approximately 74 export-approved slaughterhouses out of a total of over 900 plants. That is only 8 per cent. of all slaughterhouses and accounts for about 38 per cent. of throughput. That figure is clearly much lower than that for other member states. In 1987, 85 per cent. of West Germany's major slaughterhouses were export-approved. The figure was 51 per cent. in France, 58 per cent. in Belgium, 71 per cent. in Northern Ireland, 69 per cent. in the Netherlands, 100 per cent. in Luxembourg and 19 per cent. in Denmark. That covers all the largest abattoirs and the majority of total throughput. Only Italy, Greece and Spain have a smaller proportion of slaughterhouses approved than does Britain.

Unless an abattoir can be exempted as a result of derogation, it will have to be upgraded at considerable cost. Therefore, something must be done. The number of

abattoirs in Britain has declined at an alarming rate as a result of changes in the agriculture industry and of general economic pressures. In the mid-1950s there were 3,500; last year that number had been reduced to 778.

The Meat and Livestock Commission predicts that only 360—less than half the present number—will remain after 1992. The future of hundreds of small abattoirs remains in the balance as the 1993 deadline for upgrading draws near.

The trend towards fewer, larger meat plants with advanced technology and added-value operations has accelerated as the date for the imposition of the new EC standards advances. According to the Meat and Livestock Commission's report, only 270 of the 778 remaining abattoirs expect to be operating after 1992. A further 200 were undecided. The Minister, who believes in a free market economy, must do something about that.

Yesterday I received a press release—as I am sure many other hon. Members have—from the Council for the Protection of Rural England. The headline reads:

"Explosion of 'shackery' threatens to create a tatty countryside".

It states:

"'The fragmentation of farms, erection of shacks and small buildings, and abuse of planning freedoms threatens to create an unloved and tatty countryside.'

This was the message given by Tony Burton, Senior Planner of the Council for the Protection of Rural England . . . to the AGM of the Farm and Buildings Centre . . . Mr. Burton said: 'The 1980s saw a remarkable 15 per cent. rise in the number of small farm holdings, with over 6,000 new units under 10 hectares. The result'"—

according to him—

"'has been an explosion in the problems caused by small farm buildings in the countryside, unchecked by a powerless planning system.'"

I disagree. The reason why there are 6,000 new units under 10 hectares is financial pressure on many farmers. They owe so much to the banks that they must sell parts of their assets to repay their debts. They have sold their sheds and barns and a few acres of land to ensure that they can survive. It has nothing to do with planning—it is a matter of finance.

With respect to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I wish him well in his deliberations, but he must change his attitude in Europe. He must work harder for the British farmer and, now and again, he should heed what the leaders of the National Farmers Union, other organisations and political parties in Britain say to him—please take advice from other people who love the countryside and who live for British agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I remind the House that speeches between now and 9 pm should not exceed 10 minutes in duration.

6.59 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make a short contribution to the debate as I represent one of the most important agricultural constituencies in north Yorkshire. As my right hon. Friend the Minister knows, I also represent the Church Commission, which is one of the largest landowners in Britain. We own more than 155,000 acres and 410 farms of more than 50 acres. From the perspective of my constituency and of the Church Commission, the view of British farming at present is gloomy.

My right hon. Friend's departmental report for 1990 says it all. Farmers were caught up in a fearful vortex of natural and man-made misfortunes which, taken together, were little short of catastrophic. There was an environment of falling real prices for output, and rising input costs and high interest rates. The only way out of the vortex for many farmers was to get out and to leave their coats behind. Farm incomes fell by 14 per cent. in 1990—22 per cent. in real terms. At the beginning of 1990, there were 189,000 farmers in the United Kingdom; by the end of the year, no fewer than 6,000 had left agriculture. Clearly the past year has been one of trauma for farming.

Nobody doubts that my right hon. Friend is deeply concerned about the gloomy scene which I have depicted, and that he is deeply committed to and engaged in the battle to safeguard the future of British farming. However, his efforts are undermined by little governmental niggles, which are not directly of his doing, but over which he may have some influence. In this year's Budget, for example, in which it was proclaimed as a virtue that rates of vehicle excise duty for cars, buses, coaches and all goods vehicles were to be left unchanged, how was it that the vehicle excise duty rate for agricultural machinery was, virtually uniquely, increased from £16 to £30? Could not that increase be dropped when we come to the appropriate stage of the Finance Bill?

Another apparent niggle is to be found in the Government's new pollution control regulations which will put severe restrictions on farmers. One farmer in my constituency has complained about one aspect—the regulations on oil storage. The new regulations will apply only to fuel stores or tanks on farms, and not to fuel stores or tanks in domestic property where probably far more oil is stored than on farms. Farmers find such discrimination, which involves potential financial detriment, discouraging in the present circumstances.

Farmers are resilient folk and are used to ups and downs. They are capable of being philosophical and of taking one year with another. However, I hope that my right hon. Friend appreciates that there is a special sense of gloom and foreboding in agriculture at present because agriculture seems to be confronted by so many intractable problems which are beyond its control.

My own Church Commission agricultural advisers have quoted to me reports that show that one farm in four is currently trading at a loss and that, in consequence, 20 per cent. of farmers will not survive five years. Such a decline in British agriculture would be catastrophic and I know that my right hon. Friend will struggle relentlessly to prevent it from occurring. It has never been truer than today to say that if the British farmer did not exist he would have to be invented. He is incomparably the best, most skilled and most reliable custodian and protector of our natural environment and heritage. Even if every scrap of food consumed in Britain were to be imported and our farmers driven off the land, our countryside could still never look better—indeed, it would look appallingly worse—than it looks today in the hands of working and productive British farmers.

In his valiant struggle to do his best for British farming, my right hon. Friend will, I hope, not think me presumptuous in sketching one or two suggested guidelines for the way ahead. First, will my right hon. Friend avoid like the plague proposals such as those that Commissioner MacSharry has advocated for protecting and compensating weaker and smaller farmers in Europe

[Mr. Michael Alison]

with a subsidy to produce? The sooner we can get away from production subsidies Europeanwide in any form the better, but a deliberate policy of subsidising the least efficient producer to produce output that nobody wants is a higher form of lunacy.

Secondly, there is a form of subsidy that is desirable and acceptable. There may be, for example, a reward to farmers for performing what amount to public services in preservation and environmental protection. The Minister's farm and conservation grant scheme and the farm diversification grant scheme are good cases in point. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider extending the first scheme beyond its present three-year limit if only because it has to march in step, to some extent, with statutory pollution control regulations, which have suffered some delay in coming before the House.

Thirdly, will my right hon. Friend be eternally vigilant in the matter of competition? With fair competition, the British farmer is a world beater with an assured future, but it is not fair competition when, for example, chemicals used on cucumbers in Holland are not allowed to be used on cucumbers in Britain. There are countless similar examples that one could give. Will my right hon. Friend consider doing more to promote good marketing practice and producer co-operatives? The downside to our larger farm units in Britain, compared to those in mainland Europe, is that farmers tend to think that they are big enough to go it alone in marketing when in reality they cannot. The mini-producers in Europe know only too well that they must co-operate, which they do, so that their tortoises are, unfortunately, only too frequently beating our hares.

If output has to be restrained to keep the CAP and its budget afloat—and farmers are perfectly well aware of the necessity for that—reductions in support, to quote the Country Landowners Association,

"must be made only at a pace which the industry can cope with. Cuts in support must be matched by our GATT partners, and must be applied equally across the whole European Community."

I hope that my right hon. Friend will be positive in his thinking, and even innovatory and radical. I was a little disappointed by the cold water that he poured on the scheme that my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) mentioned—the idea of Community compulsory restrictions on the use of nitrogen throughout the EC. Using a fertiliser quota scheme that individual farmers could buy or sell would be a far more interesting and economical way to reduce total EC production while rewarding the efficient and profitable farmer than any of Mr. MacSharry's ideas for subsidising lame ducks. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to keep an open mind on that interesting nitrogen scheme.

I put on record the fact that the Church Commissioners, as substantial owners of tenanted farms, welcome my right hon. Friend's proposals for reform of agricultural tenancy law. We support what is proposed, and we will submit detailed comments in the near future.

7.9 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is well known that I am Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation. That Committee has examined the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the 22 or 23 documents in the Vote Office. The value of Select Committees is sometimes appreciated outside the House. The Chairman of the Agriculture Committee has contributed to this debate. I hope that one day his Committee will get round to considering alternatives to the common agricultural policy. A Select Committee of this House would be an admirable vehicle for that purpose.

I am making this speech in a personal capacity—not with my Chairman's hat on. Twenty years ago, this House was having debates about joining what was then called the Common Market. Agriculture, of course, was one of the central themes of the debate. I remember saying to the then Member for Lowestoft and Minister of Agriculture, "Do you really suppose that a common market from Sicily to the Shetlands will be a practical proposition?" I said to colleagues who are now on the Liberal Benches, "Do you really want to hand over British agriculture policy to Brussels?" They said yes, and voted accordingly.

Let me refer to the question of sugar. At the time to which I have just referred, I was not the Member for Newham, South, so I did not have a constituency interest. However, I was very concerned about this issue, and I am even more concerned about it now.

At a meeting of the Select Committee on European Legislation last Tuesday, the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) questioned the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about sugar. The hon. Member referred in particular to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the 1·3 million tonnes of sugar that we get from Commonwealth territories. The Minister replied:

"If that means we have to rewrite the Protocol and have a whole new system, then so be it".

I do not know whether that remark has been publicised. In some ways I hope that it has been, but in others I hope that it has not. If it has, it will create a great deal of fear in Commonwealth capitals—the capitals of countries such as Mauritius, Fiji and Jamaica. In exchanges with my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), the Minister did not provide the ACP countries with very much reassurance.

Mr. Gummer: I should not like any fear to be based on that. The reason for the remark, as I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept, is that significant reductions in sugar prices in the European market—that is the context in which the matter was being discussed—have a very real knock-on effect in associated countries in the developing world. I was suggesting that one could not just allow that to happen and that we should have to find a different way of helping those countries. It was entirely a supportive suggestion. I thought that it was not necessary when we were cutting by 5 per cent., but the question that I was asked in the Select Committee referred to the possibility of a continuing and significant cut. I was asked what I would suggest in those circumstances. In reply, I said that it would be necessary to look again at the protocol. That would be in the context of improving the situation of the developing countries—something to which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, I am committed.

Mr. Spearing: I am very grateful for the Minister's clarification. I see exactly what he means. Apart from sugar, what do those countries have to sell? Other measures that have been suggested, but not put into practice, are very doubtful indeed. I think that I have made the point. I am no longer the Member for Acton. I now

represent Newham, South, which imports 1 million tonnes of Commonwealth sugar, although the employment that is provided in the constituency—I suppose that this is a vested interest—is rapidly diminishing with the advent of technological development.

I wish to comment briefly on the general MacSharry situation. In the first part of his report, Mr. MacSharry brutally exposed what is going on. In the past 10 years, CAP costs have doubled in real terms; 35 per cent. of the agricultural population have left the land; in the United Kingdom, 18,000 farmers have left the industry in the past 10 years, and 44,000 farm workers have lost their jobs. We all know that we do not get a very good deal for our contribution, but that is just one of the consequences of the rules of the club. As somebody once said, it is not our money. Mr. MacSharry, in his report, pointed out also that the stabilisers had failed. Held up, only three or four years ago, as the great salvation for the CAP, they have now been set aside and are hardly operative. Pensioning off, too, is marginal. Things that were trumpeted a few years ago are not working.

I want to be objective. People know my general views of the Common Market. We have been in the Community for 20 years, and we all know that there is a problem. Indeed, Britain has a dilemma. When the Minister goes to Brussels, he does not have a veto. Any 23 members, in combination, can turn down any proposal. This reminds me of someone who has driven up a one-way street and cannot get back. Such a person is in a particularly bad position if he does not have a reverse gear. But even if he were minded to get out and push the car, he might come up against some of those metal plates on the road. If things cannot be changed without one third of the membership in voting blocks, it may not be possible to find any way at all. That is a constitutional problem of which this country should be aware. Indeed, this House is only just becoming aware of it.

Let me put this fundamental question: what is the difference between the objectives of the common agricultural policy, the means and mechanisms by which those objectives are realised, and the desirable characteristics of the CAP? I detected from what the Minister said on Tuesday, and from what the Opposition spokesman has said, the sort of characteristics that this country wants the common agricultural policy to have. There is the question of care of the countryside and of ensuring that the impact on the environment is benign. But I wonder whether those objectives are attainable. The purposes of the common agricultural policy are to be found in articles 38 and 39 of the treaty of Rome. Paragraph 1 of article 1 says:

"The common market shall extend to agriculture and trade in agricultural products. 'Agricultural products' means the products of the soil, of stockfarming and of fisheries and products of first-stage processing directly related to these products."

Article 39(1) says:

"The objectives of the common agricultural policy shall be:

(a) to increase agricultural productivity by promoting technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilisation of the factors of production, in particular labour;

(b) thus to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, in particular by increasing the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture;

(c) to stabilise markets;"—

three magic words—

"(d) to assure the availability of supplies:

(e) to ensure that supplies reach consumers at reasonable prices."

Of course, MacSharry pointed out that the prices would be two to three times world levels. I cannot quote the rest of the article as there is not time. Is it possible to achieve those objectives? If one has a common market, can one do the rest as well? This is a problem that must be addressed by the House of Commons and by the nation. The Minister says that we did it up until the time of our joining the common market, when there was a shortage of food in the world, and that we did it under the Williams plan and market support. I am not sure that that principle is not applicable nowadays, even in a situation of surplus. Is it possible that we could have modification to solve the problems of the common agricultural policy?

7.20 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The stabiliser policy has failed, as I told my right hon. Friend the Minister on the Floor of this House it would. I told him exactly why it would fail, because it is nothing more nor less than Christopher Soames's standard quantity policy; and one does not change the causal sequence by altering the name.

Why has not my right hon. Friend put an alternative to the MacSharry plan? It is because there is only one workable alternative, and that is quotas. My right hon. Friend does not want surpluses in store. One does not get surpluses in store with quotas unless one fixes the quota higher than consumption. That is the whole purpose. Nor does one get subsidised exports, which were tearing the general agreement on tariffs and trade apart. It is only through quotas that the support which the Community gives can go to the producers and thereby maintain the pattern of rural living which is the object of those payments, without subsidising storage, without subsidising exports, and without ruining the world economy in many countries which have a lower standard of living than ours. Sooner or later, if my right hon. Friend does not learn that, his successors will, because there is no other system capable of working.

Yesterday I flipped through *Time* magazine. Mr. MacSharry has been mentioned, but where does power reside in the Community? It resides with the President of the Commission, with M. Delors, who was interviewed by *Time*. He said:

"All the wise men agree that East European countries cannot join the Community immediately, but in the medium term their admission is possible. We in the EC can offer two kinds of assistance. We can help them democratize, and we should assume the burden of accepting more and more of their exports in agriculture, textiles and so on. That is the price we pay. At the same time, we must balance assistance to Eastern Europe with help for countries to our south . . . ".

That system will collapse the whole EEC common agricultural policy. That is what the man of power, M. Delors, is saying. Does anyone believe that Mr. MacSharry is a man of power? He would never be a commissioner if southern Ireland did not have its quota of Commission jobs. That is the only reason he is there; we all know that. This divorce from reality, which I am afraid Ministers of Agriculture seem to embrace, pretends that this is not so.

Secondly, because it is inevitable that we will come to quotas, what happens before that? What happens before that is a struggle to increase output in every country so as

[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]

to establish the largest possible datum for that quota. It happened with fisheries; it happens with everything. Why should anybody doubt that? To imagine that the standard quantity policy—I beg its pardon, relabelled "stabilisers" —will reverse that inevitable precursor is lunacy and it might as well be termed such.

The third thing I want to leave with the House, because this may well be the last time that I shall have the opportunity of addressing it in an agriculture debate, as I am retiring at the next election, is this. If the common agricultural policy in its parts is not mutually capable of living together, if the parts are incompatible with each other, that policy will also collapse. And to imagine that, with a stabiliser policy—I beg its pardon; of course it is really standard quantities—which encourages people by economic necessity to increase their individual output—that is why it died the first time, because it does not discourage the individual from producing more—what happens? More goes into store or, at a subsidised price, on to world markets. That is not compatible with what the EEC is saying in the Uruguay round of GATT.

So, as we look into the predictable future, what do we see? We see that all our policies connected with the countryside will fail if they are contradictory one with the other. My right hon. Friend said that we cannot keep supporting agricultural incomes; that is bound to fail. The same argument, of course, goes for green subsidies. If they are to replace a fair market price allied to quotas, then one will have to increase ever more and more the green payments, if they are to achieve their objective rather than be gesture politics. So we do not escape from the dilemma of increasing payments by shifting it from one to the other. However, with quotas one contains the quantum of that expenditure; with other systems one does not.

That is why I ask my right hon. Friend to grasp this nettle. I am not speaking after the event. I was advocating quotas on the Floor of the House in 1976. If we had introduced milk quotas then, before the dramatic expansion in French and southern Irish milk production, our producers could have had quotas of over 100 per cent. Quotas are inevitable, but the agony of introducing them in times of surplus compares so unfavourably with introducing them before one is in surplus. If we do it before we are in surplus, we avoid aborted expenditure on expansion; we avoid living in a false world. That is why Europe, with its higher costs, particularly in northern Europe—higher costs because of less sun; that is why costs are higher—can only live with a quota system.

I will conclude with one observation, and it is this. As world oil energy runs out—we cannot tell which year it will run out, but run out it will—where is the energy to come from? It will not come in Britain from wind power because the coldest days in Britain are when a nice anti-cyclone is sitting over Britain with zero wind speed. It will come from growing carbohydrates here for inversion into hydrocarbon fuels, just as has been done over huge areas of Brazil. There it was done for foreign currency reasons. Here, as elsewhere, it will be done because the oil is not there for which it is presently the substitute where it is done.

Therefore, energy production will be in direct competition with food production; and heaven help the third world with tiny incomes then, because they will be growing carbohydrates for the richer parts of the world to turn into fuel. That will be the pattern of agriculture. Do not let us, therefore, turn our agricultural areas into deserts, followed by the erosion that will go with that, followed by the loss of fertility of the soil, by refusing to grasp the nettle of quotas while it is still practicable to do so.

7.30 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): It is always a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who is a stimulating debater and whose distinctive style will be sorely missed by the House when he retires. The length of time that he has served his constituency has represented a wonderful achievement and he will be greatly missed by his constituents.

We must consider the background against which the debate is taking place, and I shall concentrate on Wales and refer to Scotland. Since 1945, as the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) said, there has been a dramatic shift away from the land. Reasons outwith the scope of the debate have been responsible for that shift. The great efficiency of agriculture, with increasing mechanisation, has played a great part in that development. Larger farms have been created because they have been said to be more efficient.

Many people have left the land because farming is a hard life. Those who want an easy source of income do not go in for farming, which involves long hours, seven days a week. My brother-in-law is a farmer and spends most of his evenings and nights at work during the lambing season. I am sure that he would earn more in another industry. Because it is a hard way of life, over the years people have found alternative ways of making a living.

The industry also gives a low return on capital invested. Indeed, almost no other industry gives such a meagre return, so it is not surprising that agriculture has suffered that drift since 1945. We have also failed over the years to attract young new entrants from outside the industry. That has meant that many youngsters who had something to give to agriculture have failed to do so because we have failed them.

Those are all reasons why there has been such a drift away from the land. There have been periods during this century when that drift has accelerated. For example, during the great depression of the 1930s, hundreds of thousands of people left the land as incomes plummeted. Stories about that time, particularly among those who live in rural areas, abound.

The great danger is that the 1990s will herald another massive drift away from the land because we have failed to grasp the problem encompassed by the common agricultural policy. I fear, in view of the way in which the Minister put the Government's case tonight, that he will accelerate that drift even further. Yet again he failed to explain the Government's alternatives to the MacSharry proposals. He rubbished them and said that they were nonsense, but he failed to spell out the Government's proposals.

A recent study published in Wales showed that, even if the 35 per cent. cuts proposed by MacSharry during the recent GATT round came to fruition, one in four Welsh farmers would have to leave the land because of the subsequent drop in incomes. Not only is that a remarkable figure, but the drift will accelerate if, added to those cuts

in the GATT talks, there are cuts in price support as a result of the latest price proposals and MacSharry's reform plans are totally rejected.

We must look carefully at the background to the present situation. For example, there was a 23 per cent. reduction in incomes in Wales last year, following a reduction of 28 per cent. in 1989. How can any industry survive such a dramatic rate of reduction?

What will be the result of the Community's price proposals, for example on beef, with the abolition of the safety net intervention measure and the reduction of intervention trigger levels by 8 per cent? Nobody wants to see intervention stocks increase dramatically. There is no point in beef being taken into intervention if nothing then happens to it.

There must be special measures to reduce the current levels of intervention. But we should remember why such measures were introduced. Following the BSE scare, it was clear that there had to be a system of intervention to enable beef to be taken into store. Confidence has not returned to the beef industry, so we should retain the system, at least until confidence has returned.

As the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North said, we are not in surplus in sheepmeat, so it seems scandalous to be talking about further cuts in price support in that area. After all, we are referring to extremely vulnerable farmers—farmers in the uplands and on marginal land—on whose incomes no hon. Member would wish to live. We are driving farmers off the land because we are not supporting them. It is essential that we give them support, and of course we welcome the 1·5 ecu per head support in supplementary ewe premium.

I was astonished to hear the Minister say that we should be cutting the milk quota by more than 2 per cent. He should be arguing that cuts should take place in certain sectors of the milk industry, but that across-the-board cuts damage everybody, especially the small and medium-sized producer. The Government should be giving protection to the small and medium-sized family farm, which has been sorely hit in recent years.

I agree that green pound devaluation requires more careful scrutiny than is proposed by the Commission. The green pound disparity should be dispensed with immediately, and, in view of the Minister's comments on that, feel sure that he will be taking that message to Brussels on behalf of United Kingdom farmers.

In relation to reforming the CAP, the much-maligned MacSharry proposals should not be dismissed out of hand. It is easy for people to say that MacSharry proposes to prop up inefficient small farmers, but let us at least consider the principle of what MacSharry proposes. It cannot be right that 80 per cent. of support under the CAP should go to 20 per cent. of farms. MacSharry says that that is wrong. Instead of targeting aid on farmers who do not need it, we should be supporting those in need. If we targeted properly on small and medium-sized efficient units—units that would not be viable without such limited support—we might get somewhere. It is essential that farming in rural areas is maintained. If that can be achieved by targeted support on revised MacSharry proposals so much the better.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food virtually said that agriculture should be left to the free market. What do—more to the point, what should—the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales say about that? Unfortunately, they say little, having left it to the Minister of Agriculture to make the running on the MacSharry proposals, on the GATT talks and on the price proposals.

Does the Secretary of State for Wales support Welsh agriculture and believe that Welsh farmers should be given support in the way that my hon. Friends and I have outlined? Hon. Members representing the regions of England, and Scotland and Wales say that agriculture is in a state of crisis. We demand Government action urgently.

7.38 pm

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) on his excellent and powerful speech. It is sad that it may be the last that we hear from him in an agriculture debate. We shall miss him.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and with the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). We have heard some powerful speeches criticising what has been happening and outlining the seriousness of the position in which agriculture finds itself.

I must declare an interest: I am a farmer, and I represent a constituency which depends more heavily on agriculture than almost any other in the country, especially on cereals and sugar production. Serious problems face both commodities, especially if the Government's policies go ahead. To cut the price of sugar by 5 per cent. just to keep it in line with the cut in the price of cereals is a very foolish move which must be resisted. I wholly agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare: it is quite wrong to think it sensible to cut the price of cereals. If that price is cut, what am I and my constituents to do? Are we to go further and further into the red? We shall have to do our level best to produce an extra hundredweight or two to counteract the cuts—and that will merely aggravate the situation and achieve nothing.

A great deal of misunderstanding and mythology surrounds agriculture and it is about time we clarified the situation. I was misunderstood when I intervened on the Minister earlier, when I tried to tell him, with the help of answers that he has given me, that the cost of agricultural support had fallen from 1 per cent. of GDP in 1960 to 0·5 per cent. in 1973, when we joined the EEC, to 0·25 per cent. now. But the general public do not believe that—they think that massive subsidies are being handed out. I recognise that there is a problem with expenditure in Europe, but even that is exaggerated. It amounts to only about 1 per cent. of GDP.

The Minister answered me as though I had been talking about the price of food, but even in that event he did not have a leg to stand on. The price of food is rising much more slowly than other prices generally. That means that our producers are being more efficient than the rest of the country's industries. In 1960 we spent 25 per cent. of our net disposable income on food. Now we spend less than 12 per cent., and the figure is falling all the time. So how can anyone in his right mind declare that the price of food is too high?

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Is it not also true that, of the diminishing amount of money spent on the priority item of food, much more of the profit element is going to those who process the food and to retailers and not to the main producers—the farmers?

Mr. Howell: My hon. Friend has just beaten me to my point. In 1979, the producers received 49 per cent. of the price of food and the processors 51 per cent. Now farmers get less than 40 per cent. and the processors more than 60 per cent. The processors and retailers—the supermarket chains and so on—are making the enormous profits and benefiting from the subsidies which are generally thought to be going to the farming community.

As Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) commended farmers for doing better than any other industry in their efforts to become self-sufficient. We were encouraged to increase our self-sufficiency in temperate foodstuffs—and we did. Self-sufficiency rose from 71 per cent. in 1979-80 to 80 per cent. in 1984-85. Measures taken since then have resulted in a fall in self-sufficiency to 74 per cent. Our balance of payments would be much better had we been allowed to follow the advice of the former Prime Minister and increase our self-sufficiency beyond 80 per cent.

Our balance of payments is an important feature of the performance of agriculture. Cereals are the most successful sector of agriculture. In 1979 our net balance in cereals was a deficit of £404 million. Cereals are now in surplus to the tune of £229 million—a change around of more than £600 million. In the same period a surplus of £46·9 million in our balance of trade in electricals and machinery has turned into a deficit of £1·677 billion. The deficit in road vehicles has worsened from £795 million to £6·932 billion. British agriculture, especially cereals, is therefore doing a great job for the economy of this country and we must stop trying to destroy it.

We are all concerned about the third world and the awful events on the Turkey-Iraq border. Britain is 120 per cent. self-sufficient in wheat; Europe is 130 per cent. self-sufficient; and America is about 220 per cent. self-sufficient. The Cairns group is even more self-sufficient in wheat. No wheat is ever wasted in the world, so if we cut cereal production just to balance the EEC budget—by quota, or by price cutting, which is impossible—more people in the world will starve. The lower we force prices of agricultural produce, the more we shall destroy farming communities not only in this country but in every corner of the earth.

7.47 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): This very afternoon I asked the Prime Minister what he intended to do to help farming and to help stop the catastrophe that is occurring on the hills of Clwyd. He replied that the Minister responsible had increased hill livestock compensatory allowances. But a 14 per cent. increase in HLCAs cannot possibly be considered enough, given the piteous decline in prices and incomes. Incomes alone have fallen by 22 per cent., and we face crippling interest rates and high inflation.

The Prime Minister had no answer to the problem of the disposal of casualty animal carcases. What was once at least a small monetary compensation for the loss of an animal is now a complete loss. If there is no suitable area in which to bury them on a farm, farmers must pay to have them removed. I heard on Tuesday in Denbigh market that animals are already being dumped by the roadside, which could result in a grave risk to public health.

We have already heard about the problem of the doubling of vehicle duty, which was slipped through in the Budget without being mentioned in the Budget speech. There are also restrictions on the use of duty-free diesel in journeys of more than 15 miles. But we are debating the EC price proposals which, in the absence of any real effort to change the system or redirect support to farmers and away from intervention and export restitution, will result in further damage to British agriculture. The 5 per cent. cut in sugar prices, which has already been mentioned, could result in job losses in our industry and harm the developing Afro-Caribbean countries drastically.

Common agricultural policy spending needs to be reduced, but some factors are not being taken into account —for example, the inclusion of the GDR in the EC and the potential reduction in costs of exporting surplus production with a strong US dollar. Spending could be reduced while helping farmers if the CAP were reformed.

Farmers in areas such as mine cannot continue in agriculture and continue to protect the visual and amenity value of the countryside if prices are cut merely to save expenditure.

The Minister rightly attacks the MacSharry proposals, which would be highly discriminatory against British farmers and which—although some would disagree—would discriminate against Welsh farmers and other less-favoured area farmers.

Welsh farms, and probably Welsh farmers, too, are smaller than average——

Mr. Alex Carlile: My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) is not smaller than average.

Mr. Jones: I do not believe that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) is an average Welsh farmer.

Welsh farms are smaller than the United Kingdom average, but they are six times larger than the European average and 12 times larger than Greek or Portuguese farms. The same applies when the product is considered. For example, dairy herds in Europe average 19 cows while the average herd in the United Kingdom is 61 cows. In Wales it is 50 cows, but in Greece and Portugal it is four cows. Welsh and British farms would therefore miss out badly. Different approaches to definition could be taken. For example, each country could set its own size definition or use labour units, but it would be far better if farming were recognised as an essential element in the maintenance and creation of environmental value. Integrated policies with agricultural and environmental objectives can encourage farming practices that lead to diverse and high-quality landscapes and will maintain ecological systems. Such practices will pay more heed to traditional husbandry methods and less to production intensity.

At present, farmers' only alternative to the economic mess that they are in is to increase production or go out of business, both of which would have a devastating effect on the local environment. A less production-oriented view of agriculture could also recognise the role of small and part-time farmers in rural areas and rural affairs.

A shift from product price support to environmental management payments is capable of simultaneously reducing agricultural output, maintaining farm incomes and populations, reducing the total cost of support to society and providing unequivocal environmental benefits such as reduced pollution, improved wildlife habits and landscapes and improved food quality.

The Minister said several times that he wanted an acceptable change—a green change—but what is he doing to achieve it? Hon. Members have already pointed out that he has made no proposals in place of the MacSharry plans. He can achieve something in Europe only if he is prepared to put forward proposals which will have some credibility with our European partners. In the absence of that, we will get MacSharry in one form or another and I do not think that will be good for British or Welsh farming.

7.53 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am delighted to contribute to the debate, coming as I do from a constituency where agriculture is absolutely vital. I start by acknowledging the achievements of British agriculture. Instead of food shortages we now have plenty of food at reasonable prices that we now take very much for granted. The agriculture industry has improved its productivity and efficiency superbly and has greatly helped with our balance of payments.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Rubbish.

Mr. Lord: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said "Rubbish" from a sedentary position, but I know that he will speak later in the debate, so I suggest that he remains quiet during my speech.

At the same time it has maintained a countryside which we can all enjoy. If people doubt that, they should come to Suffolk and see for themselves. Farmers have also made an invaluable contribution to the fight against inflation. The rate of inflation in recent years has been held down by the price of food, and that in turn has been held down by farm gate prices. So farmers have done more than their share in the battle against inflation. What is to be their reward for responding so magnificently to the task that the nation set them? Apparently, thanks to the CAP, their reward is to suffer either the implementation of Agriculture Commissioner MacSharry's grotesquely discriminatory plans, or to be subjected to severe cuts in the price of their products which the industry in its present state simply will not be able to stand.

Any fair-minded and reasonably informed observer is forced to conclude that the CAP, far from being the instrument that will solve our agricultural problems, is the very cause of most of them. We pay lip service to the ideas of free trading within the Community and increasingly allowing market forces to operate. We all know that those are myths. The CAP is a mixture of regulations fairly or unfairly applied, price fixing by way of horse trading at various political levels, fiddles and protectionism of various kinds and a fair quantity of sheer fraud.

I am tired of pointing out unfairnesses about which little ever seems to happen. One example concerns the egg producers. Following all the problems with salmonella, tighter regulations in Britain have meant that our egg producers are now producing the best product in Europe. Sadly, many of them have gone out of business in the process. Dutch imports have come in to fill the gap. Lorries are allowed into Britain carrying eggs that are not of the same standard as ours and are taking away the business that our producers have lost and their flocks have been slaughtered. Our eggs are now better but we are not allowed to tell people so. We cannot stamp them or market them in the way in which we should be allowed as we now have the best product.

I do not want to put the blame for our farming problems on the shoulders of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture or his team. In the circumstances, they are doing an excellent job. I know that my right hon. Friend cares every bit as much as I do for our farmers and our countryside, but his hands are tied. He is only one of 12. He has to work within the limits of the CAP and inevitably he has to horse trade. That means that, although he is our Minister of Agriculture, he cannot look after the industry as he would wish and as he should be able to do.

I was unable to be present to hear my right hon. Friend's speech at the National Farmers Union annual general meeting earlier this year, but I think that parts of it highlight his present dilemma. My right hon. Friend used the word "modulation". That is a bit of Eurojargon. He said:

> "Modulation says that support should in future be concentrated on the smallest producers—smallest not on the UK size-scale but on the Community scale . . . 90 per cent. of farmers in Portugal have 12 acres or less . . . Italy has no less than 2 million farmers, each on average with a holding of around 14 acres."

When we consider our farm sizes, we are bound to ask how can a common system be devised that will satisfactorily deal with such discrepancies of size. It is simply impossible.

My right hon. Friend continued:

> "It has to be a truly common policy, one which embraces and caters for the needs of farmers in all parts of the Community, from Northern Ireland to Crete. And it must be a policy for the 1,000 acre farm as well as for the 10 acre micro-farm."

With great respect to my right hon. Friend, I simply do not believe that is possible.

There is much discussion about whether we need controls on production or cuts in prices, more set-aside, environmental payments, social payments and so on. In my view, none of those will deal satisfactorily and fairly with our problems. We now need a radical review of the whole system.

I appreciate that the CAP, if the House will forgive the pun, is the sacred cow of the Community. But if it is not working, and if it is damaging our farmers, our trade with the rest of the world and the very fabric of the Community, surely it is time to think again. The CAP is so flawed that the money going into it does not reach our farmers but is being lost elsewhere. Surely the answer is to devise a system which will allow individual nations to organise their own agriculture as they see fit while at the same time having mutually acceptable rules within Europe and throughout the world which allow nations to trade satisfactorily in their agricultural products.

I do not seek the immediate abandonment of the CAP. However, I ask that we recognise its massive inherent failings and that it will never work properly. The different nations, climates, farming systems and sizes of farms in Europe mean that any sort of overall framework is impossible. We must acknowledge that, for the sake of our farmers, consumers and European harmony, an alternative system is needed. Most important, we must initiate a debate on those issues.

Farmers are not greedy. They want fair and stable prices. Why should we and how can we stand by and watch this vital and efficient industry slowly being sacrificed on the altar of Europeanism?

8 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): The debate has been characterised by a tremendous sense of realism, especially by the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) and for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). We have also heard interesting speeches from the Opposition. This may be one of the last occasions on which I shall speak on agriculture. I have spoken in many previous debates on the subject, but no one can deny that this debate is critical for the whole industry.

We have never had a better group of farmers. They are extremely professional, work hard and are knowledgeable, and we owe it to them to do what we can to improve the industry and secure its future. Farmers are also a great source of stability and without them Britain would be a much poorer place. I agree with a great deal of what has been said about the future of the Community. It is worrying when a good farmer on his own land makes a substantial loss, and that is a matter for a debate in itself. However, farm incomes are not the only worrying feature of the present situation. There are many factors beyond farmers' control and one is the increasing amount of interference with the farmer doing the job that he knows best.

Everyone knows that in today's world farming can no longer be pursued solely for economic ends. It must be friendly to the environment, whether natural or man-made, such as buildings. In many cases control has gone too far and much of the rhetoric condemning the depredations in the countryside labels the farmer as the chief villain. We must be careful about that. On planning issues, anti-pollution schemes, water systems and access to the countryside, the farmer is often seen as the villain of the piece and, what is worse, Governments tend to land him with the cost of remedying faults. The fines that are to be imposed on farmers who transgress pollution regulations are out of all proportion to any damage that they cause. We should make it clear that we do not see them as the villains and we must try to help them to do their job as best they can.

Let us examine the part that other European Governments play in assisting farmers. We certainly assist our farmers and we try to play by the rules, but many nations do not and examples of that have been given in the debate. It is said that we cannot believe everything that farmers tell us. That is correct, but I know from personal experience that much of what they tell us is true. We expect the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to do what it can to tell the Commission and our European partners that they have to play the game if they want the Community to work.

Farmers, and especially the dairy producers whom I represent, do not fully understand the reasons for proposed changes to the Milk Marketing Board. The proposals for a producer co-operative have been sent to the Minister for examination, but it is not the role of Government to decide how the industry should market its prime commodity. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister understands that, but some people do not. I hope that he makes it clear that not only the board and the people who manage it, but the producers, understand the problems in marketing dairy products so that a sensible solution can be found. I remember the same debate going on in the 1930s because my father was involved in it. They must find a system that is compatibile with today's realities.

Allowing producers to sell to companies other than the Milk Marketing Board if they can get a better price may undermine those parts of the industry which rely on the board to take all the milk that they produce and sell it for a reasonable price. I hope that farmers will go to meetings and try to understand the issues affecting the future of the Milk Marketing Board, which is a tremendous force for stability in the production and marketing of one of our main commodities.

I do not blame my right hon. Friend the Minister for not outlining his negotiating position about the future of the CAP. He cannot do so and could not be expected to do so. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton made a remarkable spech. I doubt whether everyone would agree with everything he said, but I agreed with some of it. He said that my right hon. Friend the Minister had spoken about the possibility of improved premium schemes. Such schemes increase the price for a limited part of agriculture, and that then increases production in that area. We then encounter the problem of having to find some sort of curb on that, which may be through standard quantities. We ran into that problem with beef when the late Lord Soames was the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and he had to end the system. Perhaps the problem can be avoided by a quota system. Although it is right, as my right hon. Friend said, to apply downward pressure to farm prices, it must be done at a pace with which the industry can work. At the same time, if we are to have an improved premium scheme for certain sectors of agriculture, that will work against the system unless production is curtailed, whether by quotas or by a similar arrangement.

There is great uncertainty. The message at the end of the Minister's remarks was perhaps the most encouraging part of his speech. He said that we want reform to start now; we must not put it off. The industry needs support now if it is to plan for the future and look forward to better times.

8.10 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It is only right that a voice from Northern Ireland should be heard in this debate. If there has been a cut in farm incomes on this side of the water—in Scotland, England and Wales—there has been a far greater cut in Northern Ireland. In the United Kingdom, incomes have fallen by 14 per cent., whereas in Northern Ireland they have fallen by 27 per cent. If the people here have a cold, we in Ulster are dying of pneumonia.

In this debate, the House has recognised the reality. It has learnt that its powers have been seriously eroded. It is not right to charge the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with responsibility for all our ills. Let this House know it: his powers have been greatly reduced and are entirely different from those of previous Ministers. In the old days, Agriculture Ministers had to persuade the Cabinet. Today, the Minister has to go and fight in Europe and, at the end of the day, he may be overruled.

I have some little experience of Europe, and I can say that these matters are decided more on a political basis than in the interests of the farmers, the producers, those

who sell the products or the consumers. It is a political business, and a very intensive political business at that. It is time that we learnt that.

Yesterday in Strasbourg a debate was held on the increased powers that Mr. Delors wants. He says that, for starters, he wants 40 per cent. more powers. Yet the Vote Office and the Library cannot produce the relevant document. The European Parliament, of which I am a member, could not supply my colleagues or me with a copy of the document that was being debated. That is Europe for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker; and, as the momentum gathers, the House will realise just how powerful the long arm of Europe is in regard to the affairs of this kingdom.

The Minister must face up to three problems. First, the system of agriculture controlled from Europe is not working to the advantage of our farmers and is not providing them with a level and fair playing field. There is no doubt about that. Our farmers are at a grave disadvantage. We are beginning to reap the sowing of the CAP. The Minister is right that a strategy to deal with shortages cannot be a strategy to deal with surpluses. That is why the CAP needs to be radically rethought or scrapped altogether. The proposals put to the House for the restoration of national power in the industry represent the only way of solving the problem. Proposals have been put tonight by eloquent speakers, who have shown that there is a direct contradiction and that we cannot solve the problem if we continue as we are.

The second problem is that the farmers are not getting the money that they should in terms of agricultural finance and subsidies. We have warehouses and intervention stores, and those in the big business of selling are getting most of the subsidies. Let the farmers get what they need. If farmers are to be asked to look after the countryside, somebody will have to pay them for doing it. Environmental aims will be achieved not by farmers producing anything but by their taking care of the countryside. We must face the fact that we have a duty to farmers. It would be a tragedy for our nation if the country were bereft of farmers and of people living in the countryside.

The third problem is fraud, and something must be done about it. The Minister said that, because we detect those who carry out fraud, we are blamed for having more people at the game of fraud. But the other countries are not taking the matter in hand at all. They are not going after those guilty of fraud. The Minister should start a crusade in Europe and tell his partners that they must start the work of detection. He must tell them, "This is happening. You must find out who is doing it and lay your arm of power upon them."

We all welcome the fact that the barriers between eastern and western Europe have broken down; but that means that import barriers have also broken down. Mr. Delors is encouraging that flood, but that, too, will tell against our farmers. We have heard the amazing fact that we are not overproducing—even in milk. Apparently, we do not produce enough milk to use in our own homes, yet we are subject to quotas, which have changed our outlook and have caused dissension among farmers. In my community, the hill farmers cannot go into the dairy business, but dairymen are going into the sheep business and taking away the upland farmers' livelihood. That has divided the community.

I am sure that the House was glad to hear tonight from two veteran debaters—the hon. Members for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) and for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). I am sure that we shall remember their speeches and that we all regret that they will no longer be with us after the next election. Of course, some hon. Members who think that they will be back after the next election may be axed, and will not have had the opportunity to say goodbye. We shall remember those two hon. Members with pleasure, however, and have always listened with interest to what they have said. Knowing their record, we wish them a happy retirement.

8.18 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I am delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen). For far too many years he was shut away in the Whips' Office and we did not hear enough from him. We are delighted to have him back and to hear his contributions, which are always of great value.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has given us a realistic assessment of the situation. I do not understand why the Opposition spokesman should have been so scathing in his condemnation. As always, the Liberal Democrat spokesman wanted it both ways. He wanted the Minister to exercise more power, yet the Liberal Democrats would be the first to pass more power to Brussels and make our Minister impotent.

We are talking not just about the problems of falling incomes or increased farm wages. We know about all that. Overdrafts have increased by 17 per cent. and the banks are getting tougher. That is part of the equation, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) put his finger on another aspect which is a greater worry to our farmers—the ever-increasing costs that are being imposed on them by new legislation, which was also referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome. It is frightening. Farmers in my constituency are worried almost as much about the impact of escalating costs of the legislation as they are about anything else.

I asked a farmer who farms about 1,100 acres on three farms—one tenanted and two owned—to give me an estimate of what will happen to him this year. He wrote telling me that he had done what I asked and had produced an estimate of what it would cost his farming enterprise this year. He said:

"In a way I wish I hadn't done it, as to comply with the 'letter of the law' it will require estimated extra costs and expenditure this year of some £94,840 of which £40,000 might be reclaimed back from MAFF via pollution control grants."

I make no apology for giving some of the details because these costs are important to our farming community. In regard to the control of pollution, the farmer said:

"Large fuel storage may pose 'significant risk of pollution' being near to water course and will probably require concrete bund to retain any spill. Cost with work done by farm labour £2,500."

For one dairy, he said:

"A complete dirty water irrigation system required for 180 cow dairy complete with new silage effluent tanks, roof drainage system, etc. Estimated costs including design and building to be not less than £50,000."

For another smaller dairy, he said:

"A smaller dirty water irrigation system . . . Estimated cost about £20,000."

For another dairy, he said:

"A small dirty water irrigation system . . . Estimated cost £10,000."

[Sir Jim Spicer]

Because field clamps of silage will no longer be legal, he will have to build a new clamp inside, which will cost £4,000. Under the Water Act 1989 he will need a licence to abstract water, at a cost of £25 each for two boreholes. He will also require at least two discharge consents at a cost of £350 each. To comply with the new regulations for the control of substances hazardous to health he will need to carry out dust suppression and control measures costing £3,000 and provide a new chemical store at a cost of £4,000. For all the farms the cost of extra record-keeping and health monitoring will be £1,500 per annum.

In regard to the Food Safety Act 1990, the farmer says:

"Extra security is now required to prevent unauthorised access to dairy plant and equipment . . . Total estimated cost will be about £5,000."

He will also have extra expenditure under the Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1990 for a new building and veterinary certificates for casualty slaughter. I could go on and on, but my main point is that the total cost will be £94,840 in one year.

All those changes may be good news for the environment and many stem from decisions made within the Community. However, I am worried about whether we are on a level playing field. Are all the other countries carrying out the same inspections? Is there a national rivers authority going up and down the Seine, and inspecting rivers in Greece, Portugal and Spain? Are chaps rushing around dipping their "little dipsticks" into the water, checking it out and saying, "This is disgraceful. You, Greek farmer, will have to spend the same as your British counterpart on increased protection"?

The major worry is that we are not on a level playing field. I know that. As a Member of the European Parliament, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) knows that. I do not know how we will resolve the problem. If we are to switch support from direct subsidies on the farming and food production side, and if we are to favour the environment more, we should not put greater burdens on the farming community but should increase grants, where that can be done. That would not solve all the problems, but it would at least be of some help.

I urge my right hon. Friend to do all that he can to help farmers with all the additional costs, many of which are being imposed because of extremely high standards, many of which are not necessary. If a farmer is not to have any slurry spills ever, he has to meet unnecessarily higher protection standards. Surely the right answer is to say to the farmer, "If you contaminate a river with slurry, you will be hammered." The polluter should have to pay for contamination, but if too high standards are imposed, the farming community cannot carry the additional costs.

8.25 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): When we talk to our farmers about the conduct of the Minister in difficult situations with Commissioner MacSharry, they always ask whether he is tough enough and whether he has taken a strong enough line. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his stance. Recently he was reported in the press as having said:

"You don't get out of difficult situations by pretending there is an easy way out."

That was not a soft option; it was a tough option. I hope that he will continue to be tough.

Commissioner MacSharry does not endear himself to me. His proposals on CAP reform and on things like the continuation of minimum values at auctions for the export of live animals show clearly that he does not regard equality as important. I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that cuts are shared fairly among the EC member countries. Britain must not bear an unfair burden. I know that my right hon. Friend is aware of that; in fact, he has already said so, and I shall not press him further on it.

Farming is facing great change. As the Member of Parliament for Meriden, I represent a number of farms in the west midlands between Birmingham and Coventry. Most of them are between 200 and 300 acres; some are bigger, and as large as 1,000 acres. They are all facing the pressure, as are farmers throughout the country, of high interest rates, which are coming down under a good Conservative Government, with more reductions to come later. Over the years their borrowings will diminish, but even so they are going through a difficult period.

Farmers in my area have been innovative in diversification, although perhaps in the green belt between Birmingham and Coventry there may be too many golf courses and too much wrong diversification. However, farmers see a need to pursue that as incomes increase and borrowings decrease.

I should declare an interest as a member of the National Farmers Union, although only as a very small smallholder. I appreciate the comments and briefings given to me by the NFU locally and nationally. Nationally, the view of the NFU is interesting. It felt that it would be appropriate for the Commission to propose a neutral price package. What is being put forward is a severe reduction. I do not have to be persuaded by the NFU or anybody else that there is direct discrimination in the MacSharry package against highly efficient British farmers. That may be a trite remark because many hon. Members have already referred to the point, and no doubt many others will raise it as the debate continues. I wish to register clearly that the ordinary midlands farmer has got a bad deal from Commissioner MacSharry.

We obey the rules and respect the guidelines. I shall not say that that gets my goat because it would be wrong to use that expression in an agriculture debate, but it is irksome. We always seem to be the good guys. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister is a real toughie and I hope that he will confirm that in his reply. However, we do obey the rules and I have seen that in other industries. Our car manufacturers and car component manufacturers obey the rules, but the French and Germans find ingenious and innovative ways around them. Let us hope that our farmers, who are up against it now, will not face such practices from our European partners and friends. I am a committed European, but I hope that our partners will not use such mechanisms as Commissioner MacSharry may allow to find ways round the guidelines, thereby obtaining an advantage over our farmers.

The reservations expressed by the NFU include the fact that the guidelines were set before the former German Democratic Republic became a full part of the Community and should now be increased to offset fully the extra cost of supporting the agricultural sector of the former GDR—*[Interuption.]* My hon. Friends are chuntering behind me, but I wish that they would not. They also include the fact that the strengthening of the United States dollar against the ecu will substantially reduce the cost of exporting EC surplus production.

The Commission's proposal to reduce the remaining United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts by one third is inadequate according to the NFU and takes no account of the United Kingdom's commitment to a fixed exchange rate within the EMS. The NFU says that all our green rates should be aligned to a general rate so that British farmers no longer have to produce under the handicap of monetary disadvantages. I make no apologies to the House for reading out some of the details given to me because they are current and important and they represent the collective view of the NFU nationally.

I shall now come to the problems facing my friends locally. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) mentioned a multitude of minor disadvantages which, to a farmer, are major disadvantages. The new silage and slurry regulations came into effect on 1 March and the Food Safety Act 1990 comes into effect on 1 July. Those pieces of legislation, together with the regulations on the welfare of livestock, are terribly important. They are welcomed by farmers, but they all pose additional costs at a time when farmers in my constituency are not just on the margin but, with their borrowings, over the margin.

I shall not say that more and more are leaving farming because, being good productive midlands farmers, they are trying desperately hard to continue in their occupation and support their families. However, even if they survive, the real penalty is investment. They do not have enough funds to invest. Hence, in my area we have seen the closure of a number of distributors of farm equipment. As farmers no longer buy the equipment, the distributors face problems and that works its way back to those who manufacture the equipment, including tractors and a wide variety of other equipment Therefore, problems are facing not just the farmers who are directly involved, but those in the chain who provide farmers with the mechanisms to produce the food that we need, but which is in surplus.

The position on fallen stock is most unsatisfactory. It is wrong for farmers to have to pay £50 a beast or £5 a sheep for the removal of dead stock. In addition, although it is not a large amount, the change in excise duty on tractors made the farming world extremely excited.

8.34 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): In this debate we should be considering two issues—first, the current parlous state of British agriculture and, secondly, the uncertainty about the future. That is the recurrent theme that I find when I talk to farmers. They want to know where they are going. Those two issues pose two fundamental questions. First, is the common agricultural policy the right vehicle to deal with present and future problems arising in the agriculture industry? Secondly, what can the United Kingdom Government do to help?

My right hon. Friend the Minister said in his speech to the National Farmers Union annual general meeting in February that the

"CAP has become an engine for its own destruction."

That is hardly surprising. The CAP institutionalises the command economy—the brainchild of socialism bred by dogma out of theory. It is a managed market, which is a many tentacled creature of central control, bureaucracy, inefficiency and waste. It has one success to its credit: in eastern Europe the totalitarian states have engineered shortages, but in western Europe the CAP has engineered surpluses.

I want to invite hon. Members to look at the accounts of the common agricultural policy. We should look first at the profit and loss account. The costs of agricultural support are now impossible to contain within a budget of £23 billion. We should also look at our sales profile. For domestic consumers it is cash on the nail, but for foreign buyers there are knock-down prices and extended credit. If I wanted to be facetious, I would tell how our armed forces in the Gulf bought foreign.

The beef mountain has already been mentioned. I do not agree with the figures that have been quoted because estimates vary from between 700,000 tonnes to 930,000 tonnes. However, more than 90,000 tonnes of that beef is in the United Kingdom alone. That is quite excessive. If we consider farm incomes, we see that they are at rock bottom.

At the end of the accounts we find the auditors' report. It is a catalogue of management failures, fraud, deficiencies and uncontrolled expenditure. It is little wonder that my right hon. Friend the Minister has said that the CAP needs radical change.

My right hon. Friend the Minister knows as well as I do that significant items are not even stated on the balance sheet. The CAP has spawned a monoculture with an all too obvious effect on ecology and environment. The enouragement of agri-business has had an adverse effect on family farms. We have caused antagonism to our trading partners throughout the world by our policies of subsidised exports. Also, the barriers that we have erected around our own markets have had a devastating effect on the economies of third world countries.

I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister is somewhat constrained in what he can say because the CAP is an intregal part of the treaty of Rome. No doubt he feels inhibited by fear of sending shock waves or the wrong signals to our Community partners. I am not similarly constrained and I want to tell the House that the notion that a prosperous United Kingdom agriculture industry can emerge from reform of the CAP is a triumph of hope over experience. The CAP has had time and money enough, but it is fundamentally flawed. In contrast with other activities of the European Community, there can be no convergence in agriculture—geography, topography and climate do not respond to regulation or directive and never will. The system is not working and no amount of tinkering will make it work. Necessary decisions are not being made on time, but the system does not facilitate decision making. It cannot reach the right decisions for the various agricultural activities in the Community, and every decision, by definition, must be a compromise. Our industry—whether it be efficient or inefficient farmers, small or big farmers, upland or lowland farmers—is prejudiced as a result.

With its green currencies, its own monetary system—monetary compensatory amounts—its own programme of legislation and its own bureaucracy, the CAP is an awesome object lesson in the inevitable consequences of political and monetary union. The danger is that the CAP will yet prove to be the rock on which the European Community, as we know it, founders.

I said that I would suggest what the Government should do to help. I do not think that any hon. Member dissents from the view that the industry desperately needs a definitive and positive statement on future support

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

arrangements such as income aid, landscape grants and commodity support. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the positive comments that he made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) made an important point about quotas. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to consider the effect of a quota system on our sheep population. He could do the industry much good by persuading his partners in the Community to nail, once and for all, the prospect of quotas for sheep or other commodities which are not already subject to quotas.

I should like to make two other suggestions to my right hon. Friend which I hope will be helpful. First, he should do all that he can to encourage co-operatives which extend beyond the farm gate. The competition that British agriculture faces from abroad is better organised, far more aggressive and taking too much of our market. Much of that competition derives from a strong and progressive producer-owned co-operative base.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend should stimulate the marketing of United Kingdom farm produce by increasing funds for the Food From Britain organisation to match those enjoyed by the French agriculture and food industries. We have good saleable products, but we must beef up their marketing and brand identity. I hope that my right hon. Friend will seriously consider whether Food From Britain can play a more important part in helping us to achieve that.

We are all, to a greater or lesser extent, opinion formers. Let us go forth from the House and sing the praises of British food and drink products. I commend that message to Labour Front-Bench spokesmen, who ran down British products so many times, which was regrettable. We can all play a tremendous part, and British agriculture will thank us for doing so.

8.44 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): We were reminded earlier how much we shall miss the debating style and eloquence of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). The hon. Gentleman is one of the best debaters in the House and has the keenest cutting edge when he speaks. He never, however, descends to malevolent insults. The Minister's persuasive pugnacity, which we often enjoy, would be all the more effective if he did not descend to offensive insults. I hope that he will apologise for what he said to me earlier.

Mr. Gummer: I have had an opportunity to check the record. On the 21 occasions when we have had agriculture debates or questions, the hon. and learned Gentleman has contributed to three. Tomorrow will be the anniversary of the first question that he has asked me since I have been Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. If he feels that anything that I have said underestimates what he has done, I withdraw it, but those are the figures.

Mr. Carlile: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware, especially as I raised an agriculture matter in another debate two days ago, that I am my party's spokesman on trade and industry. I see no reason to defend my contributions record in the House.

The Minister mentioned a visit that he paid to my constituency where, he says, the views that he expressed in the House were well received by farmers. A quick check tonight with an official of one of the farming unions failed to reveal any recollection of the right hon. Gentleman's paying a visit as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I should therefore welcome his telling the House exactly when he was so well received by officials of farming unions in my constituency. If he would like to correct that —I extend this invitation in a genuine spirit—I should happily organise meetings in my constituency with members of the two farming unions in Wales and the Country Landowners Association. I hope that the Minister will accept that invitation.

I ask the Minister to answer a question that I put today and also on 16 April—I was hoping that the Minister might listen to this point—in the debate on the British Technology Group Bill. I hope that he will tell the House that the Government have decided not to give away all the patents, copyrights and designs that have resulted from research sponsored—and successful as a result—by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It would be quite wrong to give that intellectual property to a private investor, who may then disperse it around the world and lose for Britain the profits that could be gained from it.

The Minister referred to my contributions to agriculture debates but did not take into account comments that I may have made, for example, in the Welsh Grand Committee and elsewhere, so perhaps I should repeat some of them in what I shall call a plea from the hills. We hear much from our constituents in correspondence about protection of habitat. Whether it be newts, red kites or, dare I say it, even badgers, it is important to ensure that habitats are protected. The Government should bear in mind that the most important habitat in rural mid-Wales is that of its people. The people of mid-Wales, who populate its villages, have created that environment by their efforts as farmers, and people from the cities wish to preserve and enhance it.

In the election campaigns in the 1980s farmers in mid-Wales were subjected to advice from Ministers. Some memorable advice given in 1982 by the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, was that they should produce, produce, produce. The farmers did as they were told. They almost always did exactly as they were bid by the Government because they trusted them—until recently.

Now, farming in mid-Wales faces the same situation that was faced by other great Welsh industries, such as the coal industry, which has declined from some 200 pits to three, and the steel industry, which employed tens of thousands of people and now employs relatively few. Farmers feel that agriculture is next. It is a much bigger industry than coal or steel ever were in Wales. The consequences of the Government's policy are causing a decline, referred to by several Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), which is of a scale that makes farmers feel that the coal and steel industries were probably not so badly treated after all.

There is little else to do in parts of rural Wales other than farm. Whether one lives in the valleys of the river Hafren or the river Banwy or in the villages of Llanwnog or Derwen-las, the idea that farmers can diversify is unrealistic. Some diversification can be achieved, but the idea that in Derwen-las one can sell love-spoons carved by farmers to passing trade that never passes is absurd.

However, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office seem to believe that diversification is an easy option, which anyone can achieve even if they are untrained for it or for any other job. It is not good enough to tell farmers who live in mid-Wales that if they go to Wolverhampton or Chester they will find jobs in factories, Marks and Spencer offices or local councils there. The Minister knows that such movement would not only disrupt the lives of those individuals, who would find it difficult to cope with the change, but alter the character and demographic make-up of a historic established community in mid-Wales.

We have the advantage of the Development Board for Rural Wales. The chairman, Glyn Davies, and his board do excellent work. However, will the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales recognise that a far more direct input by that board into agriculture and tourism, especially the building of hotels, could provide some alleviation in terms of jobs to enable people from farming families to continue to live and work in mid-Wales? My constituency has the lowest rate of unemployment but the highest rate of growth in unemployment in Wales. That trend must be reversed before we, too, come high in the unemployment league.

Farming has a future, but it needs help. I was extremely disappointed by the refusal of the Welsh Office to assist financially in the creation not only of an abattoir but a farm-to-package meat-processing plant in the Llanidloes area. That would make a tremendous difference to sheep and lamb producers in mid-Wales. Will the Minister consider the Government's abattoir policy and speak to the Secretary of State for Wales about creating, and assisting in the creation of, Euro-standard abattoirs to serve Welsh agriculture?

We all subscribe and pay lip service to schemes that will enable farmers successfully to manage the environment, for that will be the key to their survival, but although the Minister used fine words in that part of his speech today, he did not say that he was willing to finance such policies. He must use the words and pay for the policies or the greatest industry in Wales will decline and the population will decline with it.

8.54 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): This has been one of the best debates on agriculture that I have ever sat through, and I am delighted to make a brief contribution to it.

I very much enjoyed the robust contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) and for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). I mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton last, but not least, because we shall miss his contributions in the future. I wish that he had not announced that he was making what might be his last speech because I think that we shall have another full year in which he could make many more good, robust speeches.

Common threads have run through the speeches this evening. We all recognise that agriculture is in crisis, with spending on the CAP at its highest yet and farm incomes at their lowest since the second world war. In addition, uncertainties about the future during the reform of the CAP sap the confidence of the farming community. Because agriculture thrives on stability, it has responded positively to the support placed on food production which, in a way, has caused some of the problems that we face today. However, it is worth recalling that, as a result, this country has a supply of temperate foodstuffs available to housewives and consumers that is second to none in quality, price and choice. We have not seen a queue for bread for many years. Further vicious reductions in production will only exacerbate the problems, as farmers desperately try to produce more to maintain their incomes and remain in business. At the same time, they are thwarted by the fact that they must operate under a handicap of monetary disadvantage.

The European Commission's proposal to reduce the remaining United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts by only one third is unacceptable and discriminatory. British farmers are being prevented from competing equally with other member states.

The livestock sector, too, is in a fragile state. Its predicament will be exacerbated by the weakening of support for beef and sheep. We have already suffered directly because of the reunification of Germany and the developments in eastern Europe. The beef industry would welcome like a hole in the head a 2 per cent. reduction in the milk quota and the resulting cow and heifer cullings.

A little has been said about the cost of German unification that is being borne by the whole Community. Will the Minister deal with that issue and say why, in the 1988 Budget, provision was made for the cost of reunification? It would have taken a wizard with a magic ball to foresee precisely what the costs would be. We know only too well that this country and others are bearing more than their fair share of that cost. Why did not West Germany pay for the cost of reunification? That is the right and proper course. It is what should have happened but, sadly, has not. We are suffering because of it.

The long-term reform of the CAP, particularly the MacSharry proposals, exercises everyone's mind. As a member of the Agriculture Select Committee, I recently went to Brussels with my colleagues to meet Mr. MacSharry as part of our inquiry into animals in transit and to discuss the future of the CAP and his proposals. He reacted in a combative and competent manner to questions put to him. He will not easily be moved from his proposals, which are fatally flawed from the point of view of agriculture in Europe as a whole and this country in particular. It makes no sense to fossilise agriculture by subsidising the inefficient at the expense of the efficient; nor does it make sense to move to a centrally controlled system of food production. We have seen that in the Soviet Union and know how disastrous it would be and to what it may lead in a few years' time.

It is important to grasp the nettle once and for all and to change from a system of support for food production to one of support for the land and the environment. The farmers who husband our greatest national resource, the countryside, need a period of stability to plan their individual businesses and to look to the future with confidence. The changeover in support should be phased in over perhaps a decade, as it has taken that long for our present problems to develop. There should increasingly be a move towards an awareness of the marketplace, with a positive attitude to the quality of production and food marketing.

We in this country produce some excellent quality food. We have proven management techniques. But we fail miserably on promoting and marketing. I am longing for

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

the day when, for example, English or Welsh lamb is sold as a sought-after, high-value commodity in its own right in the shops and supermarkets of Europe. I am longing for the day when British farmers are rewarded directly for responding to the disciplines of the market while maintaining their land in the way that is best for future generations.

Let us face up to the fact that the CAP is based on politics and has little to do with agriculture or what is best for agriculture and its most important ancillary industries. One thing is certain: any reforms must be fair across the Community as a whole and must be seen to be fair. I suggest that any cuts in production should be equal across the Community and that national Governments should decide how to implement them in their own countries. Instinctively, I wish to go one step further, but I suspect that at this stage that will not happen. I should like national Governments to take the responsibility, once again, for their own agriculture. In the long term, that is the way forward.

9.1 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) that this has been an extremely good debate. I am sorry that the time available to me and to other hon. Members has been cut because the Front Benchers need to wind up, and I shall be as brief as I can.

Despite the fact that this year's EEC price review takes place at a time of falling farm incomes, the United Kingdom has had a significant trade deficit in food and drink—therein lies a glimmer of hope for our hard-pressed agriculture sector. The obvious conclusion is that United Kingdom producers are less successful than their European and other counterparts in the world in marketing their products in this country. That problem must be addressed from two angles.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) that our farmers should get together in co-operatives, as their French counterparts do so successfully. In Wisbech, in my constituency, there is a successful co-operative in the fruit-growing area. That is a way forward. Economies of scale can be gained by co-operation.

The Government have a role to play in ensuring that they promote British products and encourage the British public to buy British. They are right to be concerned at the frightening increase in the proportion of the Community budget spent on the CAP and are rightly proud of initiating the CAP reform and proper budgetary discipline. The Government would have more support from farmers in my constituency were it not for the grievance at the fact that they are not allowed to compete fairly and equally with their European competitors. The playing field is certainly not level.

United Kingdom arable farmers must work under two major disadvantages, and I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister recognised them. First, for years the green rates have put Britain at a disadvantage. They subsidise imports and penalise exports. The green money system is not compatible with the single market, but our farmers cannot wait until 1992. Furthermore, the third cut that is offered in the present price review is not acceptable.

The second disadvantage is that the co-responsibility levy penalises the larger and more efficient British cereal grower. The Government say that they are completely opposed to that, but in this year's price review they propose to double the levy from 3 to 6 per cent. The Minister has an important task on his hands in ensuring that he delivers on both those counts.

It seems that the price reductions in the current review will hit arable farmers in north-east Cambridgeshire harder than most. They crop sugar beet, wheat, oilseed rape, some flax, peas and, of course, potatoes. Sugar beet will face a 5 per cent. cut in support; oilseed rape, flax and peas will each be cut by 3 per cent.; and, as I said a moment ago, wheat growers face a doubling of the co-responsibility levy from 3 to 6 per cent.

There are few alternative crops for the growers in my area. The harsh cuts in support for oilseed rape and flax will force more land back into cereal production. The cuts in sugar support prices seem unjustified since it is the growers and processors who pay levies to meet the cost of the EC regime. The only other cash crop that forms a significant proportion of many of my constituents' farm incomes is potatoes. Currently only those destined for starch come under the EC budget proposals, but that may well change post-1992.

A major problem with potatoes has only just come to light but it will affect the farm incomes of my constituents. The source of much of our seed is Scotland which, with its harsh climate, has produced excellent seed potatoes for many years. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland operates a classification system which complies with the EC requirements. It guarantees the buyer of the seed a virus-free and disease-free product. Last year the potato crop of one of my constituents failed totally. When he tested it, he found high levels of virus. His loss amounted to £40,000 or £50,000. As a result of the publicity that we gave to that incident, 80 farmers in my constituency tested the seed that they received from Scotland before setting it this year. Of the 80 who tested the seed at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge, eight had samples with virus levels of between 30 and 40 per cent. That seed is worthless and, luckily, has been replaced by the merchants.

That incident raises a number of important questions, such as who is responsible for the seed being so far removed from its classification and certification, and who is responsible for informing the farmers who have taken delivery of seed which might be infected? I have a particular case in mind. I have with me the register of last year's Scottish seed potato crop from which one can locate every farmer, every producer and even the fields in which the potatoes were grown. Two farmers in my constituency took delivery of 24 tonnes from a grower in Scotland. We estimate that his total tonnage is 621 tonnes. Where have the other 537 tonnes gone? It is likely that if 24 tonnes are infected, the whole crop will be infected.

What is happening in Scotland? There seem to be three possibilities. First, the last two mild winters may have led to the aphids which carry the virus over-wintering, but surely the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland realised that and should therefore have introduced more rigorous testing. Secondly, the problem may be well known to growers and to DAFS and they may hope that a climatic change in the next few winters will mean that it will go away. Thirdly, perhaps there is fraud and corruption in Scotland and tickets of certification are

being attached to bags of seed potatoes which are ordinary wares and not the true Scottish seed which has been properly inspected and passed.

I urge the Government to conduct a thorough inquiry into that incident in Scotland. I hope that they will liaise with the National Farmers Union and the National Association of Seed Potato Merchants to examine the sale agreement that farmers undertake because current levels of compensation are derisory. We must also examine the level of legal protection for farmers who face large losses. I ask the Ministry to use all available channels to alert all potato growers to the problem.

CAP reform is vital. We need reforms which satisfy certain conditions. Any price reductions and cuts in quotas should apply to all farmers in all areas equally—there should be no special deals for those in the Mediterranean areas. Set-aside should be used more in the arable sector. Goodness knows, my own fenland landscape could do with a few more trees, but the rate of set-aside, and the money paid, must be at the right level to encourage farmers to take land out of production. The present figures are far too low.

Environmental issues should enter centre stage. Britain wants a framework in which each country selects its own priorities. I congratulate the Minister on his forthright and robust appraisal of the problems facing the industry, and I also thank him for his positive proposals in regard to CAP reform.

9.10 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I apologise for my husky voice. I have overused my vocal cords in the past couple of days in the cause of defeating the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. I am sure that the Minister will be pleased to learn that I shall not speak for as long tonight!

The hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) paid special tribute to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who said that his speech tonight might be the last one that he would address to the House. Let me add my tributes to theirs. The hon. Member for Tiverton, with his hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen), has been a regular attender of our agriculture debates over recent years, and they have both contributed regularly. I have not always agreed with what they have said, but I have come to respect them as Members of Parliament who have served the House with diligence and loyalty. They have served their constituency interests to the best of their abilities, and according to their lights. I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge, when he replies to the debate, that his party will be the poorer for losing their services.

Today's debate has revealed the state of flux in which agriculture finds itself. Despite the apparent differences between the two opening Front-Bench speeches, I believe that there is a large measure of agreement between them about the essential problems of the industry. The debate was, however, given a certain spice by the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord)—a Tory Member—who suggested that his party should adopt a policy abandoned by the Labour party after the 1987 general election. Similarly, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) suggested that the Government adopt a policy rejected by the Liberal party after their defeat, on policy grounds, in the 1983 election.

The debate has certainly been well informed, and, with the exception of the apparent disagreement between the Minister and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, good natured. I was, however, reassured by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), who told me that the Minister's comments had been "restrained".

There is a growing consensus in Britain about agricultural politics, which must be good. If there is one thing that the agriculture industry needs, it is stability and long-term confidence. We believe that, if the growing consensus helps to bring that about, we shall all have served our country and industry well.

There is agreement about three of the principal matters that have been debated this evening. First, on the question of budgetary limits, the Minister, in his typically robust way, made it clear that he intends to resist any breach of those limits in Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said that the Minister would receive our support. With one or two exceptions, the House believes that the Minister is following the right cause and we wish him well in defending those budgetary limits.

Secondly, there is agreement that there must be reform of the common agricultural policy. We all recognise that and many of us believe that it is desirable. Thirdly, there is largely agreement that we must now try to change the direction of agricultural support away from commodity price support and redirect it into environmental and countryside payments. That case was put effectively and persuasively by the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). I was pleased to hear that she now accepts the policies that the Labour party has advocated, at least for the previous couple of years.

If there is a disagreement between the two principal sides in the debate it is a difference in the mechanism that we think is necessary to ensure that the changes take place in an orderly way. It appears that the Government are relying over-heavily on the application of market forces. They will seek robustly—as is the Minister's way—to secure price cuts in the belief that the cuts will lead to a restructuring of British agriculture.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery made it clear that that process would have a devastating effect on the rural communities that they represent. It will mean farm mergers and bankruptcies. It will also mean that farmers will continue to leave the land in large numbers and that the rural communities in their constituencies—and in many constituencies in the north and west of Britain—will be impoverished. We believe that the change must be a managed change, which takes account of the real needs of the British countryside, of the British consumer and of British farmers. We are not prepared to rely to the same extent that the Minister appears to do on the mechanism of the market.

In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields pressed the Minister for details of the alternative policy that he wishes to adopt to redirect the payments for countryside management and environmental purposes. The Minister was untypically reserved in offering the House details of his policy. I was reminded of a report that I read of an address by the hon. Member for

[Mr. Ron Davies]

Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), the Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to the Oxford farming conference this year. He began with the memorable words:

"What I say neither is nor isn't Government policy".

To judge by the Government's response to the Commission's proposal, it neither was nor was not Government policy as the Government do not have a policy for it not to be.

If we are unable to judge the Government's position from their policy for the future, we can at least examine their record over the recent past, and it is a pretty miserable record at that. Last year British farming sank further into unprecedented indebtedness now totalling £7 billion. The farmers who continued to struggle were forecast to earn real incomes only half of the levels of those in the early 1980s. In response to that domestic catastrophe, the Minister talks continuously about the importance of restructuring agriculture in other EC states. We know what he means by restructuring: he means throwing farmers off the land. It must be said that it is a subject on which he is well qualified to speak as he knows a lot about it.

During the 1980s—10 years of Conservative Government—we lost farmers at the rate of six each day. However, since the present Minister was promoted to guard our agricultural interests at Cabinet level, that steady flow has turned into a flood. Not six but 16 farmers a day go out of business. Wales and Scotland both have a higher proportion of the work force who are still involved in agriculture than has England. In Wales, we had a recent report from Professor Midmore of Aberystwyth university which warned that a further 11,000 jobs might be lost in the next two years. Two weeks ago, the Scottish agricultural college warned that half of Scotland's farm workers will be redundant by 2015.

If the Government's record is one of a huge decline in the United Kingdom's agricultural work force, can they claim that at least it has benefited the consumer? Not a bit. We all now know the figure used by the National Consumer Council in its 1988 paper, in which the cost of the common agricultural policy was identified as £14 a week for each family of four persons. The financial costs of agriculture are conventionally denominated in ecus and the inappropriately named green currencies.

Costs are also paid in environmental terms. If we were to add the environmental to the financial costs of the common agricultural policy, we should find that the true figure was far higher. There has been some tinkering at the edges in an attempt to reduce environmental damage, and some of the schemes, although limited, have been successful. Others have so far failed, largely because of the Ministry's mismanagement and lack of urgency. An example was the farm and conservation grant scheme payments for pollution control which were promised but never came. Over most of the country, we still have an agricultural policy that encourages environmental destruction—the same policy which has ruined so much of our landscape, polluted our water and destroyed our wildlife habitat.

It is also a sad fact that British farmers, by and large, are held in low esteem by many members of the public. A notable exception is the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). Let me hasten to say that I do not blame the farmers for that state of affairs. They are in the same position as the publicans of biblical times. I should add—and I am sure that the Minister will appreciate the analogy—that the biblical publicans were the equivalent of today's revenue men. Asked to do unpopular things, they do them as best they can. However, as they can survive only by practising a policy that is universally derided, they are bound to be criticised by the public who pay their wages. Farmers are certainly not assisted by a Ministry which is widely disbelieved by the public and which has shown itself to be incapable, as currently structured, of taking an independent regulatory role to ensure at least the safety, if not the financial well-being, of the consumer.

If the Ministry's record is pretty dismal—and I am sorry that the Minister finds it a source of amusement that 70 per cent. of the British public believe that his Ministry cannot be believed when it talks about food safety—can we at least pay tribute to the fact that the industry is prepared for the challenges of the single market? I am afraid that we cannot. United Kingdom farming is singularly unprepared to face 1993 with confidence. Investment levels are pitifully low. The National Farmers Union briefing on the Government publication "Agriculture in the UK: 1990" said:

"Over the five years to 1989 farmers' annual investment in fixed capital fell by 40 per cent."

Our own estimates suggest a further fall of about 15 per cent. in 1990. That slump in investment is additional evidence of the gravity of agriculture's economic crisis. It is especially worrying as 1992 and the single market approach. If private sector investment is low, can we look to the Government to provide assistance? Again, unfortunately, we cannot.

Let us consider the question of the slaughtering industry, which was raised by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and is of great concern to us in Wales. Last December, I asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assistance he had given to help slaughterhouses in the Province reach European Community export standards. The reply was that, over the five years to 31 March, £4·5 million had been paid for improvements to slaughterhouses in Northern Ireland. Encouraged by this, I tabled a similar question to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Back came the answer that the Department does not provide any special financial assistance for compliance with EC standards in slaughterhouses. Ditto Wales; ditto Scotland.

In Northern Ireland, thanks to its relatively progressive policy of encouraging private investment, 74 per cent. of slaughterhouses meet European export standards. In Scotland, the figure is 35 per cent.; in England it is 7 per cent.; and in Wales it is a miserable 5 per cent. How on earth does the Minister expect British agriculture to compete with European agriculture and Northern Ireland agriculture in the years following 1 January 1993? Last month's excellent report on the slaughtering sector from the Farmers' Union of Wales should dispel any complacency still lingering in the Minister's mind. We have also seen the survey of all British slaughterhouses by the Meat and Livestock Commission, which showed a hidebound industry with very low investment. According to the commission's chief economist,

"Some abattoirs are not sure what is required of them, and some do not see 1992 as a reality."

What kind of preparation for 1993 is this? What kind of lead are the Government giving to ensure that agriculture is fit to face the challenges of the single market?

I suppose that the slaughtering sector should heave a sigh of relief that all that it has suffered is malign neglect. Not so the state veterinary service. Hon. Members will be familiar with the disaster that has befallen the veterinary investigation service, involving the recent closure of another seven centres, with the loss of 52 posts—an act that the Minister describes as

"improvements in the quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the service".

It is a view that is not shared by the practitioners. Mr. A. J. C. Parker, secretary of the Cornwall Veterinary Association, writing in the *Veterinary Record*, said of the closure of the Truro centre:

"The chief veterinary officer is now expecting the profession in Cornwall to provide material for their nearest investigation centre, Starcross, which, for some areas of Cornwall, represents a 300-mile round trip. He must be joking."

I do not think it is much of a joke, and I do not think that British agriculture will find it much of a joke. That is just the veterinary investigation service. Other aspects of the state veterinary service have been cut, with staffing levels now down 20 per cent. on the figure of 10 years ago, at a time of unprecedented public concern about food quality and safety—not to mention animal welfare.

Research and development has gone the same way. Just over a month ago, the Ministry issued a press notice which said:

"Baroness Trumpington urges food industry to invest in R and D"—

and I am surprised that the notice did not have a sub-text saying, "because the Ministry of Agriculture certainly will not do it on your behalf". According to the Agriculture and Food Research Council officials, 300 further jobs in agricultural research and development will go this year.

In the Ministry's own directly-provided service—the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service—a crisis is building up. According to its director-general, Peter Bunyan, the farm and countryside service, which is responsible for the very service that the hon. Member for Congleton thinks will be at the heart of our system of agriculture,

"is down to a level where it is difficult for those who remain to cope with the current workloads."

We have looked at the dismal state of the agricultural infrastructure in the United Kingdom. What about marketing? The difficulties here were vividly illustrated by the hon. Member for Ludlow. Last year, the food and drink sector of the United Kingdom economy had the largest deficit of all sectors. Why should this be so when the lion's share of the deficit was with countries that have climates similar to, or worse than, our own? Could this, as was suggested by the hon. Gentleman, be related to the fact that our own marketing and promotion organisation —Food From Britain—has a budget one seventh the size of that in France or Germany? Or could it be that the confidence of British consumers in domestic produce is diminished by their inability to trust the Ministry to safeguard their welfare and safety?

However, there is hope for the industry. That hope is to be found in reforming agriculture policy away from overwhelming reliance on price support as the mechanism for maintaining farm incomes. It must go towards the concept of environmental management, or green premiums.

As we refine and hone our policy, it is increasingly clear that the Labour party is a source of inspiration for the Government's position on countryside management via agricultural policy. It is a policy that we advocated two years ago. It is a policy now belatedly being accepted by this Government. The trouble is that, even though the Government are adopting the policy, they are not doing much at the moment about implementing it.

Let us look at the Government's claims about their achievements in this area. The Minister wrote in *The Times* on 1 April—April fool's day, quite appropriately—as follows:

"Support through payments linked to production must fall and there must be more emphasis on direct payments for custody of the countryside. Britain",

he proudly proclaimed,

"has been the leader in this change."

Later in the same article the Minister wrote:

"We must also begin to bring agricultural prices up to a more realistic level."

That is an odd position to take if one believes that farmers should be paid more for countryside management and less for crop production. It is also somewhat inconsistent with the Minister's self-proclaimed pre-eminence among the price cutters in the Council of Ministers. Perhaps he can explain how higher food prices can be reconciled with food surpluses and the need to liberalise trade and reduce the gap between world and European Community prices. Nor am I sure how this fits in with the Government's proclaimed view of reducing inflation as its central economic objective.

As for the claim that Britain is in the lead in introducing environmental criteria into agricultural policy—precisely the point developed by the Minister in his opening speech —let us turn to a more impartial source than *The Times*. We could not have one more impartial than Agra-Europe, which commented thus three weeks ago on the same subject:

"The Dutch and the Danes have already agreed agricultural environmental legislation which is far in advance of that in other EC countries."

So much for the Minister's claim.

The specific areas in which the Minister boasted so much for Britain were as follows:

"Our schemes for Environmentally Sensitive Areas set the pattern for Europe, as have our encouragement of farm woodlands and broadleaf planting, our establishment of nitrate-sensitive areas, our aid for diversification and our support for organic farming."

Let us consider those points individually.

ESAs have been a success, I acknowledge that, as we have acknowledged it continually since they were adopted. However, the payment levels were fixed and have not been reviewed, and in the period since they were fixed they have been effectively devalued by 23·4 per cent. The Government have refused to maintain their value—some commitment to ESAs.

The Ministry makes great claims for farm woodlands and broadleaf planting. They are admirable schemes, but his target is 12,000 hectares per annum. The latest figures from the Forestry Commission show a planting total of barely half the target. In Wales, where we have particular problems as a result of the decline in farm incomes, we have had a grand total since the scheme has been implemented of 93 hectares over three years under the farm woodland scheme.

For diversification, one of the Minister's own schemes for the maintenance of farm incomes by encouraging

[Mr. Ron Davies]

alternative enterprises, the story is pretty much the same. Expenditure during the first three years of the scheme's operation totalled less than £5 million and, according to recent Ministry figures, during that period farm incomes fell by a massive £152 million.

The most ridiculous claim is the one that the Minister makes for his assistance to organic farming. He has been promising us year after year that he will shortly be announcing his organic conversion scheme. It appears to me that the Government still hold the view of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who described organic farming as "a way to rip off the customer". We have never had a repudiation of that view from the Ministry of Agriculture. Now that the right hon. Member has forcibly left the Government and decided to spend more time with his family, perhaps the Minister would take this opportunity to repudiate that view and assert that organic farming does have a role to play.

I can imagine the Minister making that announcement, kitted out in a purple track suit. Hee would be the Government's own Mr. Green—the David Icke of the Tory party—though it would require some nimble footwork to accommodate Mr. Icke's bizarre spiritualism into the Minister's High Church Anglicanism.

I said at the outset that we had shared objectives. But our means of achieving them are very different. We agree on the necessity to redirect support away from production and towards environmental goals. We recognise that we shall in future operate within international trading constraints which may make even the regular EC budgetary wrangles seem easy and harmonious. Where we differ is in our approach to the type of assistance to agriculture which is measured not in ecus and aggregate measures of support but in our commitment to the agricultural infrastructure, to investment, to training, to research and development, to adequate veterinary manpower, to food safety measures and to marketing.

Those matters are not the subject of GATT negotiation or EC legal cases on unfair competition. Neither GATT negotiators nor EC Commissioners care two hoots about how much we support those aspects of our agriculture industries—except, in the case of the latter, the other EC members probably support the British Government's destructive line on the ground that it benefits their national agricultural industries. After all, the more damage the British Government do here, the less other member Governments have to invest to continue out-competing us.

It is in the interest of us all—farmers, consumers and environmentalists—to get our agriculture policy right. We have shared objectives on the central thrust of agricultural restructuring. But the Government must recognise that there is a role for the public sector. They must restore the cuts that they have made in investment in that infrastructure. Only by doing that shall we be in a position in 1993 to compete on a level playing field with our trading partners in Europe.

9.36 pm

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to what has been a valuable and interesting debate. It was marked on the Government Benches by a degree of realism which was not always heard in some speeches from Opposition Members, and it was certainly not heard in the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

That hon. Gentleman, like the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), wants to have the argument both ways. On the one hand he demands that we have considerable reductions in spending through the common agricultural policy. On the other, he bemoans the fact that British farmers have lower incomes. The hon. Member for South Shields chided the EC for not accepting the American proposition, as he put it, of a 75 per cent. cut in support. Clearly, he wants a 75 per cent. cut in support. How he ties that in with the kind, sweet remarks he makes for the farmers I do not know.

It is clear that the hon. Member for South Shields wants to have it both ways. Half his speech was aimed at farmers while the other half was aimed at consumers. The first half was designed to say how nice it would be if farmers had bigger incomes and the second half was based on the principle of how nice it would be if consumers got lower prices and taxpayers paid less taxes.

My hon. Friends and I have been honest enough to say that one cannot square that circle. We must face the fact that if we are to bring the budgetary arrangements of the CAP under control, we must move to more realistic prices, at a pace that the industry can accept. The hon. Member for South Shields proclaimed today his conversion to the market. His phrase about the market will be quoted against him in every debate in which Labour Members take part, for if only they had been converted to the market in all other respects, what a different nation Britain would have been.

I hope the hon. Gentleman does not mean by his references to the market that farmers should be deprived of all support. I hope that at least he accepts my statement that there is a continuing need for support for agriculture because we cannot ask British and European farmers to produce food under conditions which are severely more onerous than conditions that apply elsewhere in the world, and not expect to give them some support. My hon. Friends have clearly pointed out a number of areas of which that is true.

The hon. Member for South Shields discussed what he called the paltry amount of my budget that I spend on the environment. In doing so he did himself the disservice of using the figures. He mentioned 7 per cent. of the budget. It is strange that he did not mention the fact that 80 per cent. of the budget is dictated from Brussels, so the 7 per cent. of which he spoke represents well over a quarter of the budget over which I have control. When it comes to setting an example to the rest of Europe I can thus claim to be the only Minister in Europe who can point to the part of the budget over which he has control as evidence of his concern for environmental health——

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): More than a third of the budget, in fact.

Mr. Gummer: Indeed. I was being too generous to the hon. Member for South Shields, perhaps. We in Britain are setting an example that has been increasingly followed by other countries in the Community——

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: On this one occasion.

Dr. Clark: I shall be brief, but it is important to clarify this matter. What I said was that over a period of years farmers should come to rely primarily for their income on the market, but that we believe that they need support. That is why we have advocated a green premium for positive management of the environment and to develop less intensive farming. If we ask them to look after the countryside, we must admit that farmers still need support.

Mr. Gummer: I remind the hon. Gentleman of his speech, in which he lauded the American proposal of a 75 per cent. cut in support over the next 10 years. With all the green premiums in the world, I do not believe that British farmers can achieve such a cut at that pace. It is not humanly possible for them to do that; and if the hon. Gentleman did not mean that, he should not have chided the Community for not agreeing to the 75 per cent. cut. The hon. Member for South Shields cannot have it both ways. If he looks at the record, he will find that what I say about his speech is correct.

I have a great deal of sympathy with and respect for the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). He is a working, practical farmer who always addresses the House with the charm and wit that we have grown to love. His speech today, however, did not meet his usual standards. It is not possible to be a member of a party that is wholly committed to our membership of the European Community and at the same time to pretend that we can run an agriculture policy in Britain different from the common agricultural policy. It was not good enough for the hon. Gentleman to say, in response to a seated intervention that should not have been made, that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was responsible for everything: 80 per cent. of my budget is decided in Brussels. I happen to think that that is right. I support the common agricultural policy, and I wish to reform it. In that I differ from some of my colleagues, whose views on repatriation are at least credible. But the hon. Gentleman neither wants repatriation nor is prepared to accept the inevitability of a common agricultural policy, and that is not a tenable position. Never before have we accused the hon. Gentleman of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

One reason why I was so sharp with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was that it is my experience that his party is extremely good at saying what sounds right locally, knowing that it will never have to carry out its proposals anywhere else. I absolve the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North from doing that in all circumstances except this evening's debate. I hope that he will read again what he said. He cannot tell the people of Wales or of the United Kingdom that the Liberal party now favours a policy that denies the realities of the Common Market which he sought to join and of which he is a supporter. As such, he must accept its inevitable results, which are that the Community makes these decisions. If we want those changes, they have to take place within the Community.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) put those points very clearly and I was pleased that he drew attention to some of the minor irritations—some of them caused by Government—which add together to the feeling in the farming community that people outside do not respect or understand them sufficiently. There is a real problem in Britain where the links between town and countryside are much less strong than they are in many other countries. Those of us who represent agricultural constituencies and who love and care for the countryside recognise that it is often difficult to explain even to some of our fellow Members of Parliament who represent urban areas quite what the problems of the countryside are. I said in response to a question in the Select Committee that there is a curious view in the House that poverty is all right so long as it comes thatched. There is a much sharper attitude towards urban poverty than towards rural poverty. Similarly, people are less interested in the difficulties of the countryside because the vast majority of people are urban and suburban. We have to find a better way of explaining to them what they need and how they depend upon those who live in our rural areas.

I know that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) disagrees with my views on the European Community, but some of the points that he made today were extremely valuable and I shall be watching them with great care.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), in what he told us might have been a valedictory agricultural speech, was particularly forceful. I join others in congratulating him on a long service to the House and a particular quality and directness of speech. There are few hon. Members to whom one is more careful to listen and to reply for he has a reputation which is second to none for guarding the interests of his constituents. I do not agree with him about quotas. They are the means of depriving British agriculture of its major advantages of competitiveness. I do not think that they can be borne either by the industry or by the public. They would fossilise the industry and they would be impossible for the public to accept. I know that my hon. Friend disagrees with me and I believe that we will continue disagreeing on that issue, but I honour him for the clarity and the way in which he put that forward.

I have to say to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) that it would be of benefit if he were to look carefully at the figures and the facts before suggesting that the proposals would mean cuts for sheep producers in the hills. One reason why the Government have been prepared to accept the Commission's proposal of a 2 per cent. cut in the sheep price is the extra help that will go to sheep producers in the most difficult areas. That is why we support it. Yet the hon. Gentleman was saying that it would cut the incomes of people in those same less-favoured areas. The whole process is to try to help those in most need and that is why I increased the HLCAs by 14 per cent. and increased the suckler cow premium to the highest possible rate in those areas where it is most difficult to produce animals. That is why I have consistently supported the means by which we have helped farmers in the most difficult areas of the country.

One thing that farmers and Members of Parliament should do occasionally is show some gratitude on behalf of the industry for those things that we get right. The public as a whole react better if they feel that taxpayers' money is welcomed instead of always being asked for more. We have to get the tone right if urban and suburban people are to continue to support us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) spoke about egg producers. I still think that he is not entirely right. If our egg producers really stamped all those boxes with, "Eggs produced in Britain" and really showed that British eggs are more safely produced than other eggs,

[Mr. Gummer]

and got the Labour party to stop bashing British food, we could make our higher standards into a marketing advantage. We must try to improve those standards.

Dr. David Clark: The Minister is misleading the House.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman says that I am being misleading. I did not take every opportunity in the House to stir up scares, problems and difficulties. I was not the one who was attacked by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North for letting farming down by attitudes over beef problems. I did not recommend in the House that people should eat New Zealand apples because British apples were not good enough. I was not the one who said on television that I would not eat a British sausage. The hon. Gentleman now has reason to believe differently. The Opposition said all those things. Anyone who dares to suggest that he has any interest at all in British farming should consider what he says about British food, which is the best, the safest and the most surveyed food in the world. It does not deserve what, for several years, the Labour party has attempted to do to it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) again displayed his deep understanding of agriculture and his concern for those who work in it. I share his concern about pollution regulations, but if agriculture is to prove its worth it is essential that the rare instances of river pollution and so on, which have been a real scandal, should not be repeated. Farmers do not want to see their industry besmirched as it has been by a few people who have broken the law so dramatically. We provide high grants for the work that has to be done in pollution control. I am pleased that I was able to announce changes to an unnecessarily difficult part of the regulations which meant that farmers could not get a grant if they had already started on the work. The changes mean that not only will they be able to start the work before claiming the grant, but they will be able to make grant applications for work that has been completed and for which they had failed to receive grant because of the rule. I thank the House for agreeing to that and I hope that hon. Members will not mind the small element of retrospection which is fair for farmers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome spoke about the Milk Marketing Board. We must enable the British farmer to receive a proper return for his products. To do that we must pay heed to the fact that in several recent years the British dairy farmer has received less for his milk and the consumer has paid more for it than in almost any country in Europe. That means that the system is not working as it should. We are now in direct competition with the rest of Europe. We are not taking the top part of the market, we are only 86 per cent. self-sufficient in butter fat, and we are still producing butter for intervention. That shows that changes in our dairy system are overdue.

I welcome the Milk Marketing Board's move. It initiated that move and is putting forward proposals. I was pleased to hear some Opposition Members say that the Government should not decide how milk should be marketed. I agree. I want the industry to publish an effective plan for marketing. I hope that it will do so and that the plan will receive industry-wide acceptance. I also hope that it will be accepted by the Community because of course the Commission also has a part to play.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is always a breath of air—I will not say a breath of fresh air—on these subjects. He and I have crossed swords in the past, but on this occasion I should like to pray him in aid—if I may use that term. I hope that he will defend me against the allegation by the hon. Member for Caerphilly that I have a leaning towards spiritism. I do not use the word "spiritualism", for reasons that the House will immediately see. It is spiritism that the Opposition are after. Although the hon. Member for Antrim, North may disagree with my Catholic views, I am a darned sight nearer to him on the subject than I am to Mr. Icke and the Opposition. That is about the first time that I have been able to find a religious way of getting nearer to the hon. Member for Antrim, North, although I doubt whether he will wish to advertise the fact in the north of Ireland.

We cannot usefully do anything to reform the CAP unless we ensure that the other European countries face up to the problem of fraud. People in this country will not accept a state of affairs in which they feel that they are being ripped off by large numbers of people operating in other countries. I am pleased that many countries are beginning to accept that and that there is now a considerable move to follow British advice and the British example.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) talked about pollution, and I hope that he will be happy with the points that I made on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) talked about the problems of the green pound and I remind him that we are committed to alignment in one step and not the three steps proposed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) and others referred to the repatriation of agricultural policy, and I shall address that question directly in the last few moments available to me. I must say to my hon. Friends the Members for Ludlow and for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) that repatriation is not a practical proposition: it will not happen; no member of the Community will support it. Moreover, I do not think that it would achieve the end my hon. Friends seek.

Repatriation of agricultural policy is proposed on the basis that one could have an agricultural policy fitted in reasonably well with other national agricultural policies in a world of surplus. But if we do not argue things out within the CAP we shall have to argue them out somewhere else. Otherwise, countries will fight them out. We may give extra support to one sector only to be countered by a French move to give extra support to another. Deals that we may do to protect our agriculture will be countered by deals done by the Germans to protect theirs. In those circumstances, the repatriation of agricultural policy would lead to more difficulties rather than fewer and we should end up with less of a level playing field. Many of our farmers would also find that countries with large farming communities—for example, Greece, with 23 per cent.—would have more pressure placed on their Governments than could be brought to bear in Britain, Denmark, Holland and France. To those hon. Members who support our agriculture, I must say that it would not do our industry any good to propose what cannot be and what would not, in any case, improve the position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton is right that we must face up honestly to the need fundamentally to change the CAP. It is all very well for the Labour party to talk about the CAP, to blame the Government and to say how much better things could have been. The fact is that all the changes that have been made in favour of a more sensible CAP have been made at the instigation of the British Government. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), in particular, led us towards major changes. It is not true that stabilisers have not worked. What has happened is that they have not worked sufficiently because we have not been prepared to take them as they should have been taken or to take the necessary compensatory measures. That is what we now have to do, and I am pressing for such action.

We all want a healthy agricultural community because only in that way can we look after our rural areas and countryside, protect our landscape and be sure of our food supplies. I am not one of those who believe that surplus is necessarily endemic. I do not believe that, in 20 years' time, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will inevitably be trying to deal with surpluses. All sorts of changes may take place and we may again need more production in Europe and in Britain. It is for that reason above all that we need to ensure that our food supplies are protected, our landscape is cared for and our people can rely on a healthy rural economy.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5032/91 ADD1, ADD2 and ADD3+COR1 relating to prices for agricultural products and related measures (1991/92), 4549/91 relating to the development and future of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 2/90 on the management and control of export refunds; and supports the Government's intention to seek a price settlement that respects budgetary discipline and is consistent with the agricultural guideline, and to negotiate for further changes to the Common Agricultural Policy that make it more market-orientated, reduce its costs, lead to greater integration between agricultural and environmental policies and apply fairly throughout the Community.

London Ambulance Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the London ambulance service, but I do so with no enthusiasm because the debate should never have had to take place. One would hope that the need for ambulance services, their obvious priority and the lack of party difference on how they should be run would make such a debate unnecessary. Alas, for a number of reasons—not the fault of the Labour party—the debate has become necessary. Indeed, it is the sixth debate on the London ambulance service since 1986.

In 1965 such a debate would have been held across the floor of West Ham or East Ham town hall by ward councillors, and after that in the committee rooms of the Greater London council. It is a measure of the centralisation to which ordinary people and hon. Members are now subject that I have had to ask for this debate.

The Minister may have been told that I and some of my hon. Friends have declined invitations to meet officers and members of the London ambulance board, so I will tell him and the House why. Those people are either appointed by the Secretary of State or are employed by those appointed by him. They are not responsible for providing the resources, and they are not responsible for the policy or for the reorganisation which in effect will lead to disintegration of the service and may threaten the title of the London ambulance service itself.

That service is the largest in the world. At one time it was the world's best. Alas, that cannot be said today. The emergency service is getting less and less responsive. There are major problems in management and at headquarters, and the patient transport service, which is numerically the largest part and which transports people to out-patient departments on the medical request of clinicians and practitioners, is breaking down. Both the emergency service and the patient transport service are getting into more and more trouble.

In January this year no fewer than 10,478 journeys to out-patient appointments were cancelled. That figure was in a document which, I suppose, came out of the back of a photocopier. That is what happens when centralisation and secrecy abound in government. Such a document would have been a routine report in a local council.

The effect of the cancellations, let alone the number of journeys delayed, has been disturbance, distress, dread and fear among thousands of Londoners and their families. Indeed, the concern, on-going disturbance and worse that have been caused to patients are almost unimaginable, to say nothing of the difficulties caused to those responsible for the work in hospitals who may be accused of lack of efficiency or performance.

It is no secret that Members of Parliament and councillors have received hundreds of letters. Newspaper columns have been full of complaints. The correspondence columns of the *Newham Recorder*, my local newspaper, have been full of such letters for two weeks. Community health councils throughout London have had meetings about the problem and are very concerned. The CHC in Newham has just published an excellent report which contains four pages of typical complaints. An elderly cancer patient had an ambulance booked for a follow-up

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

appointment but it failed to arrive. When transport was contacted to book a second ambulance for a rearranged appointment, the patient was told

"If you can walk out to the ambulance, we can't send one."

Due to lack of transport the patient had to cancel the second appointment, too.

That is relatively mild compared to many of the distressing problems that have occurred. For example, an item in my local newspaper said that a lady of 86 in an invalid chair had to wait six hours before she could go home after an appointment. Her husband, who is also disabled, was wondering where she was. I received a letter this morning from a lady suffering from Parkinson's disease. She can hardly walk but had to wait four and a half hours to get home. She wrote that she was "bewildered" by what seems to have come over our national health service.

One might wonder how we could have come to such a pass without warning, but there have been warnings. In an Adjournment debate on 31 October 1986, I pointed out that there had been a drop of 40 per cent. in patient transport journeys. The then Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who is well known, said:

"I am more than happy at that development."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 666.]

In other words, it was a deliberate policy—a policy to reduce the budget.

I have received a letter from Mr. Harris, the chairman of the London Ambulance Board. He said that the budget had to be reduced by 3·5 per cent.—£280,000—in the current year. Also, in an official letter, the board said that it wanted to keep demand at the post-dispute level. As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, understandably demand went right down.

The health service has been cost-capped for some years. From somewhere or another an arbitrary sum has been put on the London ambulance service and it has to cut its coat according to the cloth that has been provided.

Where ambulances are necessary for emergency purposes and when doctors have said they are necessary, of all our public services, surely they should be demand-led in principle. When I raised this matter in a debate on the Consolidated Fund in 1989, the then Under-Secretary of State said:

"It cannot be financed as a demand-led service such as unemployment benefit or the prescription of drugs".—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1989; Vol. 164, c 528]

In other words, a doctor can prescribe drugs but he is not allowed to prescribe an ambulance.

It is a sorry state of affairs that affects all London. I have said that there were 10,000 broken appointments. There are 147 hospitals in the London area and I shall give the top 10 for cancellations. The Central Middlesex hospital had 516, Ealing hospital had 443, St. Ann's hospital, Haringey had 382, Newham general hospital had 374, Roehampton had 300, Tooting Beechlawn hospital had 240, St Thomas's had 229, Stanmore had 226, Wanstead had 226, and the London hospital had 221. That was in January. Will it go on in that way?

It will probably get worse on the question of criteria. A letter from Mr. James Harris to his officers said:

"ideally, with your assistance, we would restrict the use of ambulances to patients requiring a stretcher or wheelchair and to those undergoing serious treatment such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, renal dialysis and for severe cardiac or respiratory problems."

A letter I have received today from Mr. Wilby, the chief executive of the London Ambulance Board, puts it rather differently. He says:

"This requires ambulance services to provide suitable transport for any patient who is considered by a GP or clinician to be medically unfit to travel by other means. Ambulance transport should not therefore be provided for patients whose medical condition does not prevent them from travelling by any other means, ie. on foot, or by public or private transport."

In other words, if a clinician says that a patient needs an ambulance, a car or minicab can be provided because they count as a form of ambulance. In practice, as the lady from Newham said, anyone who can walk to an ambulance cannot have one. Such, alas, are the criteria being applied.

The problem is well known throughout the health service. Last year I read a petition from 380 members of the London ambulance service pointing out that

"the root causes of that dispute have not yet been addressed and therefore and unless and until there is a full and proper public examination of the financing, organisation and operation of the London ambulance service there remains a great and continuing risk to the health and welfare of all Londoners."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 565.]

I hope that the Select Committee on Health will consider that because the service is in turmoil and needs emergency treatment.

More than £3 million was spent on a computer which cannot do the job. That is now the subject of legal action. About a further £3 million is to be spent on another one. It is reported that one of the senior officers or board members has some interest in that. I do not like rumour, so three weeks ago I wrote to the chairman of the board asking whether it was true. I did not think that it was, but such rumours must be put down. I have received no substantive reply, and I hope that the Minister will find out why. I should have thought that London Ambulance Board members and officers would sign a declaration of interest, thereby making such delay unnecessary.

Reorganisation is under way—alas, not to deal with the problems that I have mentioned but something which I shall deal with in a moment. Approximately 270 officers, who did not participate in the dispute or who held different views on it, were asked to reapply for their jobs or for jobs akin to what they were doing. They were told that their contracts were being changed and that there would no longer be Whitley council representation of their collective interests. You, Mr. Speaker, may recall that Mr. Speaker Whitley was the founder of the Whitley council system, which until recently helped our collective endeavours.

Fifty of those officers failed to be reappointed. I understand that they have been offered early redundancy, early retirement or the option of giving up their officer status and becoming leading ambulance men. Jobs will be held vacant for other people. If employers treat their employees like that, how will they treat the patients whom they are elected or appointed to serve? I checked with the chairman that overtime is limited to an average of two hours per person per week and he did not deny that.

Cost cutting is stopping emergency ambulances. A lady in East Ham had to wait 40 minutes for an ambulance. When it arrived, she was very poorly and died before reaching hospital. A letter of complaint was sent, but the reply said that the nearest ambulance was six depots away. That is not acceptable at 1 am on a Monday.

There is no accountability in this £50 million service. It is a closed book to Londoners, who know little about what is going on, and even a Member of Parliament finds it difficult to obtain information. A letter from the chairman of South West Thames health authority offers a little more information, but it is not easy to follow. There are no minutes or public proceedings, and in reply to a written question on 18 December 1990 from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), the Minister said that he did not see any merit in publishing minutes. A local authority would have to publish minutes—the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was keen on such practices—and the fire service has a joint authority, so why not the ambulance service?

I think that I know why. It will not be the London ambulance service as we know it for much longer if the Government have their way. According to their infamous White Paper, it will be disintegrated, literally, into business centres. There will be some 29 different areas, because the health authorities throughout London will be able to bid for patient transport services. From 1992, other people —perhaps even other ambulance services, in Kent, Surrey or wherever—and private firms will be able to bid. The service will be divided into two broad sections. Despite the fact that the ambulance service's official literature says that handling of the patient transport service is a vital part of an ambulance person's training, the 999 emergency service will be separated from the rest. Naturally, there will be eye-catching helicopters and probably some flying squads, but there are 2,000 emergency calls a day and I am not convinced that people will be reassured.

The service is disintegrating and becoming incoherent, and the staff are under great pressure. I have described what has happened to some officers. When there was an industrial problem recently, they voted 84 to 82 for industrial action. When a legal matter arose and they went to court, they lost their case and 100 of them put in for early retirement. That shows the state of morale in the service as a result of the new form of management.

Ambulance service personnel are professional Samaritans whom we ask to do a difficult and vital job. London's sick, dying and crippled people—particularly the elderly—and victims of accidents should not be sacrificed on the altar of the Government's view of how a public service should be run. Clearly, a sea change has been made in the way the service is being run. New management and new personnel have been appointed by the Secretary of State. The service is unaccountable to the citizens of London, other than in debates on the Floor of the House. That is quite wrong.

The corporate loyalty of staff is being destroyed, and funds are being capped in a way that causes people to move out of London to unfamiliar areas. I mentioned earlier an ambulance that was delayed for 40 minutes. That was probably because it had to be moved from another area in order to be more efficient. Cancellations are frequent and will not be helped by the reorganisation that is being carried out for different purposes.

The good Samaritan instructed the innkeeper to charge what the man needed; he said that he should give and, if it cost more, he would give to him. I am sure that people in London are happy to pay slightly increased taxes for a service that they want. The Government do not understand what is happening, but carry their political points of view on competition and contracts into areas where they are least desirable and practical, and where they cause great damage. These schemes are being implemented surreptitiously—they have not been written down other than in the chairman's letter that I read a little earlier. The best comment that I can make about the Government and their schemes is a quotation from the book to which I referred a little earlier:

"Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I was slightly surprised to hear from the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) a speech that appeared to belittle the concept of accountability as exercised across the Floor of the House. The hon. Gentleman has a reputation as a Member who is keen to see Ministers called to account at the Dispatch Box, and rightly so, for the exercise of their executive discretion, particularly in the context of the European Community. When he makes speeches on that subject, he loses no opportunity to say that the accountability mechanism which we have built up in this place over centuries is second to none. In many ways, I agree with him when he argues that point of view.

When the hon. Gentleman argued this evening about the need for an accountability mechanism for the London ambulance service, he put on a completely different hat, which does not fit him as well as the one that he is more accustomed to wearing. He must make up his mind whether the House is an effective accountability mechanism. If it is effective in the context of Europe, it is effective in the context of the London ambulance service as well.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): So the Government are to blame.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Member for Newham, South was anxious to know who was accountable for what goes on in the national health service. He wanted to know about the political accountability mechanism. It is true that the NHS is accountable to the House through Ministers, and that goes for all parts of the NHS—I do not seek to duck that point.

The hon. Member for Newham, South began by establishing the importance, which he hoped would be accepted on both sides of the House, of the ambulance service as part of the NHS. I am pleased to confirm the importance of an effective ambulance service in the context of emergency response and of non-emergency provision —the patient transport service. Both are an important part of the health service. Perhaps the importance of the emergency ambulance service is so obvious that it does not need to be recited. The work done by the London ambulance service during the Victoria and Cannon Street British Rail incidents recently is effective evidence of the importance of good emergency ambulance provision. The London ambulance service carries 500,000 emergency patients a year. Every one of them and their families and loved ones have good reason to be grateful for the service's effectiveness.

The importance of the emergency service is not in dispute any more than the importance of the non-emergency service. Sometimes the non-emergency service is less glamorous than the emergency provision. Non-emergency ambulance services are an important part of the totality of health provision. That does not mean that they must always be provided in the way that they have

[Mr. Dorrell]

traditionally been provided. It does not mean that provision can be made only on the basis of a single, uniform ambulance service across London. Some form of non-emergency transport for patients who need it on the basis of clinical discretion is part of the comprehensive health service which all hon. Members want provided. The London ambulance non-emergency service carries 1·7 million patients a year as a testament to the importance that health service managers attach to the non-emergency part of the service.

There is no dispute between the two sides of the House about the importance of the ambulance service. Because there is no dispute, the Government and managers of the health service have spent considerable time in recent months addressing the management issues of the London ambulance service to ensure that the service available to the people of London matches the aspirations that we all have for it. In June last year, we established a changed system of managing the London ambulance service because we believed, like the hon. Member for Newham, South, that aspects of ambulance provision in London were not as they should be and needed to be changed.

The hon. Member for Newham, South listed a catalogue of shortcomings on which he rightly wanted action to be taken; but which structure was responsible for producing those shortcomings? It can hardly be the one that he sought to blame, as it has been in operation in full form for only a fortnight. It is therefore unlikely that it was responsible for the shortcomings, about which there is no argument.

I am proud of the fact that the Government have addressed these problems. They started in June 1990 with the establishment of the new system of managers, whom the hon. Gentleman will not see. In July 1990, those managers published a short-term business plan for 1990-91——

Mr. Spearing: A business plan?

Mr. Dorrell: Yes, a business plan. They are running an operation and, like any operation in either the public or the private sector, should and do have a commitment to using their resources effectively in the service of the people that they are there to serve. In the context of the London ambulance service, that means the patients and the people of London. The management of the service is determined to ensure that its effectiveness in the service of the patients and the people of London is improved. That is why it announced that it is improving the training for emergency crews. That is why it announced its commitment to improving the response time of emergency ambulances and the concentration of non-ambulance services on those patients who need the service most and where the priority is highest. That is also why it announced the introduction of management training for middle and senior managers, which emphasises its commitment to an effective and efficient ambulance service that will improve on and address precisely the problems that the hon. Gentleman enumerated.

The hon. Gentleman then talked about the changes that were introduced earlier this April and the effect of the new national health service arrangements on ambulance provision in London. From April of this year, the responsibility for the budgets of the non-emergency ambulance provision in London rests, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, with the district health authorities. For the first year, the district health authorities will use those budgets to buy non-emergency ambulance services from the London ambulance service. However, from April next year, we should be able to see the district health authorities using those resources more flexibly to ensure that some of the shortcomings of the non-emergency service which the hon. Gentleman listed are addressed.

We shall be able to look at the relative priorities of non-emergency ambulance provision against the other priorities of a local health service in any particular district. The existing management system of the London ambulance service does not allow us to do that. We shall also be able to look at alternative ways of providing non-emergency ambulance provision for the people of London, including voluntary car services and alternative providers which may be able to provide the service at a lower cost or a higher quality of service at the same cost.

We shall also be able to address—indeed, we are already doing this—the issue which the hon. Gentleman rightly identified as one of the shortcomings of the traditional system of management in the London ambulance service. I refer to the number of journey cancellations. The hon. Gentleman quoted the statistics and knows that the National Audit Office has picked up on that issue and has emphasised that it needs to be addressed. The new management of the ambulance service is determined to see that that problem is addressed.

Turning to the emergency ambulance provision, the new system in the health service since 1 April maintains a centralised contract, negotiated on behalf of the four regions, which means that there is a unified emergency ambulance provision across the whole of London which is managed as an emergency service should be managed—with the priority being placed on effective provision of high-quality emergency care at short notice. Some of the most exciting developments in the London ambulance service relate to emergency ambulance provision. We are investing—not without difficulty—in improving the command and control of the ambulance service to improved response times that are not as good as they should be. We are providing cardiac defibrillators in every emergency ambulance and the staff training so that they can be used by the end of July this year. We are also providing training for ambulance staff to ensure that we have an extra 144 paramedical staff in emergency ambulances each year.

I am pleased to announce this evening that at its last meeting the South West Thames regional health authority approved an additional one-off capital allocation of £5 million for the London ambulance service. That includes £3·5 million for much needed vehicle replacement and will enable the London ambulance service to purchase 60 new accident and emergency vehicles and 60 patient transport ambulances. In addition, it will enable the London ambulance service to purchase a further nine rapid-response vehicles, bringing the total to 10—three in each division and one in the centre of London. Those rapid-response vehicles are an important part of the improvement in the emergency provision of the London ambulance service.

I do not pretend that the London ambulance service is without problems, but I vigorously reject the suggestion that the changes in management downgrade the ambulance service in any sense. They are designed

precisely to address the problems that the hon. Gentleman is anxious to bring to the attention of the House and to which he has every reason to demand a solution, and that is what we are bringing about.

Question put and agreed to.
Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 19 April 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *Mr. Harold Walker, in the Chair*]

CONTINGENCIES FUND 1989-90

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House Accounts of the Contingencies Fund, 1989-90, showing:—

(1) The Receipts and Payments in connection with the Fund in the year ended the 31st day of March 1990.

(2) The Distribution of the Capital of the Fund at the commencement and close of the year; with the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.—*[Mr. John. M. Taylor.]*

BILLS PRESENTED

SCHOOL TEACHERS' PAY AND CONDITIONS (NO. 2) BILL

Mr. Secretary Clarke presented a Bill to make provision with respect to the remuneration and other conditions of employment of school teachers; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 April and to be printed. [Bill 137.]

Orders of the Day

Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 2

ENFORCEMENT ACTION BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN SCOTLAND

'(1) It shall be the duty of a regional or islands council—

(a) to consider, at least once in every period of twelve months, the extent to which it is appropriate for them to carry out in their area a programme of enforcement action relating to section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 and sections 3 and 5 above, and

(b) accordingly to carry out in their area any programme which is for the time being considered by them to be appropriate under paragraph (a) above.

(2) In subsection (1)(a) above the reference to a programme of enforcement action relating to the provisions there mentioned is a reference to a programme involving all or any of the following, namely—

(a) the investigation of complaints in respect of alleged offences under those provisions;

(b) the taking of other measures intended to reduce the incidence of offences under those provisions;

(c) in relation to section 18(2) of the Act of 1937, the monitoring of such use of automatic machines for the sale of tobacco as is mentioned in that provision.'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

9.35 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move,That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 2, in page 2, line 31, leave out clause 4.

Government amendments Nos. 5 to 12 and Nos. 16 to 17.

Mr. Lloyd: In Committee, I agreed to bring forward a provision for Scotland which paralleled as far as possible clause 4 of the Bill. In giving that commitment, I said that such an amendment would need to reflect the different prosecution arrangements in Scotland, and new clause 2 does that. In response to representations from the Bill's sponsors, new clause 2 extends the local authority enforcement role to cover not only offences under section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 but new offences that will be created in clauses 3 and 5 of the Bill. Those are offences in relation to the sale of unpackaged cigarettes and the display of warning statements in retail premises and on vending machines. Later in the debate, I shall move amendments to clause 4 which parallel that extension of the local authority enforcement role. I hope that the new clause has the approval of the Bill's sponsor, the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), and I commend it to the House.

Amendment No. 2, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), seeks to

[Mr. Lloyd]

delete clause 4. As some members of the Committee will remember, there was much discussion on that clause. We wanted to get it right and I am sure that, with the addition of the amendments that I have tabled, we have done so. I hope that there will be general agreement on that. As always, I shall listen with care to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East. I shall explain why I think that clause 4 is necessary and how it is intended to work. Local authorities have powers elsewhere to follow up offences such as those in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. The Bill strengthens those powers, and clauses 3 and 5 introduce new ones.

The concern expressed by the hon. Member for Warley, East, other members of the Committee and the Parents Against Tobacco campaign was that those powers were not necessarily being used. The Government are concerned that some local authorities appear not to be taking seriously enough their responsibilities in that area. This can be for various reasons, but it seems that local authorities are often doubtful about their powers to act in this field and may even believe that they have none. This, I believe, was also the response that Parents Against Tobacco came up against.

It seemed clear, therefore, that something was needed to prompt local authorities into considering exactly what they might and should be doing to prevent the sale of tobacco to children. The other clauses of the Bill strengthened the force of the offences, but, alongside that, it needed to stimulate local authorities into action.

Clause 4 requires local authorities to consider at least once every 12 months to what extent it is appropriate for them to carry out an enforcement programme relating to offences under the 1933 Act, and now, with my other amendments, to which I shall be turning shortly, the other clauses of the Bill. In practice, this will mean that, at least once a year, this subject will be on the agenda of every county council, metropolitan district council and London borough council. The councils will have to address themselves to the problem in their area and decide what form of action is appropriate to their particular local circumstances.

As the House will have noted, district councils in the shire counties were not on the list of those to whom clause 4 applies. However, this does not mean that they will not wish to take action or that they will be unable to do so. District councils have powers under section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972 to prosecute for such offences. Also, of course, they, too, may take a decision to mount a campaign in the interests of their area aimed at the prevention of the sale of cigarettes to children.

The Government's determination to see that clause 4 produces results is reflected in our commitment to back it up with a circular to local authorities, prepared jointly by those Departments with an interest in these matters. The circular will explain exactly what local authorities' powers are to take action on these offences. It will remind them of their responsibilities and the importance which is attached to taking action against offenders.

We have been told that local authorities are not sure how best to approach such a campaign. Again, it is hoped that, with the assistance of those already engaged in these activities or the monitoring of them, the circular will provide examples of best practice. These will serve to explain to local authorities the various ways in which this problem can be tackled.

We would not, however, propose to leave it at that. As has been said, public pressure for action can be an important driving force for local authorities to take action. One way in which local electors can judge what is happening is to have access to information about what their local authority has been doing. We have therefore given an undertaking to issue a revised code of practice to local authorities on the publication of annual reports and financial statements by local authorities, which will require local authorities to include information on just that.

The annual reports of local authorities must be made widely available to members of the public, at town and county halls; members of the local press, supplemented by a press release; interested groups wishing to receive copies; and employees of the authority. This should give plenty of opportunity for the general public to evaluate what their local authority is doing and, if necessary, to lobby for more or different types of action.

9.45 am

Clause 4 is the linchpin of all this activity. Local authorities already have powers, but we want to ensure —I know that this is the purpose of the hon. Member for Warley, East—that they are regularly considering whether and how they should use them.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): My hon. Friend said that the local authorities have powers already to take the various forms of action that he has described. Are not we guilty of repetition by giving the authorities the additional power of enabling them to consider every year the appropriateness of the action that they have taken, and to take whatever action happens to be appropriate to their respective areas? Is not the additional power repetitious and an example of what we seek to avoid putting on the statute book?

Mr. Lloyd: The proposed legislation requires local authorities to do only one more thing apart from providing them with additional powers, which is done in other parts of the Bill. It is to consider carefully at least once a year what the problems are in their areas and how they should best use their powers. I think that my hon. Friend will agree that these are important matters. I know that he has concern, because he expressed it in Committee. I believe that he would like to see local authorities considering the problem and using their powers as they think best and using their resources in the manner that they hope will be most productive. I believe that my hon. Friend and I agree on that. The clause does no more than ensure that local authorities regularly consider how that may best be done in their areas.

We want local authorities themselves to be aware of what can and should be done, and we want their electors to be in a position to make their opinion felt. Without the requirement in clause 4 for each local authority to take a measured view of what needs doing at least once every 12 months, this may not happen. The force of the Bill as a whole would be emasculated by the removal of clause 4.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East is concerned not to place additional unnecessary work on local authorities, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). They are right. We all know that it is far too easy to require

local authorities to devote resources and time to inessential and ineffectual tasks, to the exclusion of their more serious responsibilities. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East will accept that clause 4 represents one of the more serious responsibilities of local authorities —to consider how the law on the sale of cigarettes to children might be enforced—and that it could therefore be right to retain it.

It would probably be useful if I spoke to amendments Nos. 5 to 11, which are largely technical. Much time and care was devoted in Committee to achieving a form of words for the key enforcement clause, clause 4. The Government were concerned to arrive at a clause which was practicable and effective. I know that that was the intention also of the hon. Member for Warley, East. Although we may have started out from somewhat different positions, when it came to what we considered to be practicable and effective, I am glad to say that it seems that we have achieved common ground. I do not believe that that would have been achieved without perseverance and resourcefulness and the good sense of the hon. Member for Warley, East and his supporters and friends in Parents Against Tobacco.

The intention that lies behind the clause is that, at least once every 12 months, every county, metropolitan district or London borough should consider the extent to which it is appropriate for it to carry out an enforcement programme that is designed to stamp out the practice of selling cigarettes to under 16-year-olds. The programme of action was to be related to the offences that are set out in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. However, the new offences that are introduced by clauses 3 and 5 go wider than that.

Thus, a local authority may wish to design a programme to deter retailers from selling packets of cigarettes to children. Where the main problem is the sale of single cigarettes, it may wish to take action on that offence. A local authority might wish to monitor the use of certain vending machines as a preliminary to making complaints about their use to a court. Some or all of these activities might be appropriate to a programme of enforcement action, but local authorities need to consider them all before deciding how best to proceed in the interests of their areas.

Clause 4, as drafted, refers only to the offences under section 7 of the 1933 Act. This group of amendments would insert reference to clauses 3 and 5 of the Bill and to the making of complaints about and monitoring of the use of vending machines. Thus they ensure that each local authority will take a comprehensive look at all those areas where children might be at risk through the illegal sale of cigarettes before deciding what action to take. That can be seen only as an improvement to clause 4.

Amendment No. 16 is simply a tidying-up amendment to ensure that the clause follows those clauses in the Bill, notably clauses 1, 3 and 5, to which it relates.

Amendment No. 17 tidies up the long title to the Bill. It reflects the changes made in the Bill in relation to enforcement action by local authorities and to the order of the clauses that have been agreed. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The Bill returns to the House after four Committee days, which we all much enjoyed, and a lengthy process of negotiation. I do not pretend that the Bill is as uncompromising as I would like, but both the Minister and I made it clear on Second Reading that we were ready to do all that we could to establish a consensus behind legislation that would effectively reduce the sale of tobacco products to children. I am in no doubt that the Bill will do that.

I thank the Minister for the generous amount of time that he has given to our discussions. He has bent over backwards—if that is not an unparliamentary term—to help the Bill to proceed on its way. I thank him for his extraordinarily constructive attitude—not a quality that one always finds in Ministers. I also thank the Committee for its work.

I shall not take too long to review the background to the Bill in general, and this new clause in particular, but I must remind the House of two salient points. First, nobody outside the tobacco industry argues with the proposition that tobacco products represent a major threat to the health and well- being of the nation. On Second Reading, I quoted the chief medical officer of health, who said that cigarette smoking in the United Kingdom continued to be

"by far the most significant single cause of ill health and premature death, and hence of expenditure on health services".—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1991; Vol. 183, c. 1093.]

The House heard from myself, from the Minister and from other hon. Members about the overwhelming evidence of death and disease caused by smoking. Those problems are especially acute in Scotland. There, and throughout the United Kingdom, our hospitals and cemeteries are filled with the victims of tobacco.

Secondly, in giving the Bill a Second Reading, the House accepted that while there are difficult questions of personal freedom when it comes to restrictions on adult smoking, those do not apply to children. For their own protection, children cannot be given the same freedom of choice as more mature adults. That is recognised in existing legislation—in Scotland, it is the 1937 Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act—which makes sales of cigarettes to children illegal. Regrettably, despite a worthy amendment to the law introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in 1986, the legislation still fails to restrain the sales of tobacco to children.

There are a number of reasons why the law as it stands does not work, but the chief of those is that it has not been properly enforced. Local authorities in Scotland currently take no effective part in preventing illegal sales of cigarettes; they have no powers to bring a case to court —that is the procurator fiscal's role—and they have not generally investigated complaints. Mostly, where investigations have been done at all, the police have been responsible, and they have admitted that they simply do not have the time to do the job properly, if at all.

I am delighted—indeed, pleasantly surprised—that Scottish Office Ministers now see the sense of charging local authorities with responsibility in that area—even though, of course, the decision to prosecute remains the province of the procurator fiscal. I salute that change of heart and implore the Scottish Office to complete its good work by preparing guidance to local authorities on the use of this new power, based on best practice in curbing illegal cigarette sales. I hope, too, that a means will be found of ensuring that regional and islands councils will refer in their annual reports to action taken to monitor the situation and to investigate complaints.

[Mr. Andrew Faulds]

Clause 4 introduces a framework for effective enforcement action in England and Wales. As I said, the failure of the legislation to date is largely due to the fact that it has been so inadequately enforced. On Second Reading, I cited a number of surveys demonstrating that up to half the shops that sell cigarettes in Britain were selling to children under 16 in open defiance of the law. Such surveys have continued and while, in a few areas, retailers are responding to public concern and acting responsibly, in too many instances the same familiar pattern of law-breaking is evident. The reason for that is that traders have been able to take it for granted that they would not be prosecuted. A survey at the end of 1989 of 110 local authorities showed that 104 had prosecuted no one in the three years since the 1986 Act was passed.

There was, perhaps, confusion about who was responsible. There were local authorities that literally did not appear to know that the law existed. Many local authorities thought the responsibility was that of the police, and the police took the view that the responsibility lay with the local authorities. This Bill acknowledges that the primary responsibility for enforcing the law should lie with local authorities.

If the amendments to clause 4 are accepted by the House, as I hope, a duty would be placed on one tier of local government to consider, at least once a year, the extent to which it is appropriate for them to carry out in their areas a programme of enforcement action designed to control all aspects of cigarette sales to children. The nature of that programme is defined.

I will not pretend to the House that I would not have liked this part of the Bill to be even more specific, but I believe that these provisions, taken together with the supplementary guidance that the Department of the Environment is to issue, will create the conditions for a real blitz on illegal cigarette sales, whenever and wherever necessary.

It will, in future, be abundantly clear that local authorities do have the responsibility to act, that some specific local authorities must fully consider the matter on an annual basis, and that they have the power to investigate and to prosecute, and to take any other steps they consider appropriate. When the Bill becomes law, it will never again be possible for one of the relevant local authorities either to claim that it has no power to act or that it is not responsible for acting in this area. It is therefore a major advance.

The effect of the measure as a whole will be to make absolutely plain the responsibility of retailers not to sell to children under 16, to deter them from selling single cigarettes to children and to make it easy to deal with any loophole provided by the availability of vending machines.

Other provisions in the Bill simplify most usefully the nature of offences and raise substantially the level of fines that can be imposed by the courts. The retail industry is on notice. When this legislation completes its course through Parliament, as I hope will happen this summer, it will not pay to sell cigarettes to children.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am trying to pursue the hon. Gentleman's argument. He suggests that the problem with enforcement is that one has to have the necessary evidence to take a case to court. How does he suggest that that evidence should be produced? Will he use children as agents provocateurs? How will he get the essential truth? I agree that we should protect our children by education and parental control, but I do not think that there will be a large number of additional prosecutions as a result of this clause.

10 am

Mr. Faulds: I wondered how long it would be before I received an intervention from that quarter. The hon. Gentleman was one of the most interventionist of hon. Members in Committee—not always with the most useful contributions. He asks a simple question—he usually does ask simple questions—and I can only respond as best I can.

The hon. Gentleman uses the phrase "agents provocateurs" as if we were trying to do something improper by the use of children in acquiring evidence about the illegal sales of cigarettes. We argued this question in Committee, and he knows in his heart of hearts that we are not going to get prosecutions unless we have the help of children under the age of 16 who are sold cigarettes. That has to be part of the process and I think that in his kinder moments he would probably accept the necessity for that sort of action.

I was winding up my comments on this passage of the Bill, saying that local authorities should be under notice that parents throughout the United Kingdom expect action on this matter. Central Government will have an active part to play in monitoring the situation and calling to account either the industry or the enforcing agencies if the law is neglected in any area.

I am immensely cheered by the fact that in consultations and discussions with the Government, and after the very healthy presages of the Committee, we have managed to achieve this enormous improvement on what is now an appalling status quo.

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said from the Front Bench on this subject, and I shall come to my reaction later, as I have tabled an amendment to delete this clause. I want to comment on what the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) has said.

Obviously, there are worries when we impose fresh duties on local government—something that we do all too lightly in the House. On occasion, it seems that every Bill will have to be enforced by local councils at one level or another, without regard to manpower considerations or cost. However, with the other hand, we apply pressure on local councils to contain their costs, although their duties are increased, and that is unreasonable. Local government continuously objects to it, and rightly so.

I served in local government for a long time and I know precisely what pressures are brought to bear from time to time by Government Departments. If a pressure group gets on to a Department about a certain issue, the whole of a council's resources should then be devoted to that cause, whatever it is. The next year, there will be another pressure group campaigning about something else.

It is difficult to bring prosecutions for this offence. Last year, the figure was 27. It is difficult to obtain the information on which one can push for a prosecution, but there are problems with the use of agents provocateurs. The hon. Member for Warley, East lightly swept that argument aside, but there are serious moral and legal questions over such a use of children.

Is it right that children should be used to incite another person to break the law? That is a serious question. Is there not a danger that those children will lose respect for the law and consider that it is correct to do something if they are told to do so by a person in authority?

It is illegal to incite the committing of a crime and those who use that method to bring prosecutions might well find that it is deemed illegal when a case reaches a sufficiently advanced stage in court. One never knows—that is always a danger.

I do not dismiss the use of children as agents provocateurs lightly, but it seems to raise a host of problems to which we should give careful consideration.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I share the hon. Gentleman's concern, but does he agree that when children are seen coming out of a tobacconist with cigarettes, it is legitimate evidence, because that is where much of the evidence was collected?

Mr. Knowles: I agree absolutely with the hon. Lady, but it is difficult to do that.

Another matter that I am not certain about, although it is dealt with in another clause, is whether tobacconists are deliberately selling cigarettes to children on a large scale. I do not accept that, as I do not think that people in this country go around deliberately breaking the law. It can be difficult to distinguish between a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old child. In Committee, I mentioned memories of my youth, when children over the age limit used to buy cigarettes, break open the packet and sell them individually. However, I never came across cases of tobacconists breaking open packets, although that does not mean that it does not happen, and I think that it is more usually older children who do that.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): My hon. Friend mentions a serious problem. Is he in dispute with Parents Against Tobacco, which says that £90 million a year is spent by children on tobacco? Does he think that that figure is wrong?

Mr. Knowles: I do not think that under-age children are going to tobacconists and spending that money themselves. I suspect that the money is spent indirectly, with children over the age buying the cigarettes and selling them on. That has been my experience.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): We have just been given one of the figures. It does not make the problem any easier, but it is important for my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) to remember that that figure of £90 million, which is probably accurate, in part consists of sales by children over the age of 16 or by adults, who have bought cigarettes legally, for their friends standing outside the retailer's shop. However, that does not absolve society.

Mr. Knowles: The hon. Member for Warley, East said that no one outside the tobacco industry has any doubts about the health arguments. I tend to agree with him there. That is also true of the drink and butter industries. We are told that innumerable things are threats to our health, but it is difficult to argue that that should give us the right as legislators to interfere with people's choice. In Committee and on Second Reading, there was a straight clash of principle on that subject. I start from a libertarian position, but there is a broad divide in the House which does not necessarily run between the parties so much as across them.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Does my hon. Friend agree that a number of products are harmful when taken in excess, and it is right that people should be free to have them, provided that they realise their effects? Tobacco products are unique in that they are harmful per se. Therefore, there is a clear distinction to be drawn.

Mr. Knowles: That is where the clash comes: in the principle of the libertarian argument about people's right to prescribe what others do, and that of individual choice. It applies to a whole range of matters.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The hon. Gentleman is in danger of setting up a spurious argument. We are talking about children. If the hon. Gentleman believes that it is wrong to preclude children from exercising choice in regard to tobacco, he must apply the same argument to restrictions on alcohol and fireworks. For centuries, we have taken for granted our responsibility to protect the young from themselves. We are not talking about robbing adults of choice.

Mr. Knowles: If I could get out more than two sentences at a time, I might be able to answer some of the points that are being made.

The hon. Member for Warley, East said that the Bill was not as strong as he had originally wanted it to be, and that he had been forced to compromise. Approaching the matter from the opposite direction, I find myself in much the same position. I suspected that, although the word "children"—which is always good emotive stuff—was incorporated in the Bill's title, the driving force behind it was a generalised attack on the tobacco industry, for which children were being used as an excuse. Whether people like it or not, the tobacco industry is still legal and will, I believe, continue to be so.

As for the generalised libertarian question, I always view such measures with suspicion, because I would rather fight in the first ditch than fight in the last. If the argument is lost in regard to tobacco, similar restrictions will then be applied to drink and fatty substances, and newspaper censorship will follow. When the people who know best want to tell others how they should lead their lives, there are no limits to the argument. I am entirely against that argument, which runs, "It is all for your own good. All you have to do is surrender your freedom to me."

I think that we are getting somewhere, however, I hope to speak on some of the amendments later; but I am more than happy to accept the assurances of my hon. Friend the Minister, and, in the light of what he has said, I shall not oppose new clause 2.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I welcome new clause 2, which attempts to bring Scottish law into line with the Bill's proposals for England, allowing for the differences between the prosecution systems of the two countries.

It is generally recognised—certainly by Parents Against Tobacco—that the problem of children under 16 acquiring cigarettes illegally is greater in Scotland than in England. Had the matter not been tackled, the Bill would have contained a serious lacuna. The Minister has shown an enlightened awareness of the problem from the outset, but the same tribute cannot be paid to his Scottish colleagues.

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

For years, the Scottish Office has been reluctant to fund research into under-age smoking, with the result that, while the latest figures available in England were produced in 1988, the latest Scottish figures were produced in 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's kind references to me. When I voiced my concern, and that of the Committee, about the absence of enforcement measures in Scotland, my Scottish ministerial colleagues immediately saw the point, shared my concern and worked hard to consult local authorities speedily, so that the new clause could be tabled on Report.

10.15 am

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister has indeed exercised considerable persuasive skills to bring round his Scottish colleagues to a somewhat more enlightened view than they had previously demonstrated, and I welcome the changes that are being made.

Under clause 4(2)(a), English local authorities' "programme of enforcement action" includes

"the bringing of prosecutions in respect of offences under the principal section".

Perhaps inevitably, there is no comparable provision for Scotland, because of the responsibility of the procurators fiscal for bringing prosecutions there. I hope that the difference in criminal procedure will not make local authorities any less assiduous in seeking to assist the prosecuting authorities in the collation and production of evidence, and in encouraging the bringing of prosecutions for the evil that under-age smoking causes. It is difficult to measure the scale of that evil, which causes permanent damage to the health of hundreds of thousands of children. The figures produced by Parents Against Tobacco have not been seriously challenged in any quarter.

This is a valuable measure, which supplements a Bill introduced by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in 1986. I congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on his sterling work.

Mr. Page: I wish not to discuss the principles and purposes behind the Bill—the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) has done that very adequately in Committee and today—but to say a little about how I expect the Bill to operate in practice. I welcome new clause 2 and clause 4; I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that they are the linchpin of the Bill and will determine whether it succeeds of fails.

I am a great believer in the deterrence theory. I hope that the Bill will set up what is known in boxing parlance as the old one-two. We are looking for the straight left in the form of local authority enforcement, and the right hook represented by adequate fines from magistrates. The £100 average is ludicrous; I believe that the maximum fine should be imposed and I should like the press to play the role of referee.

The press must give such cases must more publicity when they come to court, so that people are made aware that they are patronising a shopkeeper who, for a few measly pence, is prepared to put children's health at risk. They should consider whether it is worth their while to patronise a shopkeeper who is so careless of our children's health. If someone were caught putting poison into baby food, the subsequent court case would be publicised throughout the country.

People who sell children tobacco are poisoning them as surely as they would be if they put poison in their food. The time scale is longer, but in setting up an addictive habit they are condemning those children to eventual illness and disease. Because more young girls are smoking nowadays, shopkeepers are condemning not only the present generation but the next generation. More deformed children are likely to be born, along with children who will have less chance at school because of the proven effect on the intelligence of children of women who smoke.

Local authorities, magistrates and every Member of Parliament must ensure that when the Bill is enacted it is enforced. I want every hon. Member to say to the local authority in his or her area, "What do you intend to do to enforce the provisions of the Bill?" In accordance with clause 4 and new clause 2, I want them every year thereafter to say to their local authorities "Can I have a copy of your monitoring for the year?"

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have listened keenly to my hon. Friend's observations. He suggests that the onus should be placed on local authorities and he wants maximum fines to be imposed by magistrates. What about the responsibility of parents and teachers? Huge penalties are all very well, but the training of parents has been ignored. My hon. Friend puts the responsibility entirely on Parliament, but that is not Parliament's responsibility.

Mr. Page: One of the virtues of an intervention before one has finished one's speech is that one can disregard what one intended to say later. In conclusion, I was running through the responsibilities of Members of Parliament and others, that lie beyond the provisions of the Bill, but my hon. Friend has done the job for me. He rightly points out that parents have a role to play in preventing their children from smoking. He also rightly says that more emphasis should be placed on the role of schools in educating children about the dangers of smoking. My hon. Friend has done it so eloquently that there is no need for me to say more.

Mr. Alan Williams *rose*——

Mr. Page: I ought to return now to the role of Parliament, but I see that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) wishes to intervene.

Mr. Williams: I endorse the hon. Gentleman's point entirely, but are we not now in the fatuous situation, as a result of the protestations of the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), where the campaign to stop children from smoking has become the moral responsibility of everyone except the tobacco industry? The one sector which appears to have no moral obligation is that which, due to its odious dishonesty about the dangers of its product, has tried to deceive both the public and youngsters about the hazards that they face if they smoke tobacco.

Mr. Page: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I do not intend to get involved this morning in the libertarian argument about whether the provisions of the Bill should apply to the entire population or should be applied only for the protection of children. In a

previous intervention the right hon. Gentleman made the point that the Bill provides for the protection of children until they reach the age when they can make the decision for themselves, and I intend to stick to that argument. The right hon. Gentleman, who sits beside me on the Public Accounts Committee, and I have seen many a report highlighting the cost to this nation of the effects of smoking tobacco on people's health, including coronary heart disease and many other associated illnesses. However, if I were to go down that route we should be here for a long time and it would not serve the purposes of the debate.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) for supporting my view that parents, schools and everyone else should take part in the moral crusade to prevent children from smoking. Local authorities must, however, provide the sharp cutting edge of enforcement and magistrates must back up the enforcement. Then, I hope, fewer children will smoke and the result will be a healthier nation.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I welcome the amendments that we are debating—in particular, new clause 2 and the amendments to tidy up clause 4. In Committee I made the plea that we should make the language of the Bill understandable and I congratulate the Minister on achieving that aim. On many occasions I have emphasised that the legislation that we pass should be couched in language which makes quite clear what its purpose is.

The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) said that he had sought consensus. Both he and the Minister have achieved it. One has only to consider the provisions of the Bill before it went into Committee to realise that now they have been honed to a workable form.

I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) that legislation prohibiting the sale of tobacco to children has been in place since 1933, so local authorities already have that responsibility. All that the Bill does is to emphasise their role in bringing prosecutions and ensuring that there is adequate publicity about preventing the sale of tobacco products to children.

Much has been said in the debate about the libertarian aspect. My view is this; smoking is habit forming, and if we permit children to smoke there is the danger that the habit may carry through into later life and seriously damage their health. Nevertheless, we must remember that children will be children. When they mature, they can make logical decisions about what substances to consume —be it tobacco, alcohol or anything else—but during the growing-up process they will inevitably try things that are not necessarily good for them. Therefore, Members of Parliament—including those of us who are parents—have a role to play. Local authorities also have a role to play in ensuring that the legislation is enforced. I sympathise with local authorities when the legislation that we pass leads to additional expenditure, due to the extra personnel that they have to employ, but in this instance we are emphasising a role that they already have under the 1933 Act and asking them to get on with that important job.

Mr. Michael Brown: I do not intend to oppose new clause 2, which will bring the law in Scotland into line with the provisions that we agreed in Standing Committee. I do not intend, either, to oppose the other amendments in this grouping. Before we agree them, however, I should like to refer to some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). I thought that he had gone off his head this morning; normally, he is so sensible about the role of governmental organisations and local authorities. Therefore, I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) intervened. He made exactly the same point as had occurred to me.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) said, it has been against the law to sell tobacco to children since 1933. However the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) believes, and there is evidence to support his view, that, notwithstanding the fact that it is against the law for tobacco to be sold to children, they are nevertheless getting hold of it. Therefore the hon. Gentleman and the Minister have proposed amendments to ensure that the law is enforced. Even though an Act has been on the statute books since 1933, more and more children appear to be buying cigarettes.

The sponsor of the Bill and his hon. Friends support the Bill enthusiastically. I support the Bill's reaching the statute book, but not with a great deal of enthusiasm, because I believe that, in two, three or four years' time when local authorities have produced their annual reports, they will say that the problem is as bad as ever. It might even have got worse.

10.30 am

However much we seek to enforce the law—I agree that it should be enforced, and if there is evidence that the law has been broken it is essential that prosecutions take place, maximum fines are imposed and the penalties are severe enough to be a deterrent—I am concerned that it will not change what goes on in the real world. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) said, it is quite possible for people to beat the law.

Most evenings at 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock or midnight a group of teenagers who have nothing better to do hang around the war memorial in the village where I live. Some of them are over 16 and some are under 16. I know jolly well that, notwithstanding the intentions behind the Bill, those over 16 will go into the village shop and legally buy cigarettes and those under 16 will smoke them. No law will have been broken because the cigarettes will have been purchased by those over 16. They will probably have done exactly what was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East in Committee and sold them singly for 10p a throw. Ultimately, it is the duty of the House to do all that it can to prevent illegal sales of cigarettes to those under 16—and it has been illegal since 1933—of course and to ensure that any changes in the law are enforced by the agencies outside. The Bill clarifies that it is the duty of local authorities to enforce the law and clears up the doubt over whether is is the duty of the police or of local authorities.

The rumours in the papers regarding the announcement to be made by the Secretary of State for the Environment leaves my constituency in some doubt. The Minister will clarify today whether it will be the district council or the county council, through its trading standards office, that enforces the provisions of the Bill. I should point out that I represent a constituency in the county of Humberside. According to "Newsnight" last night, apparently the county of Humberside is not much longer for this world. In the event that the county is abolished—I hope that it is —how will the Bill's provisions apply to my constituency?

Will the legislation relating to the reorganisation of local government which is likely to be introduced later this year have to be amended, or will the Bill have to be amended to deal with the fact that later this year I will represent a constituency within a county that does not exist? Will the Minister tell me what is likely to happen?

In conclusion, let me summarise some of my misgivings about the Bill. Ultimately, for all the enforcement agencies and local authorities which may or may not exist, we come back to the parents. I am glad that the organisation is called Parents Against Tobacco as parents are the most important group of people who can do something about children smoking. What I should like to happen around the country and in Ulceby, the village where I live, is for parents and responsible people to say to the parents of children who smoke, "Your son is not 16 yet, is he? I could have sworn that I saw him smoking outside the Spar shop in the village the other day." That is what used to happen in the 1950s and 1960s when I was a schoolboy. I knew jolly well that if I were ever tempted to smoke the lady who lived across the road from my family would speak to my mother and say, "I could have sworn that I saw Michael smoking the other day. He is not 16 yet, is he?" That is the most effective way to deal with the problem.

Mr. Page: Did that actually happen to my hon. Friend and did it stop him smoking?

Mr. Brown: Yes, it did. I can honestly say that I never had one puff of a cigarette and I admit that I was a pretty dreadful child, as I am sure all hon. Members would expect. I was intimidated by my parents, the neighbours and, most of all, by my teachers who regarded the idea of anyone in their charge smoking—that also applied to those aged over 16 as I stayed at school until I went to university—as unacceptable. At my secondary modern school, the penalties for anyone between the ages of 16 and 18 caught smoking on the school premises were extremely severe. I only regret that it is not possible for the Bill to contain provisions for teachers to spend a little more time, effort and energy on enforcing the ideas behind it, as teachers are letting the side down. In the average comprehensive secondary school today, teachers do not recognise the crime of smoking under the age of 16 in the same way as we do. The rules should be toughened up through the education system.

Parents and teachers can have a far greater impact than any legislation. That is not to say that I do not accept and understand the need for legislation. I agree that if it reaches the statute book the Bill will improve matters. I hope that my hon. Friend's Department and the Department of Health will start keeping statistics as soon as the Bill reaches the statute book and that in a year or two years' time we can have an Adjournment debate on the issue to see whether there is any change for the better. I have a shrewd suspicion that although there may be some improvement, we need to get the message through to parents. Parents Against Tobacco needs to get the message through.

I have an interesting critique of the Parents Against Tobacco campaign written by Mr. Chris Cooper. He suggests that some of their statements should be reworded. He writes:

"Did Des Wilson perhaps in the early stages of drafting his denunciations of the buying of cigarettes by children ever blurt out anything indiscreet, such as, 'You negligent, improvident, irresponsible parents let your children run wild without thought for their health and now we, the right-thinking, energetic, caring parents are going to have to do your job for you.' If he ever did, squads of PR people stepped in to soften the message without moderating the excitable prose. The parents of this country will not allow the heath of their children to be threatened and their lives to be potentially curtailed by the activities and products of a ruthlessly cynical industry."

We must acknowledge that there is an element of buck-passing. We pass the buck to the House of Commons, to the courts, to the police and now to either the district councils or the county councils. We are now saying that all of them have a responsibility, but, ultimately, we shall not get a grip on the problem until there is a greater sense of parental and teacher discipline on children, which is lacking not only on the question of smoking but on a range of other issues. Smoking is only the symptom of a breakdown of teacher and parental discipline. Although we, as responsible citizens representing our constituents, are right to try to do what we can to put the Bill on the statute book, parents must exercise greater discipline.

When I see people in my village and tap them on the shoulder—which I do as a responsible Member of Parliament—to draw their attention to one or two things that their children are doing and suggest that their children should not run riot through the village a 11 pm, midnight, or 1 am, that they should perhaps not get drunk and should not smoke if they are under the age of 16 and that they get up to no good, the parents do not like it. Little Johnny can do no wrong. Until we break through that attitude, we shall make no progress, whatever legislation is on the statute book.

I welcome the new clause in so far as it relates to Scotland—it merely repeats what we wrote into the Bill in Committee—and although I also support the other amendments, I urge a note of caution. Until teachers and parents recognise their responsibilities, we are unlikely to change some of the statistics which were given by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East.

Miss Lestor: We know now that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was a model child and was never tempted down the path followed by so many other hon. Members. I was also a model child and never smoked.

I recently heard an hon. Member describe something that had happened and say, "I slept like a baby." I remember thinking that that man had never been involved with one. I now say to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes—that paragon of virtue—that I am certain that he has never been a parent. If he had, he would know that although all parents have responsibility, we cannot hold them solely responsible for the actions of their children. Parents are often fighting against an ethos in society which encourages their children to go in the opposite direction to that which they would have wanted. It was not parents who, in the 1960s, encouraged their children to smoke cannabis. Parents have a responsibility, but so do we all. That does not mean that the House should not try to enact legislation that makes it easier for parents to carry out their responsibilities and not have them undermined by irresponsible shopkeepers and irresponsible advertising.

When talking about passing the buck, we can make a contribution by saying that the buck stops here. I was going to take up what my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) said——

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is the hon. Lady suggesting that parents should abdicate their responsibilities and that society should be run by the House or by legislators who, of course, always know best?

Miss Lestor: I thought that I said the opposite, but I repeat that parents have responsibilities. Often what they try to do is undermined by other agencies and by the ethos of our society. That is what has happened with smoking.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East on the Bill and on the way in which he has accommodated many hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. I would not have been so generous. My hon. Friend almost described the Committee as a love-in and I was going to take him up on that. However, having listened to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes say that although he disagreed with the Bill he would go along with it, I believe that my hon. Friend was right: those of us who believe in the Bill influenced hon. Members who had doubts to say that they would support it.

It is important that we clarify who has responsibility. I, too, believe in deterrents. We can now publicise the fear of detection of those people who sell to under-age children and shopkeepers will now be aware of their responsibilities. We cannot stop youngsters over the age of 16 or adults giving cigarettes to children, but we can try to create an atmosphere in which they believe it to be undesirable. We do not have the power to go around our constituencies poking people and saying, "Look, we know what you are doing." We do not have such powers and some of us might get strange responses, but we can make it more difficult for children to smoke.

10.45 am

One important issue that has not been raised is that, whatever freedoms may exist in society for adults, the medical profession is concerned about the effect of smoking on young girls who can become addicted at an early age. There is a danger not only to their health but to the health, well-being, survival rates and weights of the babies that they produce. Anyone who knows anything about children's health is worried about that. One of the first questions that hospitals and doctors ask a pregnant woman—especially a young woman—is whether she smokes and they advise her not to do so. Smoking during pregnancy has an effect on the weight of a child and on the way in which it thrives. A motion was tabled on that issue during the previous Session.

Women's magazines offer a temptation or invitation to smoke. Many young girls read such magazines and we must do our bit to counter that by saying that there is another argument. We must create an ethos in which smoking is unfashionable and try to stop people selling cigarettes to children.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes introduced a red herring by asking who would be responsible if a local authority was abolished. I am sure that the Minister will deal with that issue. There are transfers of schedules and ways to deal with such issues. The hon. Gentleman introduced the red herring to raise doubts and to say that the Bill would not work. Until legislation is on the statute book, we do not know whether it will work. Sometimes we must return to legislation to refine it and to deal with further difficulties, but if we all agree that we do not want our children to smoke, we must ensure that whatever parents, teachers and others do, people are not allowed to tempt our children and get away with breaking the law.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wish to make a few comments in answer to points that have been made. As I said in my opening remarks, I understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles), who does not want unnecessary and expensive duties to be placed on local authorities. However, clause 4 would require local authorities to decide how best to enforce powers and responsibilities that they already have. We ask them to think carefully about how best to use them and put them into effect. I hope that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) will agree that time spent on reconnaissance is never wasted; that is equally true of local authorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East said that he was not minded to press his amendment and I am glad that he came to that conclusion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North was right to stress that cigarettes are harmful. Local authorities will have to take stock of how they use their powers and use them as effectively as possible so that children cannot buy cigarettes as easily as they have been able to do in many places.

I was glad that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) welcomed the Government's new clause 2. He was right that Scottish local authorities do not prosecute, but they are best placed to provide the evidence to the procurator fiscal on which prosecutions may be based. I hope that those local authorities use their opportunities effectively and fully. That is the view and hope of my ministerial colleagues in the Scottish Office.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was in a sombre—indeed, almost pessimistic—vein for most of his speech. He spoke about the difficulties of enforcement. Because this is a difficult area to enforce, we spent much time in Committee considering how to do that. The Government will assist by issuing a full and helpful circular and by ensuring that local authorities include in their annual reports information on what they are doing so that local people know what is happening in their area and can take the action that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes suggested that parents and teachers should take. I am glad that my hon. Friend accepted that we should do all that we reasonably can by legislation and I am grateful to him for that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes asked who will enforce the law in his local authority area if the position changes. I am not sure what the possibilities are for his area, but I imagine that the authority may become a single-tier body. In that case, it is simple—those responsibilities that belong to the local authorities which are abolished will pass to the single-tier authority and responsibility for enforcing the Bill's provisions will belong to the local authority that has all the responsibilities for local government duties in my hon. Friend's constituency.

I was impressed by the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes revealed that he was

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

intimidated by his parents when he was a child. I am not sure that he has ever been intimidated by anyone in the Chamber, as he repeatedly proves in his speeches. My hon. Friend was right to emphasise the disciplinary role of parents, teachers and other adults. I hope that that message will not be obscured by our concentrating on what we can do in legislation. I am sure that that will not happen, because my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North put that message before us constantly in Committee and again pithily this morning. His view found agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East and other hon. Members.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) for her support for the further changes that I have asked the House to make to the Bill. She rightly said that smoking is particularly bad for pregnant women and can do much damage to their children. That should be widely known. The hon. Lady referred to advertising seen by young people. I draw her attention to the voluntary agreement that excluded advertising in a range of magazines that are particularly read by young women. Perhaps we shall return to that point later. It should be emphasised in concert with the hon. Lady's important point about young women.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 3

SALE OF UNPACKAGED CIGARETTES

Sir Trevor Skeet: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 24, leave out clause 3.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 3 and 4.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The title of the Bill is the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, but the primary concern of clause 3 is not children but adults—adults, not children, will be penalised. Under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and subsequent Acts, it is illegal to sell a packet of 10 cigarettes to a child of 16—I would be very much against that. It is also illegal to sell one cigarette out of a packet of 10 to a child, because the greater covers the lesser, so why repeat the point?

It is extraordinary that the Bill not merely dots the i's but crosses the t's. There is a refusal to accept that when something is already illegal it is not necessary to make it illegal a second time. This provision is not necessary. What will happen if it is illegal to sell cigarettes individually? Small tobacconists face a 2·5 per cent. increase in VAT and a recession. They also face the possibility of higher penalties—I understand that scale 3 penalties will be imposed—such as a £1,000 fine if they make the great mistake of selling one cigarette to an adult. Seen in that light, it is ridiculous. It deprives a low-income person of the right to go into a shop to buy a single cigarette.

We had an interesting debate on this matter in Committee. My hon. Friend the Minister said:

"On the clause stand part debate I shall advise the Committee to drop clause 3".

Nothing could be more specific than that. My hon. Friend also said:

"It is a piece of self-indulgent rhetorical legislation that we should eschew. It is already illegal to sell cigarettes to children."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 13 February 1991; c. 99-100.]

My hon. Friend the Minister gave clear guidance in Committee and dealt adequately with the points that were raised. I hope that he will also consider the points that I raise today and that we can find a way round some of the difficulties.

I should like to make a point about the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). On our trips to the middle east, old friendships were restored. I am delighted that the Bill will go on the statute book. It deserves to be called the Faulds (No. 1) Bill. It will contribute to the long line of legislation dealing with children. No hon. Member wants children under 16 to smoke, but the means by which we propose to achieve that differ.

The hon. Member for Warley, East believes that legislation should be supreme in this case. It is all very well to ask local authorities to prosecute. They can beaver away every day of the year trying to find a way to prosecute, but, unless they have evidence, there will be no convictions. In 1990, there were about 30 minor convictions for such offences.

Ultimately, we must have confidence that people will abide by the law, and more than 90 per cent. of retailers recognise their responsibility and want to comply with the law. What evidence exists of abuse of the law against selling cigarettes to children under the age of 16?

11 am

The Minister has tabled an amendment to deal with enforcement. It recommends that the penalty be raised to scale 3, which seems rather tough. Formerly, the maximum fine was about £400, which was imposed by clause 15 of the Criminal Justice Bill 1991. Under scale 3 it will go up to £1,000. I understand why, in certain circumstances, courts should impose the full fine. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) recognised the fact that a severe punishment should exist, but I cannot see how the £1,000 fine would be appropriate unless a series of offences had been committed. Will my hon. Friend the Minister explain that point?

Another Government amendment goes some way toward helping us and says that cigarettes should include cigars. However, cigars cannot be broken in half and handed around in that way. Therefore, they would have to be excluded because their inclusion would cause serious difficulties.

This country is now part and parcel of the European Community. How does the Bill stand with regard to European legislation? The EC wanted to place an order that would be binding on the United Kingdom. Would clause 3 be acceptable to the Council of Ministers? Would it survive the microscope of Europe or would it have to be modified? As the matter has been partially dealt with, that is where we should deal with it finally. If the EC is about to legislate on the subject we should be cautious about legislating in the Chamber.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you had any notification of the Government's intention to make a statement today on this morning's publication of the Amnesty International report on the position of Palestinians and others in Kuwait? Twice in the past few

weeks and three times through letters to the Prime Minister, I have raised the issue of the imminent danger of a murderous pogrom against Palestinians in Kuwait, where British forces are situated. The current Government of Kuwait, which Amnesty International accuses of being involved, through their armed forces, in murder, torture and abduction, were reinstated to power partly with the help of the British armed forces. If a Sabra or Chatilla occur in Kuwait city under the shadow of British armed forces, it will have serious consequences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman says, but I have received no such request. The matter will no doubt be dealt with by the Government.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): May I say how much I support the amendment? I am extremely worried about clause 3 for several reasons. I was not on the Standing Committee but, in principle, I agree with the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) about the need to protect young children from tobacco. However, I have read clause 3 carefully and see no specific reference to young people. It states:

"it shall be an offence for any person carrying on a retail business to sell cigarettes to any person other than in pre-packed quantities".

It says nothing about persons under the age of 16. If it did so, I would support it, but as it does not I oppose it utterly.

In certain parts of the country there has long been a custom of tobacconists selling cigarettes singly, particularly in my part of the world in the north-east. It would cause great resentment if that practice were stopped. In my constituency there is a specialist tobacconist, to which people come from miles around, to buy and sample products. It would make life difficult for such specialists if they could not sell cigarettes singly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that children in his constituency were buying packets of cigarettes and selling them singly at 10p each. As I believe that a packet of cigarettes now costs more than £2, my hon. Friend should teach those children a little about business matters.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): We should bear in mind the fact that the tobacco industry supports the non-sale of cigarettes to persons under 16 years of age. However, Government figures suggest that some £70 million worth of cigarettes are being sold to juveniles. By the same token, it must be recognised that the tobacco industry spends £1 million advertising the fact that shopkeepers should not sell cigarettes to those under 16.

The clause deals with selling cigarettes singly. In disadvantaged areas, many people like to take advantage of buying one or two cigarettes, especially at the end of the week. I fear that the clause will deprive them of that facility. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) clearly stated, a law already exists covering the sale of single cigarettes to children. As it is already unlawful for children to buy cigarettes, the clause is unnecessary and its removal would not undermine the current sound legislation.

As a non-smoker who supports the tobacco industry, I feel that the industry has a difficult job to do. I support the withdrawal of the clause as it is unnecessary and hits disadvantaged people.

Mr. Maclennan: Hon. Members who have spoken on the clause have shown little common sense. The section of the community which is most likely to—and, according to the only evidence that we have, does—buy cigarettes singly in any great numbers, is that of children.

Mr. Summerson: No.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) did not produce a scintilla of evidence that there was large-scale purchasing of single cigarettes by adults, and nor did the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). If the evidence had been available it would have been brought before us by the tobacco lobby, which clearly has an interest in stopping as much of the Bill as it can. I do not believe that any such evidence exists.

Mr. Michael Brown: The specific point is that if a shopkeeper has been selling single cigarettes to children, that shopkeeper has already committed an offence under the 1933 legislation. Therefore, the only people who can possibly be affected by the introduction of clause 3 are people aged over 16, to whom the Bill does not generally apply.

Mr. Maclennan: That is not quite my point, but I will deal with it later. I was dealing with sales of single cigarettes to adults. I do not believe that there is any evidence of extensive sales of single cigarettes to adults. If there had been, I have no doubt that it would have been brought before the House during the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Dickens: I said that there was £70 million worth of sales to juveniles, which represented just 1 per cent. of all sales in the United Kingdom. If the hon. Gentleman wants evidence, he should ask who is buying all the other cigarettes.

Mr. Maclennan: Cigarettes are normally sold in packets. The evidence is that single sales relate to children. The most persuasive evidence put before the House was that of the 1985 Bristol survey. That evidence also showed clearly the extent to which children who smoke when aged 14 to 15 are hooked on the habit by buying single cigarettes. More than half of those children bought single cigarettes over a period. That is a problem.

The fanciful suggestion that we are depriving adults of the possibility of smoking because they cannot afford to buy more than one or two cigarettes at a time seems, when weighed in the balance against under-age smoking, to be seriously flawed. I well remember the words of the Tom Lehrer song about today's young innocent faces being tomorrow's clientele.

This is one of the Bill's more important clauses because one of our great difficulties in enforcing the ban is producing the evidence. Clearly, evidence of cigarette packets that have been partially broken into to obtain single cigarettes could be compelling evidence when seeking to enforce the rigours of the law.

Mr. Robert Banks: I supported the clause in Committee when we had a long and intricate debate on it. I received publicity in my constituency for my stand on banning the sale of single cigarettes. I have not received any letters from anyone complaining that they buy single cigarettes and would be deprived of doing so under the clause.

Mr. Maclennan: I am extremely grateful for the hon. Gentleman's helpful intervention. I am sure that his common sense attitude is the one which the House should display towards the clause. The provisions of the clause seem to be a sensible attempt to bolster the Bill's purpose. Those who argue against it must address the clear evidence that young people buy cigarettes singly and there are unscrupulous shopkeepers prepared to sell them singly, repeatedly, until children are hooked. That is one of the main causes of under-age smoking. The Bill tackles it effectively and I hope that the House will support it.

11.15 am

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) who has just moved the amendment in a vigorous, common-sense and slightly teasing style, I had considerable misgivings about the relevance of the clause to the rest of the Bill, for a number of reasons. As he said, I put those reasons fully in Committee.

First, it is already an offence to sell cigarettes to children. Therefore, the clause partly duplicates the existing law. Secondly, in practice or in theory, depending on whether one believes that adults buy cigarettes singly, the clause limits adults' rights, albeit in a small way. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) said, it is not the Bill's specific purpose to prevent cigarettes from being sold in ones or twos to adults.

I was also concerned that the clause might contravene article 30 of the treaty of Rome as an unnecessary restriction of trade. The Government have given that matter further consideration and do not consider that they need to oppose the clause on the ground of the risk of challenge under the treaty. Apart from what has been said by one or two of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow, we are not aware that, at present, cigarettes are sold in packets of less than 10, and are not often sold singly to adults. However, there is evidence that they are sold singly to children. Unless such facts were to be introduced, we consider the risk of challenge under article 30 to be very small.

Hon. Members who were members of the Standing Committee will recall that we had a robust debate on the clause, which was ordered to stand part of the Bill by the casting vote of the Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill). In voting in support of the clause, my hon. Friend was following tradition and precedent, and I have no quarrel with his decision. However, I noted carefully the views of the supporters of the clause on both sides of the Committee, and I understood their special concern about children picking up the smoking habit by initially buying cigarettes in ones or twos. We want to put a stop to that, as I believe do all hon. Members.

The Bill's main purpose is to stop the supply of cigarettes to children under 16. We are addressing that problem in several ways. The Bill strengthens the law on illegal sales and increases the penalty for such offences. It also clarifies the role of local authorities in enforcing the law. However, I recognise that there is a strongly held view that some errant retailers contrive to believe that there is nothing unlawful about selling single cigarettes to children or, where they do understand that it is unlawful, they believe that they can get away with it.

Therefore, I understand the attraction to many hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), the Bill's sponsor, in having a specific provision on the face of the Bill to prohibit the sale of single cigarettes. I have also been influenced by my ministerial colleagues, particularly those at the Department of Health, who are in favour of the clause, and by representations that I have received from local organisations and members of the public.

Last, but certainly not least, I have considered the views of the Government's chief medical officer, who has told me of his support for the clause. Having had the opportunity to reflect on the matter and weigh up the strongly held views on both sides, and then having reflected again, particularly during this debate, my conclusion is that the clause should be left in the Bill.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend has the interests of children under 16 at heart, but he will have seen the figures produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys showing that, in 1982, the percentage of boys who smoked at least one cigarette a week was 11 per cent. By 1988, the figure had dropped to 7 per cent. It is well down, so boys are smoking less. In the same period, the figure for girls dropped from 11 per cent. to 9 per cent. If the trend is in the right direction, do we require this hammer to deal with it?

Mr. Lloyd: If there are opportunities to reinforce that welcome trend, it would be irresponsible of us not to take them.

The Government no longer wish to oppose clause 3. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North, who advanced some powerful and extremely familiar arguments against the clause, will likewise decide, on balance, not to press for its deletion. He quoted me as saying that there was something of self-indulgence in the clause. I used those words, and I think there is, but occasionally it is right for the House to indulge itself, and if it does so on this matter, children will be the beneficiaries.

Amendment No. 3 makes it an offence to sell upackaged cigarettes. Its purpose is simply to provide a penalty for that offence at level 3 on the standard scale. The maximum fine under level 3 is £400, but it will rise to £1,000 when the Criminal Justice Bill is enacted. A level 3 fine seems the right maximum penalty for the offence. We agreed in Committee that level 4 was the correct penalty for the main offences under the Bill of selling cigarettes to children under 16 and for failure to comply with a court order on vending machines.

I cannot accept that it is right to set a similar maximum penalty for selling one cigarette to an adult. That is surely a less serious offence, and the penalty should reflect that. Where a retailer is accused of selling cigarettes to children under 16—even a single cigarette—he can be prosecuted under clause 1 and face the higher penalty under level 4 of £1,000, rising to £2,500 under the Criminal Justice Bill. If a retailer sells a single cigarette to a child, there is nothing to prevent him from being charged under clause 3 and under the principal provision. We shall give guidance to local authorities in the circular that we propose to issue when the Bill is enacted.

Sir Trevor Skeet: There appear to be two levels of penalties—one for selling to a child and another for selling to an adult. Should not the clause say so?

Mr. Lloyd: It is perfectly clear. If someone is charged under clause 1 for selling cigarettes in packets of 10, in boxes of 200 or only one, the higher penalty is available to the court. If someone is charged under clause 3, only the lower penalty—level 3—is available to the court. If a single cigarette is sold to a child, a prosecution can be brought under both clauses and the court will decide what the fine should be. I believe that it is clear what is available to the prosecution. If evidence shows that someone has sold cigarettes to a child in ones, 10s or 200s, they should speedily consult their solicitor. If someone sold a single cigarette, he would have to plead hard at court to avoid substantial fines on both counts.

Mr. Faulds: I am very pleased that, since Second Reading, we have managed to achieve a consensus, in Committee and with the Minister, on the important point concerning single cigarette sales. Clause 3 was designed to end the practice of breaking open packs and offering cigarettes for sale singly, and often at an inflated price.

The House should be in no doubt that my motive is to help bring smoking by children and young teenagers to an end. Hon. Members sympathetic to the tobacco industry may declare that I intend more—that I really want to prevent adults from smoking. That suggestion has leaked through, but I must simply deny it. Adults who are smoking are to be pitied for their costly addiction. Let their doctors urge them to stop. Such advice is the province of the medical profession, which has offered it strenuously over decades.

Only yesterday, the Townswomen's Guild conference on drug and alcohol abuse heard from doctors that smoking is far more dangerous than hard drug addiction. That may appear odd, but apparently it is the case. It causes overwhelmingly more deaths and fills many more beds in our hospital wards. Dr. Claire Gerada, talking of the impact of drug addiction during pregnancy, said that a pregnant mother who smoked 20 cigarettes a day would do far more harm to her unborn child than a pregnant woman who injected heroin every day with a fresh needle.

But if we can stop smoking in childhood, we should make enormous inroads into the whole range of adult problems associated with tobacco. Most people take up the habit before the age of 18. At root, tobacco use is caused by addiction begun in childhood. I am sure that the whole House will share my ambition to choke off this life-denying habit before it takes hold.

Unscrupulous traders who seek to make an even higher profit from children smoking will break open packs and sell a cigarette singly, often with a match, to children who cannot afford the price of a packet. The argument—of course, it is plausible—was that the law already forbade the sale of cigarettes to children under 16, and thus a law preventing the sale of single cigarettes was unnecessary.

The Minister explained his conversion, and the Committee looked at further evidence, including a recent paper published in the *British Journal of Addiction*, showing that the habit of selling cigarettes singly to children is particularly prevalent in poor areas, and that the more cigarettes a child smokes the more likely the child will be to buy them singly.

Clause 3 will make it illegal for retailers to sell cigarettes except in the original pack of 10 or more. It is most unlikely that it will have any effect on the trade in cigarettes to the adult market. One retailer who wrote objecting to the clause admitted that he never sold cigarettes singly to adults. I cannot conceive that local authorities would seek to take action under the clause unless they very firmly believed that the trader was supplying children with cigarettes from broken packs.

In such circumstances, the clause will create a powerful additional offence, designed to bring an end to the deliberate recruitment of children to the smoking habit. On that basis, I am happy to accept the level 3 fine for this offence, since the level 4 fine, which will apply to the principal clause on cigarette sales to children, is still in the frame.

Miss Lestor: The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) says that smoking among young people and children is declining and asks why we need the Bill. But we do not usually remove from the statute book legislation designed to prevent people from breaking the law just because the incidence of the particular offence with which it deals has declined. The hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that there are new children coming along all the time; we are not talking about the same young people.

Smoking may indeed decline among a certain group for two or three years at a time, but any graph will show that that decline is not constant. We are talking about the young people of the future as well as those of the present, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) said, it would be interesting to discover what has happened to youngsters who took up smoking when they were under age and to ascertain whether they are now addicted. My hon. Friend rightly said that addiction may start very early on.

11.30 am

We have heard much about the possibility of our preventing adults from smoking if we make it illegal for cigarette packets to be broken open by retailers. One question that we have not considered—and we shall not be dealing with it in this debate—is that although we may say that adults are responsible for themselves and that it is up to them whether they smoke, their smoking has an effect on other people, and the fact that the rest of us inhale their smoke and their poison is receiving a great deal of attention from the medical profession.

As someone who has been as pure in my habits over the years as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), I object very strongly to inhaling other people's smoke. If hon. Members have any concern for our health in this place, they will recall that my throat was severely affected for a long time, and I was certainly not helped by the fact that I had to attend a large number of meetings at which people were allowed to smoke. Adult smoking affects not only the individuals concerned but the rest of society.

Although some adults buy single cigarettes, more appear to be sold to children. The point of the clause is that it would provide shopkeepers with a safeguard. In Committee, we discussed the difficulty that shopkeepers may experience in refusing young people who seek to intimidate them and the need for a notice explaining that it is against the law to sell cigarettes to young people. If we make it illegal for shopkeepers to open packets of cigarettes and sell the contents singly, we shall be providing them with another safeguard. A shopkeeper can say, "Sorry lads; I'm not allowed to sell you single cigarettes. I'm not allowed to open the packet."

To an extent, the clause will also deal with the case of the young person over the age of 16 who goes into a shop to buy two or three single cigarettes to sell to youngsters under the age of 16. I accept that the clause may prevent some adults from buying single cigarettes, although I do not think that the practice is very widespread. Nevertheless, the clause represents a useful way of helping shopkeepers to avoid breaking the law by telling youngsters, "I cannot open the packet of cigarettes, so you will have to go away." That is a good reason for retaining the clause.

Mr. Robert Banks: I agree with the speech that we have just heard. There appears to be uncertainty in the House —and certainly outside it—about the number of adults who go into shops to purchase single cigarettes. We just do not know, although I think that the number must be very small indeed.

One thing about which we can be certain, however, is that children go into shops to buy single cigarettes. One of the problems that retailers face is that they cannot always be certain that young people are under 16. Children grow up very fast these days and many of them look older than they are. A retailer may therefore sell a single cigarette in good faith to someone of 14 or 15 believing that he is just over 16.

The Minister's approach to the problem is highly commendable. We had a fine debate in Committee, at the end of which, on the Chairman's casting vote, he was rebuffed and failed to achieve his then aim of deleting the clause. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend went to the trouble of obtaining expert advice. I think that he would agree with me that if we retain the clause, we shall have a belt-and-braces policy on the sale of single cigarettes to under 16-year-olds. I most certainly support the clause, because it is all too easy for a child to obtain smoking material in the form of single cigarettes. That is where the chain starts, and that is what we want to avoid. That is the purpose of the Bill.

The sale of single unwrapped cigarettes should never be allowed. After all, we buy cigars that are wrapped and placed in tubes or other hygienic coverings.

All in all, we shall be doing children a great service by retaining the clause.

Mr. Michael Brown: In Committee, I started from the position then held by my hon. Friend the Minister. Even this morning, I had much sympathy for the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and for the argument that he advanced. He asked why we needed the provision, given that it is illegal to sell one cigarette or 20, packaged or unpackaged, to children. As the Bill attempts to protect children and young people under the age of 16 from tobacco, and as it is an offence to sell one cigarette to a child under the age of 16, why do we need the provision? That was the point from which I started, but, on reflection, I concede that good arguments have been advanced on the other side.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) said, the debate in Committee was finely balanced. Just about every member of the Committee spoke and we all cast our votes, with an equal number on each side of the argument. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North will understand if I say that, now that we have had a second opportunity to consider the matter, I am prepared not to stand in the way of the clause.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) made a good point, which I had not considered before. In Committee, I made great play of the need to ensure that retailers were protected when they innocently broke the law. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North and I were anxious to emphasise that it is sometimes difficult for retailers to know whether they are selling to a 17-year-old or to a 15-year-old.

Mr. Alan Williams: I respect the integrity of the hon. Gentleman's argument, which fits in very well with the point that he made earlier—against the rest of us. He said that many of the £90 million-worth of tobacco goods allegedly sold to young people were initially sold to youngsters over the age of 16. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that people in that age group are the most likely to try to buy single cigarettes. In other words, the hon. Gentleman has met the objection that he voiced in his first speech by his change of heart in his second.

Mr. Brown: I try to be consistent, and I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. If my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North withdrew the amendment, he would be conceding the point in favour of the arguments that he and I advanced in Committee. Bearing in mind the wishes of Ministers at the Department of Health, whom my hon. Friend the Minister has consulted, and the fact that, as my hon. Friend said, there is nothing wrong in the House indulging itself occasionally on such an important subject, I am prepared to withdraw my opposition to the clause.

I have one technical reservation. Clause 3(1) states:

"It shall be an offence for any person carrying on a retail business to sell cigarettes to any person other than in pre-packed quantities of 10".

Those who travel on British Airways flights in the smoking section may be invited to partake of a cigarette after a meal or, on request, of a packet of cigarettes sold under the brand names of Rothmans, Benson and Hedges and so on. Such cigarettes are given, not sold. I have seen cellophane-wrapped packets of cigarettes on such British Airways flights, and I presume that they are also available in hospitality. Will that still be permitted? Will it be possible to give or provide cellophane-wrapped packets of five cigarettes in this way? Will it still be legal, on the ground that they are not being sold? If my hon. Friend the Minister cannot answer that now, perhaps someone from his Department or the Department of Health will write to me with an answer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) for following me on my pilgrimage to the point at which I support the retention of this clause—that is the right conclusion, and the legislation will be the more effective for it. I think that I can satisfy him on the question that he asked. If cigarettes in packets of five, or in singles, are given away in this country in the circumstances that he describes, they will not be affected by this legislation, because we are talking about selling. If an airliner has taken off and is elsewhere, of course our law may not apply—but I should have to take further advice on that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that the Minister was intervening——

Mr. Michael Brown: I had finished.

Mr. Lloyd: I was also grateful for the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks). He has been utterly consistent: he took the same view in Committee as he has expressed today.

I realised once I had sat down earlier that I had not mentioned amendment No. 4. I hope that the House will find it useful if I say a little about it. Clause 3(3) was inserted in the Bill as a result of an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) in a helpful effort to ensure that retailers and hotel and restaurant owners could continue to sell cigars singly to adults. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, by tabling this amendment, the Government do not seek in any way to reverse what he has done or to prohibit the sale of single cigars to adults. The Government remain fully of the view that retailers and others should remain free to sell cigars in packets of fewer than 10.

I did say in Standing Committee, however, that the courts may have difficulty with the wording of this subsection even if we attempted to define cigars and cigarettes. The simplest way of avoiding confusion and removing any possible doubt would be to delete it. By attempting to exclude one tobacco product—cigars—from the meaning of cigarettes in this subsection we leave more open to doubt and confusion, the issue of whether other tobacco products—cigarillos, cheroots and panatellas—are included or excluded.

What we want to achieve is a ban on the sale of unpackaged cigarettes but not other tobacco products—certainly not the ones that I have just mentioned. By deleting the subsection, we would be left with the ordinary meaning of cigarettes, which does not, in the Government's view, include what would ordinarily be described as cigars, cigarillos, cheroots and panatellas.

This is a small amendment, but it may be significant in some situations. We all know what we mean by cigarettes, and I believe that the courts will have no difficulty in construing the word in the same way. Attempts to define what is or is not a cigarette or cigar would serve only to confuse and lead to uncertainty, which in turn can lead to bad law and unwanted decisions. I recommend deleting the subsection from the Bill.

11.45 am

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to the Minister, who has mentioned two points that will lead to great difficulty in future. Gift packets can be handed out to all sorts of people over the counters in shops, too. I hope that my hon. Friend will thoroughly review that matter, because I am sincerely interested in the future of children and I do not want the Act abused.

Fortunately, it will not be the Minister or indeed anyone from the legislative system who will hand out the scale 3 penalties—they will be for the courts to decide. How the penalties are administered will be complicated, but the courts may find it less so after the guidance that the Minister has given today.

I am very glad to learn that article 30 of the Rome treaties will not be infringed, because this matter will not constitute a restraint on trade. That was one of my primary concerns, and on that basis I am quite prepared to beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 2, line 26 at end insert—

'(1A) Any person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 30 leave out subsection (3).—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Clause 4

Enforcement action by local authorities in England and Wales

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 2, line 35 leave out 'in relation to offences under'
and insert 'relating to'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 37 leave out '("the principal section")' and insert
'and sections 3 and 5 above'.

No. 7, in page 2, line 41 leave out
'this section "programme of enforcement action" means'
and insert
'subsection (1)(a) above the reference to a programme of enforcement action relating to the provisions there mentioned is a referenced to'.

No. 8, in page 2, line 43 leave out 'the principal section' and insert 'those provisions'.

No. 9, in page 3, line 2 leave out 'that section' and insert 'those provisions'.

No. 10, in page 3, line 4 leave out 'that section' and insert 'those provisions'.

No. 11, in page 3, line 4 at end insert—

'(d) the making of complaints under section 7(2) of the Act of 1933 and, with a view to determining whether such complaints should be made, the monitoring of the use of such machines for the sale of tobacco as are mentioned in that provision.'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Clause 6

Advertisements

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 4, line 26, leave out clause 6.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 14 and 15.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I know that many hon. Members have been very unhappy about the extent and visibility of advertising for cigarettes on the front of shops. Their concern was made abundantly clear in Committee. I also recall that I made it very clear that I believe that the right way to control tobacco advertising and promotion is through further development of the successful system of voluntary agreements. Although complex, the system is comprehensive in its coverage and has always been honoured by the industry.

I am therefore extremely pleased to remind the House that a new voluntary agreement on advertising between the Government and the tobacco industry has been agreed in principle and should shortly be concluded. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced yesterday, the agreement will contain two key measures

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

designed to reduce the visibility of shopfront advertising and to ensure that all such advertising carries appropriate health warnings.

First, the industry has made a major commitment to reducing the amount of shopfront advertising. It has undertaken to reduce the total number of external permanent advertising materials at retail premises by 50 per cent. over five years. Those reductions will be validated by independent audit and the results of the audit will be presented to the monitoring committee and will appear in its annual report. In making that reduction, the industry will seek to ensure that it is applied evenly over time by type of sign and by geographical location. Priority will be given to removing signs that are clearly visible from schools. The programme will be carried out in consultation with the retail trade.

Secondly, the industry has agreed to ensure that all existing signs that do not yet carry health warnings shall do so by the end of June. Under the current agreement, signs erected before 1983 did not have to carry a health warning. That provision naturally caused some confusion to the public and, not surprisingly, has been the subject of a number of complaints to the monitoring committee. This programme of action by the industry represents a major step forward in the control of shopfront advertising. It will involve the industry in considerable expense and loss of advertising space and that shows its readiness to make the voluntary system effective. It demonstrates that very real and rapid progress can be made through the voluntary system without recourse to legislation.

In addition to tackling the system of shopfront advertising, the new voluntary agreement will address a number of other areas of recent concern. For example, it will extend the present ban on poster advertising that is visible from schools to cover hoardings that are visible from children's playgrounds. Furthermore, as the House may already be aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health this week appointed Sir John Blelloch as the new chairman of the monitoring committee. I am sure that he will carry out that role with the same impartiality and vigour as did the previous chairman, Sir Peter Lazarus.

I hope that the House will accept this clear evidence that the voluntary system is continuing to work effectively. Since 1971 successive Governments have concluded voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry to control advertising and other aspects of its operations. This Government have extended and enhanced the system of agreements to provide an unprecedented level of protection to both smokers and non-smokers. The current agreement, concluded in 1986, represented a major step forward. It cut by half the amount that could be spent on poster advertising, abolished advertising in cinemas and ended the advertising of high-tar cigarettes. It also banned advertising in a range of magazines aimed at young women and banned poster advertising outside schools. It enhanced the long-standing requirements for the provision of health warnings and maintained the comprehensive controls on the content of advertising—something which cannot be done as effectively by legislation which is inevitably inflexible.

The 1986 agreement created the joint monitoring committee of which Sir John Blelloch has just been appointed chairman. The committee consists of representatives of the Government and of industry. It receives and investigates complaints on alleged breaches of the agreement and, where necessary, it seeks to rectify matters. It also commissions independent research into how aspects of the agreements are working. A separate agreement, concluded in 1987, controls expenditure by tobacco companies on sports sponsorship and regulates the content of promotional material for sporting events.

A third agreement, on product modification, has resulted in a significant reduction in the average tar yield of cigarettes. The Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health reported that, together with the reduction in the number of people who smoke, the product modification agreement has contributed to a fall in smoking-related diseases.

The system of voluntary agreements has made a major contribution to public health in the past 20 years. The progress made through the voluntary system will now be consolidated with a further significant advance in the level of control over tobacco advertising. This development demonstrates just how flexible, responsive and comprehensive the voluntary system can be. Legislation, by contrast, is cumbersome and slow, and cannot respond quickly to new threats to public health or to anomalies in the existing system. Clause 6 is limited to one type of advertising and might well have proved difficult for the courts to interpret. Any anomalies or problems in the operation of the clause could have been corrected only by amendment to legislation. That is not so with a voluntary agreement which can be applied flexibly and effectively.

I hope that the House will join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on his success in extending and maintaining the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising. I also hope that it will acknowledge the readiness of the trade to agree to this more demanding arrangement. I know that the hon. Member for Warley, East has been sceptical about how much can be achieved by negotiation, but I hope that he is convinced by what I have been able to report that it would be in the interests of the public and particularly children to give the new voluntary agreement time to show itself effective. I hope that he, too, will support amendment No. 13.

If clause 6 is removed from the Bill, we shall need to consider the relevance of clause 7. The terms "local authority" and "premises" are defined elsewhere in the Bill. The definitions of "advertisement" and "tobacco sponsored event" relate only to a clause which I hope the House will agree to remove. Finally, "tobacco" is defined in clause 5 for the purpose of that clause. We are left, therefore, with a redundant clause, and we should remove it from the Bill. If the House agrees to accept amendment No. 13, I hope that it will agree also to amendment No. 14.

Amendment No. 16 is consequential and tidies up the title. It will be needed if the House decides to adopt amendment No. 13, which would remove clause 6.

Mr. Faulds: My Bill included a clause on shopfront advertising because this forms an ever-expanding message route to children, and one not blocked by the voluntary agreement which stops other tobacco advertising near schools. The clause sought to prohibit the advertising of tobacco brands or tobacco-sponsored events from retail premises.

As the House will know, the industry has been widely criticised for pretending to publish warnings about the illegality of selling cigarettes to children, while in fact providing a pathetically small notice—it appears in some shops and not others—that is dwarfed by the point-of-sale promotional graphics surrounding it. Such displays in favour of tobacco are plastered over the shops seen and used every day by children.

Throughout the discussions which I have had on the Bill with Ministers, it has been made clear that the Government opposed this provision on shopfront advertising because they preferred voluntary rather than regulatory control of tobacco advertising. I was, however, not prepared to delete the clause at the earlier stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament since I hoped that the debate on it might provoke both Government and industry into further consideration of the impact of shopfront tobacco advertising near schools. That, of course, is what has developed.

The clause won support in Committee, and the discussion there highlighted the problem most graphically. Not only did hon. Members of all parties speak strongly in favour of controls on shopfront advertising, but the Committee was shown photographs of shopfronts covered in tobacco advertising, some of it using cartoon-type characters very likely to appeal to children.

I am pleased that hon. Members' strong support for this element of the Bill has indeed produced some positive result, in the form of the negotiations that have taken place between Government and industry on expanding the voluntary code in relation to shopfront advertising, the outcome of which was announced yesterday, and on which the Minister has enlarged today. I must say that I think I personally owe him a considerable debt of gratitude. He has played a role—I am sure that this is the case with his colleagues in the Department of Health—in talking some sense into the tobacco industry in terms of the expansion of the voluntary agreement. I am most grateful to him for his efforts and his success.

In the light of this and of other concessions to my point of view made by the Minister, and for the sake of the Bill as a whole, I am prepared to let the clause drop. I look forward, however, to a really positive change in practice by the tobacco industry. I know that many individuals and national organisations, particularly PAT, will be monitoring the situation closely.

The Bill that I introduced was originally drafted by PAT. It came to the House with the support of a wide range of organisations and concerned parents throughout Britain. It tackles what it is fair to describe as an evil—the cynical breaking of the law in order not only to profit from children who smoke, but to encourage them to smoke. It also came with all-party support.

12 noon

The Bill has been carefully considered in Committee and concessions have been made on all sides. In some areas the Bill has been strengthened, and in others we have made compromises to temper it and so achieve maximum consensus. I have no doubt that it has returned to the House in a form that will encourage parents to accept that their children will be far better protected from tobacco in future. It is now in a form which should discourage offenders and ultimately lead to more and tougher action.

We all know that taking measures to reduce the sale of cigarettes to children will not, in themselves, stop children smoking. We know—this argument has been made a number of times today—that schools, parents and others, as well as the industry, have a responsibility to contribute. The Bill is based on the premise that all attempts to discourage children from smoking will not succeed while it is easy for them to purchase cigarettes and while it is easy for people to break the law and sell cigarettes to children. The Bill is a major advance on the unhappy and unsatisfactory status quo. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Sims: As a sponsor of the Bill, I am happy to agree with the proposal of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) that the two clauses be dropped. I do so for the reasons that he gave, although not with any great enthusiasm. I am prepared to give at least a tepid welcome to the terms of the agreement announced yesterday, on the "half a loaf" argument, although many of us would have preferred proposals along these lines.

I have noted the Minister's advocacy of voluntary agreements. I should be more persuaded if I felt that they would be adhered to. We have no great faith in voluntary agreements which, over the years, have been steadily broken both in the spirit and in the letter. It was part of a previous agreement that there should be no poster advertising near schools, for reasons that are self-evident and consistent with the themes that we are discussing today.

However, we know that, apart from instances where that was not complied with and poster advertisements were put up close to schools, there was an almost immediate and noticeable increase in shopfront advertising—not least, advertising on shopfronts adjacent to schools, children's playgrounds and so on—in exactly the way that the hon. Member for Warley, East described. Surely that cannot have been other than contrary to the spirit of the agreement.

Hon. Members may be aware of the survey carried out in Hackney, which commented:

"The 1986 Voluntary Agreement is being infringed daily in the London Borough of Hackney".

The evidence upon which the report was based was not difficult to accumulate. The report cited four ways in which the code had been directly broken, and one in which the spirit of the agreement had been infringed. There was also a most interesting study of the position in Edinburgh, published in 1989 in *Health Education Research*. It commented on the limited remit of the voluntary agreement, which did not restrict children's exposure to shopfront advertising.

There is another area that is outside the scope of the Bill. I am bound to express my concern, and that of many in the field, at the way in which the spirit of the voluntary agreements are circumvented by the extent to which tobacco companies not only sponsor a whole range of events but especially sporting events, with the implied connection between the sponsor and good health, which is of course the reverse of the truth. There are also indirect forms of advertising—for example, the way in which the companies promote holidays and a variety of activities not directly connected with tobacco products but which nevertheless promote their products.

I am pleased to see two of the provisions, to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred, within the new agreement. First, priority will be given to reducing the number of permanent advertising signs on shops that are clearly visible from schools. Again, I hope that the spirit as

[Mr. Sims]

well as the letter of that agreement will be adhered to, because a shopfront, although not clearly visible from a school, may be just around the corner where children will pass it daily. Surely that should be included.

I am especially glad that, from 1 July, all external signs on shops will carry a health warning. It has always seemed to me to be an extraordinary anomaly that other forms of advertising were required to carry a health warning, yet enormous advertisements outside shops did not. This voluntary agreement is a step in the right direction, and we shall watch carefully how it is implemented, both in its spirit and its letter.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Speaking of health warnings, does the hon. Gentleman accept that they ought to be more conspicuous than they normally are? Secondly, is not it an anomaly that we are concerned that drugs are taken to enhance sporting performance, but that we do not seem to be unduly concerned about a drug that is one of the greatest dangers to health?

Mr. Sims: I agree completely on the hon. Gentleman's second point. As regards the first, as far as I know, the size of warnings on advertisements is not covered in the voluntary agreement, although, interestingly, the size and placing of warnings on cigarette packets is now covered by the European Community directives, which leads me to observe that this may be the last voluntary agreement. Many of us hope so. A number of European countries have a complete ban on such advertising, and EC directives to extend that ban throughout the Community are under discussion. One hopes that those discussions will come to fruition and that the original intentions of this clause, which we are now revoking, will come to pass.

Mr. Michael Brown: I would have spoken at some length on this amendment, had it not been for the speech by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), the sponsor of the Bill. I was concerned about the inclusion of this clause and I now know the reasons why the hon. Gentleman pursued the matter in Committee. The subject cropped up in Committee and I think that it was the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) who was concerned that the voluntary agreement had not been renewed. There was some controversy and concern, which I suspect was behind the inclusion of this clause in the Bill, that the new voluntary agreement was not even available in draft form, so I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to include clause 6 in the Bill.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be encouraged, as I was, by what the Minister said. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), I have always supported the idea of voluntary agreements. I thought that he was being a little churlish about the tobacco industry when he said that it did not adhere to the spirit of the voluntary agreements. It has a vested interest in ensuring that such voluntary agreements work. As he rightly pointed out, the tobacco industry knows that there is pressure from the European Commission.

Let me remind my hon. Friend of the latest developments. Just before Christmas, when the Bill had been presented but not debated, the European Commission sought to introduce a directive controlling the advertising of tobacco. We debated that directive shortly before the Christmas recess. It was not accepted by the Council of Ministers when it met at the beginning of December, but the European Community may well return to the matter, and the European Commission may introduce another directive for the Council's consideration.

If I am to persuade Ministers that such a directive is not needed, it is important for me to be able to demonstrate, with my colleagues who believe in the voluntary agreements, that their spirit is being adhered to. The tobacco industry is concerned, as I am, about what may come from the European Community, so it is in its own interest to ensure that the voluntary agreement between it and the Government that is about to be signed is delivered. I hope that that will reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst and the hon. Member for Warley, East.

Since then, matters have moved on, and the voluntary agreement is due to be renewed in draft. I am content for the clause to be deleted.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said that he hoped that Europe would move towards banning tobacco advertisements. I am sure that the Commission will take into account what has happened over the years. In the past 20 years, smoking in the United Kingdom has gone down by 30 per cent., in the United States by 20 per cent. and in the Netherlands by 40 per cent., but all those countries permit advertising.

However, smoking has increased in some Community countries: for instance, in Portugal and Italy it has gone up by 8 per cent. In Norway, it has dropped by 5 per cent. It may console the hon. Member for Warley, East to know that he is not sacrificing much. He is wise to delete clause 6. By doing so, he has eliminated much of the argument that we would have adduced if we had to fight the matter. I think that it is probably right to rest on voluntary arrangements.

Mr. Sims: Is my hon. Friend aware of a survey carried out in New Zealand? It showed that, in 18 countries where advertising was banned, the extent of children's smoking was reduced. That is what we are concerned about.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am glad that my hon. Friend has referred to my old country, New Zealand. Some extraordinary things are going on there. Sponsored events will be phased out by 1993, but will be replaced by a Government-funded health sponsorship council. That would be a heavy charge on public funds, whereas the cost of the voluntary agreement is carried entirely by the tobacco industry. I should have thought that a voluntary arrangement would be much better than legislation.

12.15 pm

Mr. Alan Williams: I am at a disadvantage that other hon. Members might not experience. I have not seen the voluntary agreement and do not know what it contains. Does the hon. Gentleman know the terms of the voluntary agreement? If we do not know what they are, how do we know whether we are getting a good or a bad deal?

Mr. Peter Lloyd *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: The Minister will be summing up——

Mr. Lloyd: I allowed my hon. Friend to get up again so that I could properly intervene during his reply. As the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend know, this is a matter for the Secretary of State for Health, not for me. I

understand that the agreement is nearing completion and that it covers a wider range of topics than those to which I referred earlier.

The Secretary of State wanted to make available for the debate information concerning points upon which agreement had been reached in principle that he thought would be of interest to us. We shall have to wait for a few weeks before the full agreement is published. It will deal with the topics to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Alan Williams: I cannot intervene on an intervention.

Sir Trevor Skeet: No. It is, perhaps, just that I should continue to bat for a few more minutes.

According to *The Sunday Telegraph* of 2 December 1990, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), said that the two countries that had achieved the biggest reduction in cigarette consumption were Britain and Holland, which had voluntary agreements. He went on:

"Not one of the countries which had imposed or proposed a ban on advertising had recorded a fall."

That is a good commendation of voluntary agreements. They are very successful. Voluntary agreements can be altered periodically. The subject is normally discussed just before a Budget. Legislation is much more formal; it does not have the flexibility of voluntary agreements. Therefore, I recommend their continuance.

It may console the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) to know that the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses says that it fears clause 6, since the estimated cost of replacing shopfronts ranges from £200 for a simple notice to £1,000 for a full display. That could prove to be extremely expensive for people who are going through difficult times.

The National Federation of Retail Newsagents represents about 32,000 independent retail newsagents. It represents only small businesses—the shop round the corner. The federation is doing its utmost to ensure that the people who run these shops act responsibly. It says:

"As recently as last October this Federation provided a distinctive window display poster to each of its 32,000 members with the wording: 'Your Newsagent Cares—Tobacco goods will not be sold to persons under sixteen years of age from these premises.'"

That is a step in the right direction and the best way to go about it.

If arrangements can be reached with the companies concerned—they are participating by trying to enforce them through their agencies—the Bill is far more likely to work. I pay tribute to the work done by the hon. Member for Warley, East. The Bill may not now be in the form in which he introduced it, but it will now be effective, since in due course it will be administered by the Government and the judiciary.

Mr. Knowles: I join my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) in congratulating the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). For a Back Bencher to get a Bill on the statute book is a considerable undertaking at any time, but to manage it on a subject which can be deeply divisive and to get the Committee to pull together has been no mean achievement.

I should also like to offer him an apology. I mentioned earlier the libertarian and anti-libertarian arguments, and he presumed, because he had sponsored the Bill, that I was including him in those comments. I can think of few Members who are less likely to support anti-libertarian measures. I would have had more doubts about other members of the Committee, but on such issues one normally knows exactly where the hon. Member for Warley, East stands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. To put the matter beyond any doubt, I should make it clear that we are not yet on Third Reading. We are debating a particular amendment.

Mr. Knowles: I should also like to comment on the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) about sponsorship. He seemed to take particular exception to the tobacco industry sponsoring sporting events. The industry sponsors two categories of event; sporting events and cultural activities such as concerts. In many such cases, the costs are high, and one cannot charge the economic price; so such events need sponsorship. If one unilaterally chopped out sponsorship from the tobacco industry—and there is a lot of it—that would mean the end of many sporting and cultural activities. One would have to bear in mind that that would be the net effect. My hon. Friend might consider that it would still be worth doing, but I would disagree.

I am certainly happy about the removal of clause 6. The effect on small retailers would have been devastating. We have to be careful: when one seeks to achieve an end by imposing restrictions, if they do not work there is a tendency to impose totally draconian measures without returning to first base. That can be a danger. A few years ago, the Surgeon General of the United States said that passive smoking caused 2,000 deaths a year in the United States. His evidence was challenged and he had to withdraw that statement, yet one still sees that quoted as his opinion.

The difficulty is that, all too often, people start off from a set position and they do not look at the evidence purely on the facts before them. Their minds are already made up. It reminds me of the old joke about the drunk using the lamp post more for support than illumination; that all too often tends to happen in matters such as we are discussing today.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Another example from America supports what he is saying. In the 1950s and 1960s, they wanted to put fluoride in the public water supply. In the 1970s and 1980s, evidence was adduced that persuaded more and more authorities that that was wrong. There is often a time lag before one gets the medical evidence that sometimes upsets the established wisdom of earlier decades.

Mr. Knowles: My hon. Friend is correct. We can recall the alleged health effects of various products. One year, fats are good for you; the next year, they are bad for you. One year salt is good for you; and then it is bad for you. If one wrote all those theories into law, we would be chopping and changing the law even more than we do already.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst spoke about advertising. Again, it is hard to reach a conclusion. In Italy, where tobacco advertising has been banned since 1962, smoking has risen dramatically. The same is true of Portugal. Evidence shows that if one starts from a pre-set position, one can always find evidence to support one's point of view. That is the difficulty.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If such a ban on advertising were to be introduced, would the hon. Gentleman, as a self-confessed heavy smoker, feel such deprivation?

Mr. Knowles: The answer is both yes and no—yes, in that I am a long-term smoker. I know the brand I like and I am unlikely to change. So I would not necessarily miss the advertising, because my mind is made up about brand loyalty. However, I should object on principle that I could not discover other brands. I am loyal to a particular make of car, but that does not mean that I do not want to consider advertisements for other cars.

The same argument applies—it is the basic libertarian argument about deprivation of information for what is seen as the greater good. My worry is that we start selling principles for what seem good reasons, but then there is no stopping. If an argument applies to one issue, it must apply to another, and so it continues down the line.

I have already said that I am suspicious of anti-libertarian arguments. As one would expect, I could not put it in better terms than those used by Macauley. He said that the Puritans banned bear-baiting

"not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators."

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I find that last sentence by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) difficult to follow. Some of my hon. Friend's earlier remarks were more interesting.

One of the reasons why there is less smoking in this country and a faster reduction in smoking than in many others is because two remarkable medical statisticians in 1953 first discerned that it was highly likely that smoking tobacco was harmful to health. The two doctors continued in other areas—they did the work on radon and established an epidemiology of illness and diseases. Because of their discoveries, the medical profession in Britain took up the tobacco issue. We should pay tribute to Dr. Charles Fletcher, who was one of those who did much to raise public awareness.

We are discussing the dropping of clause 6. I shall tie my remarks to the voluntary agreement and its substitution for the use of the law. It is necessary to remind ourselves of the difference between smoking and alcohol. There is room for voluntary agreement on both those issues. Alcohol is not necessarily damaging, although it is if used in excess. It is also associated with other illnesses. One in 10 people is an alcoholic and many people have diseases or conditions which make alcohol harmful—pregnancy is one such condition.

There is no argument at all for tobacco, although one must be tolerant of those who still use it. I shall not talk too much about it, because I should confuse Auberon Waugh if I talked about tobacco as well as alcohol. I was able to stop smoking because I realised that I was addicted. We cannot expect all adults to be able to do that easily. Kipling told us of those who give up smoking easily as they do it often enough. There is agreement that we should try to stop succeeding generations of people from picking up an avoidable habit.

Most public service is about trying to promote well-being. That may involve welfare or material resources, but together they promote well-being, which is what brings most of us into Parliament. It may also take us into the civil service and public services, such as health and education, and into advertising or other private sector occupations.

One aspect of promoting well-being is to get rid of the unnecessary distress, disadvantage and handicap which results from young people doing what so many of us did when we were their age, which is to pick up smoking in a fairly casual way, because it is forbidden, because friends do it or because of boredom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must say once again that we are not on Third Reading; nor are we on Second Reading. I am waiting for the hon. Member to address himself to the amendment.

Mr. Bottomley: One of the disadvantages of being at the far end of the Chamber is that I may not have said loudly enough that I was referring directly to whether clause 6 should be dropped and to the effect of the voluntary agreement on young people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Despite what the hon. Member says, I am still waiting for his words to reflect what is in the amendment.

12.30 pm

Mr. Bottomley: I hope that my speech will not contain too many paragraphs that link in to my first thought, but I must not transgress your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or be tempted into making a longer speech than I choose to make.

The issue is whether the voluntary agreement will be a sufficient substitute for clause 6. The worst type of advertising that children see is the example of their parents smoking. Any parent who wants children not to start the habit should consider smoking only when or where the children are not present.

Children go, with or without their parents, into confectioners' shops and local newsagents' shops. The diversion of tobacco companies' funds to small retailers has made a big difference to the impact on young people. One cannot ban young people from smoking. If one tried to ban, it would provide a challenge. Most of us can overcome such a challenge and do whatever has been forbidden. Clause 6 matters, because we need an environment in which, although not involved themselves, people understand why they should have sympathy for those adults who still need to buy tobacco.

Dr. Godman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that advertising gives young people in particular the idea that this addiction has a spurious legitimacy? Advertising provides youngsters with the rationalisation that smoking cigarettes is acceptable.

Mr. Bottomley: There is a slight twist. We should praise confectioners, newsagents and small retailers. They have been co-operating more and more openly in not selling cigarettes to young people. I draw an analogy with the anti-drink driving campaign. Young people who were twice as bad as their fathers became only half as bad, having quickly changed their habits. That happened because of signs in pubs and clubs stating that low-alcohol and alcohol-free drinks were available. The places where people obtained drink were made allies, letting people achieve what they wanted to achieve.

I hope that the voluntary agreement works. My hon. Friend the Minister announced that Sir John Bielloch

would be the chairman of the monitoring committee, and we send our best wishes to him. Does the voluntary agreement apply in Northern Ireland? If my hon. Friend the Minister cannot answer immediately, perhaps he will make the matter plain later. The Bill should be followed by Northern Ireland legislation as soon as possible.

We are not concerned in clause 6 or in the Bill as a whole with the libertarian versus anti-libertarian argument. We are concerned with how to create conditions whereby fewer young people in succeeding generations pick up the smoking habit. All the arguments are against picking up the habit. I ask people to find ways of monitoring each cohort so that information is published as regularly as the children's pocket money surveys, once or twice a year.

We should start publicising the fact that things are getting better. There is a market in information. Peer group pressure should be reinforced, so that, no matter whether a young person is mighty or lowly, rich or poor, black or white, from the country or from the town, they look forward to the year 2000 and beyond, powerful enough within themselves not to pick up the smoking habit and to set an example to their parents, just as many young people do in other respects.

Mr. Robert Banks: I warmly welcome the removal of the clause and the introduction of the voluntary agreement. I had grave reservations about the clause, because it would have forced shopkeepers throughout the country to remove their canopies and other fascias, causing a colossal upheaval, not to mention a great deal of expense and work. It would have been a drastic and unfair measure, and I welcome the fact that the voluntary agreement will avoid it.

When tobacco companies display cigarette brand names on the fascias or blinds of shops, they are merely competing for a market share. The sight of a brand name such as Marlboro displayed on a shop would cause few children to rush off and to buy that brand. Such advertising does not encourage children to smoke but draws to the attention of those who already smoke the name of a particular brand of cigarettes, and creates an image. There is a danger that the image created by tobacco companies promotes the concept of smoking. I welcome the fact that the voluntary agreement stipulates that advertisements should not be displayed in the immediate vicinity of schools, because such image-making advertisements can put people into the mood to smoke.

My hon. Friend's measure should also be welcomed by shopkeepers and retailers, as it will save them from a measure that would have caused them huge problems.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said that voluntary agreements were often not kept. However, my information shows that they have been well observed across the board. I make a point of saying so not merely to place on record what I believe are the facts but because it is important that breaches of the code are reported to the monitoring committee, which exists to investigate complaints and should be used for that purpose.

My hon. Friend said that, under a previous voluntary agreement, it was agreed that hoarding near schools should not be used for cigarette advertising but that shop windows in the same neighbourhood seemed to display even more such advertisements. If that is so, the part of the voluntary agreement relating to hoardings was certainly being observed. My hon. Friend said that the spirit of the agreement was not being fully observed. That is not a strong argument for anyone who hankers after a legislative approach. It argues for an extension of the voluntary agreement to cover shopfronts as well, which the new voluntary agreement does.

I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friends who have spoken in favour of the voluntary agreement approach. My hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) showed how far from simple such matters were, and made the interesting point that smoking had declined more slowly in EC countries that had banned advertising than in those that had not.

People who believe that advertising is effective should consider whether the more powerful message for many people who see cigarette advertising is contained in the health warning it carries, not the advert itself. Without trying to predict what conclusion such consideration would lead to, I say yet again that the voluntary agreement insists—this will satisfy those who believe that advertising for cigarettes is powerful, but advertising that carries a health warning is also effective—that all shopfronts mentioning cigarettes should provide a health warning. The voluntary agreement that came into effect in 1986 carried that requirement only for new advertising added to shopfronts, and advertisements placed before 1983 did not require health warnings. That has all changed, and all advertising on shopfronts must, in future, carry a health warning.

Mr. Alan Williams: If I have followed the logic of the Minister's argument correctly, he is saying that companies have been profligate with shareholders' money because they are wasting it on advertising which damages sales rather than helping them. I should have thought that the only reason companies spend enormous sums of advertising is because their market research shows clearly that the advertising shows a good return.

Mr. Lloyd: I am trying to make two points. The first is the effect of advertising and the effectiveness of the health warning in bringing to the public's attention the health hazards of smoking are complex matters. Secondly, however one judges advertising or the value of the health warning, the warning must be present on all shopfronts where cigarettes are mentioned. I should have thought that the House would agree that that was a welcome development.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) asked whether the voluntary agreement applied in Northern Ireland. I am glad to say that it does.

I thank the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) for his kind remarks and for his readiness to consider clause 6 and accept the Government's advice that it should be removed from the Bill. I know that he was extremely concerned that, at that time, there seemed to be no prospect of an agreement with the trade on a renewal of tighter arrangements on cigarette advertising. As I said in Committee, I believed that discussions would produce a satisfactory result, and considered that to be the way forward. I am glad that sufficient progress has been made for at least some of that development to be revealed today, to give the hon. Member for Warley, East the assurance that he wanted and that it was right for him to want.

[Mr. Lloyd]

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 4, line 42, leave out Clause 7.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Title

Amendments made: No. 16, in line 4, leave out from '1937;' to first 'to' in line 7.

No. 15, in line 7, leave out from 'cigarettes;' to 'to' in line 9.

No. 17, in line 10, after 'machines;', insert

'to make provision with respect to enforcement action by local authorities relating to offences connected with the sale of tobacco and to other matters;'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Faulds.]*

12.44 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have come a long way since Second Reading on 18 January. The Standing Committee met four times to consider the Bill in detail. During those lengthy sittings, it debated many amendments tabled by the Government and by the Bill's promoter, the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds).

The amendments sought to improve the effectiveness of the Bill. A number, however, did not meet with the Committee's approval and we had to start again. Initially, therefore, progress was slow, but the debates and disagreements were always lively, amicable and constructive. I particularly thank the hon. Member for Warley, East for that, and other members of the Committee.

There was regular, constructive dialogue outside the Committee between myself, officials, the Bill's sponsors and Parents Against Tobacco. I admired the patient, persistent and effective advocacy of Parents Against Tobacco. The Bill was much improved in Committee.

The Bill has not been easy to handle as it encroaches on the territory of the Departments of Health, of Trade and Industry and of the Environment, not to mention the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office. I am grateful for the co-operation of my ministerial colleagues and officials in those Departments.

The hon. Member for Warley, East has good reason to be proud of the Bill. He stuck to his guns on some matters and was bold enough to have second thoughts on others, all with the noble intention of getting a good and effective Bill on the statute book. I believe that the Bill, if enacted, will long be a tribute to his efforts.

We are all concerned about the grave dangers of young children starting to smoke. Our health education programmes and initiatives address that serious matter. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) will agree that education is essential. The Bill, however, will offer young children increased protection by toughening the law and by increasing the penalties on retailers who flout it by selling tobacco to children. It will, I believe, be welcomed by parents and by the public in general and, not least—I wish to emphasise this—by the vast majority of law-abiding retailers, who are as dismayed as everyone else at how easy it is for children under 16 to buy cigarettes in some shops. I am sure that the House will want to give the Bill a Third Reading and speed it on to the statute book.

12.47 pm

Mr. Faulds: I feel it incumbent on me to make one or two comments at the end of the stony road that we have pursued over some months.

I express enormous gratitude to the Minister, because I thought at the beginning of the journey that he was not sympathetic to the purposes of the Bill. He shortly proved me wrong, because he made immense efforts to achieve a consensus and make the Bill effective. He has had the additional chore of continuous consultations with, I think, five or six Departments, all of which he pursued assiduously, to the point where enactment of the Bill will change the appallingly unsatisfactory non-observance of existing legislation. The Bill will safeguard the interests of children, who suffered under the previous unsatisfactory position. I am most grateful for the Minister's enormous co-operation.

We have had to yield on one or two points, but, overall, the Bill will enormously increase protection to children. I am most grateful for what the Minister has done and for the enormous help of Parents Against Tobacco with the campaign. I am enormously grateful to the dear Lord for drawing me No. 1 in the ballot.

12.49 pm

Mr. Summerson: I welcome the Bill in its present form, although I confess that I suffer from a difference of opinion within myself about smoking. As a libertarian, I believe that it must be left to people to make up their own minds what they do. On the other hand, I feel that smoking is such a disgusting habit that the House is perfectly at liberty to make inroads into the problem from time to time.

We must bear in mind the fact that if we make something illegal or hard to get hold of, we inevitably make it more attractive. Children's smoking is not a new phenomenon. I am sure that, when most of us were at school, it was not at all unusual for children to go behind the bicycle sheds to indulge in what was then probably one of their favourite habits. I heard of one school that did not have bicycle sheds, where the pupils got together to form a deputation and went to those in authority complaining bitterly that they had nowhere to keep their bicycles. Needless to say, that was not the real object of the exercise.

I welcome the removal of clause 6, with which I would have had serious difficulties as it would have caused great hardship to many shops and shopkeepers. Many tobacconists also run news rounds and sell confectionery; in the trade, they are known collectively as "news-conf-tob". The "tob" element forms an important part of such retailers' trade, and they would have found it a great handicap if they had had to remove from their premises every reference to tobacco.

On the subject of smoking generally, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) said, it is difficult for the smoker who is thinking of giving up to admit to himself that he is addicted—that he is using a drug and that it has him by the throat. It must be because of the addiction that so many smokers are so inconsiderate in

indulging their habit. As I said, I am a libertarian, but I feel that smokers have only themselves to blame if the House introduces legislation to curb their habit.

I am talking in particular about people who light up in restaurants. What could be more disgusting, when one is trying to enjoy a meal, than finding that someone at the next table is smoking? The smoke has a way of wafting across one's table, and very nasty it is, too. Just the other day it was my second wedding anniversary which, fortunately, I remembered in the nick of time. Having remembered it in the nick of time, I decided that I must do something extra special, not least because, on the occasion of my first wedding anniversary, I had arranged to take my wife to a local government conference in my constituency. Having survived that, I decided that in the second year I should do something a little better, so I took my wife to lunch at the Savoy. I am happy to say that my mother-in-law joined us.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend in full flight, but I am deeply gratified to learn that the title that he once held—"the most romantic man in the House"—still holds true.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to hear about the discomfort experienced by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), but I must say that I am finding it a little difficult to relate his experiences to what is in the Bill, and that is what we must discuss on Third Reading.

Mr. Summerson: Yes, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was going on to say that if smoking has such a bad effect on adults who do not smoke, it has an even worse effect on children. That is particularly true of cigar smoke that happens to drift across my table, if I may finish the story, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Smoking is certainly a disgusting habit and if you will permit me to say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am afraid that even some of our colleagues in the House when having supper in the Tea Room—*[Interruption.]*—but perhaps I have said enough.

Despite what I said earlier about libertarian principles, it is a fact to which I am sure the whole House subscribes that young people need to be protected. It is entirely justified that the House should interest itself in young people, and particularly in a habit like this which can be so damaging to them. I welcome the Bill.

12.55 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Bill and congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on his tenacity in seeing it through. As a son of the manse, he has been taught from his earliest days to tread a lonely road and to stick to his point. I thank the Minister for making it abundantly plain that the new agreement applies also to Northern Ireland, just as the Bill is intended to apply to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am afraid that it does not apply directly to Northern Ireland. That will be done in the usual way by an Order in Council, and we intend to implement one.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am glad that that is the intention and that the agreement applies to Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) talked about bear-baiting and quoted Macaulay in that context. Today we welcome this Bill for the pleasure that it will bring to genuine tobacconists, to parents and to young people, and for the relief from pain that it will bring to others who will not become addicts.

Many children are worried about adults. I recently received a letter from a primary school in my constituency which has joined Smokebusters. The libertarians and the tobacco lobby may not be too happy with that word, but those young people argue for better control of advertising and are worried about the spread of the poison that is damaging their parents. My father suffered from the addiction, regularly justifying it on the grounds that, as he said, it cleared his lungs in the morning when he started smoking. I had to tell him that that was because it irritated his chest.

I hope that the Bill will be another light along the pathway that will lead us to tobacco-free air and the ability to breathe freely.

12.58 pm

Miss Lestor: I, too, welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on introducing it and on the spirit of co-operation that he and the Government have shown in reaching a consensus on various matters. At the outset, we were all anxious to put a measure on the statute book that would protect children and make it more difficult for them to gain access to tobacco and cigarettes. That we have achieved.

It is a pity that we cannot continue the air of romance introduced to our proceedings a little earlier, although it is nice to know that we have some romance in the House of Commons. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will pull me up if I continue on those lines, however.

On a serious note, much has been said about the responsibility of parents. We must also bear it in mind that many parents who are addicted will be grateful to the House for legislation that may help to protect their children from becoming addicted as they did, possibly when children themselves. It is not easy for a parent to tell a child not to do something to which he or she is addicted. So parents may be grateful for a measure that will help to prevent their children from making their mistakes.

12.59 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I welcome the Bill and congratulate its promoter. I am glad that he stuck to his guns and that by doing so he extracted a concession on the—albeit voluntary—agreement. I am also glad that Northern Ireland will benefit from it. I do not generally welcome Orders in Council for Northern Ireland, but I welcome this one. I trust that the Minister will speed up the legislation so that Northern Ireland will not be left behind. Parents have the first and primary responsibility to ensure that their children are protected from tobacco, but they must be aided and abetted by the state, and the temptation of advertising should not be placed in the way of children. I am glad that the Bill will become law.

1 pm

Mr. Maclennan: I add my congratulations as well as those of my hon. Friends, particularly those who represent Scottish constituencies, to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), who has promoted the Bill with great skill. In parliamentary life there are few opportunities to

[Mr. Maclennan]

legislate in this manner. In my first Parliament I had the good fortune to be responsible for two successful private Members' Bills, but since then I have not been successful.

The hon. Member for Warley, East can take great satisfaction from the way in which he has piloted the Bill. The progress of the legislation will be followed with great interest in Scotland to see how it works in practice, because in Scotland prosecutions for breaches of the law are almost unheard of. The legislation will enable us to monitor through the local authorities the steps that are being taken. The legislation will be live and will not just lie on the statute book because it imposes on local authorities obligations to which they will periodically have to return. That will keep in the minds of the authorities and the public the great importance of protecting young people from a habit that is deeply damaging to their health and well-being.

1.2 pm

Mr. Michael Brown: When the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) won the ballot and chose this subject for his Bill I was very worried, because the subject arouses great passions in the House and a great deal of potential opposition. He faced the massed ranks of my hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and it says much for the hon. Gentleman's tenacity and skill that the Bill has reached its present stage.

I have never had the good fortune to win the ballot for a private Member's Bill, but I had to pilot a controversial private Bill and know exactly the hazards that one encounters. If those of us who opposed the hon. Gentleman had taken an irresponsible route by using the resources at our disposal and occupying the time of the House we could have ensured that the Bill did not go through. We did not do that, because such a course would have been wholly irresponsible.

In Committee the hon. Member for Warley, East went to a great deal of trouble to explain to us the intentions of the Bill and he certainly satisfied me about its genuine motives. He may even have on his side the Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco. I should like to quote from that organisation's document called "The right to smoke: a Conservative view" which was written by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), and which sets out the Conservative view about the right to smoke. The document states:

> "Children, on the other hand, are different. The capacity for making an informed choice exists in them only potentially. It becomes actual with time and the gaining of experience. Until then, there is no virtue in treating them as free. Insofar as smoking cigarettes involves very probable dangers to health, they should be kept out of the hands of children. The only room for argument here is over means rather than ends. Control should be enforced ideally by the parents. But if they refuse or are too weak to do this, I see a perfectly legitimate role for the State. The Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 is only the most recent declaration that this role has been assumed."

I am sure that my hon. Friend would add the Bill to that list. I hope that the hon. Member for Warley, East will not get cold feet when I tell him that I suspect that he might even have the support of FOREST on the objective which he has set himself.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): It seems from what has been said so far on Third Reading that there are two special areas of concern. First, there is addiction and, secondly, there is the danger to health that is caused by smoking cigarettes. When either factor is put in conjunction with children, there is even greater concern. It seems, however, that we shall have to think extremely carefully about other activities that are addictive and damaging to health, including, possibly, alcohol and newer developments that have come on to the market such as computer games. That may seem a rather odd conjunction, but we shall have to consider carefully how far the principles that have been raised during consideration of the Bill should be applied to other habits and developments.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend has advanced a valid argument. The hon. Member for Warley, East was sensible enough to recognise that there are those of us who take a certain view on the principle of the right to do something as an adult, but who believe that a line can be legitimately drawn if we are challenged on the freedom of the individual. I do not think that as a result of the passage of the Bill and the discussions that have taken place there has been any disagreement that the line should be drawn at the point where we come to discuss the health and welfare of children. When these matters were discussed in great detail in Committee, we were concerned, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood wrote in his article, with the means rather than the end. There has been some genuine give and take which has been an example of the House and the Committee system operating at their best.

I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East on the way in which he has gone about taking the Bill through the House. It is an extremely difficult business to get a Bill through this place, even when there is complete agreement. To have triumphed and secured the passage of a Bill that has aroused fierce passions and controversy, and in part the opposition of my hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, North and for Nottingham, East, as well as my opposition, is a sign of the hon. Gentleman's skill and tenacity. I congratulate him.

1.7 pm

Dr. Godman: I offer my compliments and congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I think that by way of the Bill he will be seen over the years to have performed a valuable public service on behalf of children throughout the United Kingdom. I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill, but I spoke on Second Reading, when I wished my hon. Friend well.

I speak as someone who first acquired the habit of cigarette smoking at the age of 12 years while on board a trawler fishing off Spitzbergen. I thought that it was manly to smoke. All the other fishermen on the vessel were smokers. By 16, I was on 20 to 30 cigarettes a day. I know how powerful the addiction is. It is not one that I have now, for I gave it up many years ago. I believe that my hon. Friend has performed a valuable service.

The need for the Bill was brought home to me when I recently spent a few days in Glasgow royal infirmary. I had to undergo abdominal surgery. On the ward there were men who were seriously ill—in three instances, terminally ill—with lung cancer and severe emphysema. When I spoke to the men they all admitted that they had been

near-lifelong addicts. They bitterly regretted that they had ever taken up cigarette smoking, especially given the heavy addiction from which they suffered.

I am disappointed that clause 6 was removed from the Bill, but pleased with the insertion of new clause 2, to which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred. It is a useful addition to the Bill, and especially so for my constituency, where far too many people smoke cigarettes. During recent days, head teachers have spoken to me about the Bill, and I am sure that they and others concerned with the health of youngsters welcome it. They will be especially pleased about the addition of new clause 2.

I shall subject the regional and islands councils to tough-minded scrutiny in the application of the new measure. It is essential that we dissuade our young people from taking up such a noxious habit.

1.10 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No newsagent-tobacconist in my constituency has complained about the Bill. That is a tribute to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), who has not tried to tackle the whole problem of smoking in one go, but has dealt with the new generations of people who need to be saved from a bad habit. The general environment matters and that is why concentrating on obtaining the help of tobacconists has been so important.

I hope that on public occasions people do not speak as though smoking tobacco is fine. I attended the inaugural lunch in the House of Commons when Action on Smoking and Health was launched. When the loyal toast was given, the royal patron said that it was one occasion when people would not be told that they could smoke. We should move away from the habit at public functions of people being told when they can smoke. They should be told when they cannot. That would apply some social pressure. In the same way, public functions should ensure that alcohol-free drink is available; people should not have to ask for it.

On the libertarian aspect, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) on reaching his second wedding anniversary. Having heard of the way in which he celebrated his first, I am surprised that anyone wanted to spend a second with him. Perhaps the only reason why he remembered it in the nick of time was that his wife did not want to remind him. Perhaps she feared that she would again be taken to a local government conference.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Criminal Procedure (Insanity and Unfitness to Plead) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

1.12 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am delighted that this important Bill has made such speedy progress. Before enumerating the amendments involved, I wish to congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on the progress of his Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill. Had I not been so preoccupied with my own Bill, I might have been prepared to lend him a hand with his. I very much support the Parents Against Tobacco campaign and I am sure that many parents today will be celebrating the passage of the hon. Gentleman's Bill to another place. I hope that it will reach the statute book very soon.

As I said, I am also delighted that my own important Bill has made such speedy progress. I hope that the House will give it a Third Reading so that it can go to another place, where I hope that it will have as swift and easy a passage as it has enjoyed in this place.

I wish to place on record my gratitude to all those who have given the Bill their wholehearted support, in particular the sponsors, those hon. Members who were kind enough to attend the Committee stage and also my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), whom I omitted to include as a supporter, but who nevertheless served on the Committee. I know that he shares my anxieties about these matters.

I am grateful for the overwhelming support that I have been given by the Law Society, which has sponsored the Bill, and has helped me in what I think that the House will agree is an extremely complex subject. In seeking to ensure that all the relevant issues were brought before the House, I have this morning been reading some of the briefs prepared by the Cardiff Law School, the British Epilepsy Association and various other organisations about matters appertaining to the Bill. The complexity of some of the legal issues surrounding case histories is almost mind-boggling at times. I do not profess to have the knowledge of the law necessary to understand all of the arguments relating to some of those cases. However, in our consideration of the Bill on Second Reading and in Committee—I hope that the same will apply today—we have managed to discuss the issues of importance relating to the Bill, so that those outside the House, who will no doubt seek to interpret our intentions and who will have to work with the Bill for the benefit of those whom it seeks to help, will be clear about our intentions and the areas of concern with which we sought to deal.

The Bill amends the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964, to provide safeguards for vulnerable people who have been found either unfit to plead in relation to the charge against them or not guilty by reason of insanity. Under the 1964 Act such people have to be detained indefinitely in hospital without trial and regardless of the severity of the alleged offence.

The provisions will affect a number of people. I have already mentioned the British Epilepsy Association. It might be for the convenience of the House and of the record if we could reflect on how the British Epilepsy Association views current law and how it affects epileptics,

[Mr. John Greenway]

and to explain why they have been so keen to support this measure, as have a number of organisations, and to support reform of the existing law.

As a result of the Sullivan case of 1983 an epileptic episode is classified legally as a "period of insane automatism". The British Epilepsy Association, in common with all medical organisations, has argued consistently that epilepsy is not any kind of insane manifestation, but a proven neurological condition.

Today's law is based on the McNaghten rules of as long ago as 1843. We are seeking to change those laws by creating a proper definition in the Bill. At the time when the McNaghten rules were written, medical understanding of epilepsy was poor—that is not difficult to understand—and the condition was far more widely believed to have a psychiatric basis. Clearly, the law has not moved with the times.

When a person is charged with an offence committed during an epileptic attack it is not medically possible for that person to be guilty of a wilful criminal act. In a moment, hon. Members will glean from one of the amendments made to the Bill in Committee how important it is that we get our thinking right on the mental element of any offence that has been committed where the person charged may be insane or unfit to plead.

It is right that an individual should be able to plead not guilty and cite the details of his epilepsy as a defence. Under the law as it stands, the defendant cannot plead not guilty without the caveat "by virtue of insanity", which results in a mandatory committal to a psychiatric hospital. At present the court cannot place supervision orders in such a case, nor can it discharge the defendant. The court simply has no choice.

There are instances of courts endeavouring to use their discretion. On occasion, that can be helpful to the defendant, but it does not alter the law or remove the need to change it. In any event, it has no bearing on other cases by way of precedent. Defendants have to choose the lesser of two evils. The law does not offer such people protection. The individual decides, or is advised, to plead guilty. Otherwise, the person has to plead not guilty by virtue of insanity and, as a consequence, is sent to a psychiatric institution.

The British Epilepsy Association would like two amendments to the law, one of which cannot be dealt with in the Bill. I refer to it because another hon. Member may wish to return to the matter in future. The association wants epilepsy to be reclassified within the law, and the implication that it is a psychiatric illness to be removed. The Bill cannot do that. Instead, it provides the courts with the flexibility that they so urgently require to deal appropriately with such cases.

At the time of Second Reading, the concept of a trial of the facts to determine whether a person who was unfit to plead had committed a criminal offence was new. Following the Committee stage, correspondence, and a great deal of interest on the part of right hon. and hon. Members, we have now come to terms with what that concept should mean.

I wish to refer especially to the changes that we made in Committee. The amendments to clause 2 substitute provisions for section 4 of the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964. The first two amendments sought to restore safeguards available under the 1964 Act which it was not our intention to remove.

The amendments allow the court to postpone consideration of whether a defendant is unfit to plead until any time up to the opening of the case for the defence. That safeguard was originally introduced into the 1964 Act to answer the criticism that, even when the prosecution had insufficient evidence to secure a conviction, a finding of unfitness prevented the prosecution case from being tested and still resulted in the accused being detained indefinitely in hospital. If the prosecution has an extremely weak case—although the accused person may be unfit to plead or, if he pleaded at all, would have to plead not guilty by reason of insanity—it is surely right that the evidence, such as it is, should be brought before the court, as an instant acquittal might well be the outcome. The question of unfitness to plead would then never need to be addressed. To give flexibility to the courts to postpone consideration of unfitness to plead will allow the case for the prosecution to be tested. If there is insufficient evidence for the jury to convict, the case can be dismissed and the accused acquitted without the need to consider whether he is unfit to plead.

A further advantage of retaining this provision, as provided for in the amendments that were agreed in Committee, is that it allows the courts to consider the accused's intention—that is, the mental element in cases where that may be relevant. That goes to the heart of the problem faced by epileptics and to the heart of the concern expressed by the British Epilepsy Association.

The trial of the facts that would follow a finding of unfitness to plead would look only at the facts of the case. It would not consider the accused's motivation. Clearly, it could not do so. It would already have been established that the accused was unfit to plead. Concern was expressed, however, on Second Reading that to exclude the mental element, which is so important in establishing a conviction in other criminal cases and very much the strength of our English criminal law, might be to the detriment of certain mentally vulnerable defendants. This provision, which merely restates the existing law, does not preclude the mental element being taken into account in those cases where it may be relevant. If intent is not established by the prosecution, the court will have the opportunity to acquit the accused in appropriate cases.

The remaining amendments to clause 2, agreed in Committee, clarify the circumstances in which the same or a separate jury should decide the question of fitness to plead and hear other parts of the trial. We wanted to remove any doubt. The amendments were drafted in such a way as to achieve that aim. They also allow for the postponement of the consideration of fitness to plead, as agreed in the first two amendments. If the question of fitness to plead is considered by the court on the arraignment of the accused—when the accused first appears before the court—and the jury decides that the accused is fit to plead, the case will be referred to a proper trial in which the accused will be tried by a different jury from that which decided the question of fitness to plead. The House will agree that that is the right way for us to proceed with this amendment of the law.

Similarly, if the accused is found to be unfit to plead on his first appearance in court, the case will be referred to a trial of the facts, which will be heard by a separate jury

from that which decided the question of fitness to plead. Again, I am sure that hon. Members will feel that that is right.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have been listening intently to the hon. Gentleman's observations on cluase 2. The role of two registered medical practitioners in submitting evidence concerning the accused is critical. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that in the practical circumstances of a trial, a registered medical practitioner means a consultant psychiatrist?

Mr. Greenway: Yes, I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. It is difficult to know how much of the ground to cover on Third Reading. This is such a complex matter that, for the benefit of those hon. Members who are listening intently to my argument, one almost needs to go back to the beginning and start all over again. That is a very important brick in the Bill to which I have not referred in any detail, save to say that clause 2 gives statutory backing to the McNaghten rules. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to tell me that I am right and that I have given the hon. Gentleman the correct answer.

I move on to deal with cases in which the question of fitness is raised with the court at a later stage in the trial after some or all of the prosecution's case has been put. Clause 2 allows the court flexibility to direct whether the question of fitness should be decided by the same jury who already heard part of the case or by a separate jury, according to the particular circumstances of the case.

That is an important provision because clearly there will be some cases where so much evidence has already been adduced that it would benefit both the court and the accused for the same jury who heard all the evidence then to hear the evidence under the provisions outlined in clause 2, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, as to whether the person is fit to plead. However, there could be other cases in which that might not be in the interests of the accused. I do not believe that the House can do anything other than give the court the discretion that it needs in those circumstances.

In cases where the accused is found unfit to plead and the case is referred to a trial of the facts, the jury who heard the earlier part of the case can also hear the trial of the facts. Of course, if the accused who is unfit later recovers to become fit to plead, as can happen, his or her case would be remitted for a proper trial and that trial would be heard by a new and separate jury.

The amendments that the Committee gladly agreed provide additional safeguards for people who are unfit to be tried and ensure that those who later recover sufficiently to stand trial will receive a fair and proper hearing.

Finally, for the benefit of hon. Members present whose interest in the Bill I gladly welcome, I confirm that part II of the Bill provides a range of disposals to the court according to the particular circumstances of the case and the defendant's individual needs. At one extreme, the court retains the power under the 1964 Act of committing the accused indefinitely to a psychiatric hospital. At the other extreme, there may be opportunity to provide an absolute discharge. In the middle, where the real benefits of the Bill are to be found, it will allow the courts to provide for supervision orders which may include treatment so that the accused can get the help that he needs within the community.

Although the Bill deals with an extremely complex area of the law, the changes it will introduce are straightforward, effective and long overdue. I am most grateful to officials in the Home Office who were most helpful with the drafting of the Bill and the amendments agreed in Committee and who I suspect may be listening to our deliberations today. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office who ensured the Bill's speedy and unimpeded progress thus far. I also thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his help and his willingness to co-operate in dealing with the Bill this afternoon. I hope that the Bill will progress to another place and that long-overdue reforms can quickly be put on to the statute book for the benefit of many vulnerable people in our society.

1.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I can confirm the Government's continued and full support for the Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) on guiding it through the Committee with great finesse. The Bill contains important reforms, some of which, as we understand from my hon. Friend's lucid explanation, are complex, but which are designed to safeguard the position of severely mentally disordered individuals who are found either unfit to plead or not guilty by reason of insanity.

On Second Reading, my hon. Friend expertly and clearly described the Bill's aims and he has done so again today. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, in turn, outlined the Government's stance and support. In the circumstances, there is little for me to add, but perhaps I can confirm the point queried by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). The registered medical practitioner to whom the hon. Gentleman referred must be approved by the Secretary of State as having special experience in the diagnosis of treatment of mental disorder.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for answering my question. As the Bill refers specifically to the Mental Health Act 1983 and to guardianship, will elements of the code of practice require revision because of the Bill?

Mr. Lloyd: As I did not steer the Bill through Committee I am not fully aware of the details. I hope that if my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale can reply, he will interrupt me.

Mr. John Greenway: I am grateful for the opportunity to do so. However, I am sorry that my mind wandered as I was dealing with notes that I received from the Official Reporters. Will the hon. Gentleman ask his question again? If you will allow a further intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall do what I can to help.

Dr. Godman: The Minister again shows his characteristic courtesy. I asked whether, in the light of references to the Mental Health act 1983 and especially to the term "guardianship", it is likely that the code of practice—or the sections of it that refer to guardianship—will need to be revised if the Bill is put on to the statute book.

Mr. Lloyd: May I, at this point, give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale? However, if he would prefer to collect his thoughts, I shall continue.

[Mr. Lloyd]

The Bill has two main thrusts. First, there will, for the first time, be a requirement for the Crown court to test the case against an accused person who is found unfit to plead in order to satisfy itself that he committed the offence in question. As I said, that is a complex measure which has given rise to a number of issues. They have been carefully considered and we can see no reason why, in practice, the measure should not prove effective. The Government are satisfied that the introduction of a "trial of the facts" would greatly reduce the possibility of an innocent person being compulsorily detained in hospital for an offence that he did not commit.

The Bill's second main thrust is to provide the Crown court with a wider range of disposal options. Currently, if a person is found unfit to plead, or not guilty by reason of insanity, the court has no option but to send him to hospital for an indefinite period as a restricted patient. There has been increasing concern, not only that compulsory hospital treatment has not always been appropriate on medical grounds, but that it might be disproportionate in view of the nature of the offence.

The Bill proposes that following a finding of unfitness for trial, where the court is satisfied that the accused did the act or made the omission charged, or a finding of not guilty by reason of insanity, the court should have a choice of disposals—ordering an accused person to be detained in hospital with or without restrictions, a guardianship order, supervision in the community, or absolute discharge. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale, the Government believe that this will enable the court to ensure that its order is appropriate for the circumstances of each case, and will remove the inflexibility of the current provisions of the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964. This will be particularly welcomed by the British Epilepsy Association, to which my hon. Friend rightly paid tribute, which has mounted a vigorous campaign to have the law amended in this regard.

It has already been made clear that the proposals are not novel. They are based largely on recommendations made by the Butler committee on mentally abnormal offenders, which reported in 1975. At the time, an extensive consultation exercise was conducted. Further consultation has been undertaken and the Bill's proposals have been widely and warmly welcomed by the legal and medical professions and by a wide range of organisations. Indeed, I am not aware of any significant objections to the Bill. I am aware that the specific and detailed question put by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has not been answered. I shall ensure that he receives an answer by letter. I regret that I am unable to answer it now.

Accordingly, it remains only for me to commend the Bill to the House and to wish it a smooth and quick passage through the other place. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale on introducing it.

1.41 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As I am a Scots Member and this is an English Bill, I hesitate to speak, but the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) is to be congratulated on introducing the Bill. The House deals with two legal systems—the English and the Scottish—and I sincerely hope that the Scottish legal system is not out of kilter in implementing these necessary protective measures for people who, for reasons of insanity or mental ill-health, cannot protect their own interests. I am pleased that the British Epilepsy Association is glad that the Bill is making good progress. I am sure that, if the Scottish system is out of kilter, officials and members of the association who read the debate will contact me.

Mr. John Greenway: The time available allows me to assure the hon. Gentleman that the Bill is supported by other organisations apart from the British Epilepsy Association. It is supported by many organisations that do social work or work with vulnerable groups and their professional bodies. They include the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, the Association of Professions for the Mentally Handicapped, the British Association of Social Workers, the British Institute of Mental Handicap, the Campaign for Mentally Handicapped People, Disability Alliance, Justice, Mencap, the Mental Health Foundation, the National Association for Mental Health—MIND—the Legal Action Group, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the National Association of Probation Officers, the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, the Prison Reform Trust, the British Deaf Association and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. I have listed all those organisations deliberately. They read like a "Who's Who" of the organisations concerned with vulnerable people and those who try to care for vulnerable people.

The presence of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), which I warmly welcome, gives him an opportunity to take up the cudgels and look at the position in Scotland. If he finds that the reforms contained in the Bill need to be made in Scotland, I assure him that I will help him as much as I can.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, especially for his recitation of those honourable associations and societies, all of which are as well known north of the border as south.

The hon. Gentleman's mention of vulnerable groups prompted me to say that the Scottish system might be out of kilter with the English one. Occasionally, the two systems for protecting vulnerable individuals become unbalanced. For example, the Criminal Justice Act 1988 contains a remarkable section that allows the use of video-recorded interviews for evidence in court in child or sexual abuse cases. It is regrettable that, in Scotland, there is no such provision and I hope that our legislation is not out of kilter with this fine Bill.

I offer my compliments to the hon. Member for Ryedale. I shall table a question to the Scottish Office asking it to confirm that our legislation is almost as good as the hon. Gentleman's proposals.

1.48 pm

Mr. John Greenway: With the leave of the House, I am grateful for the opportunity to deal with this important matter.

I shall try to answer the earlier question asked by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). For a brief moment I feared that our wicket was in jeopardy, but the answer to the question that he so rightly raised has now been assembled. Clause 5 provides for the use of guardianship orders under section 7 of the

Mental Health Act 1983. A guardian may decide where the person lives and require that he attends medical treatment, occupational therapy or education. He or she may insist that a doctor or other person is allowed to see the person under guardianship. A guardianship order would be made initially for six months, but would be renewable.

It was not my intention, in drafting the Bill, to seek to change the overall provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983. However, the House and the Minister will have noted the hon. Gentleman's concern. It is less a matter for the Home Office than for the Department of Health. The hon. Gentleman's intervention was timely in drawing attention to the fact that the Bill depends on the smooth working of the provisions of the 1983 Act.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow raises important points, not all of which relate directly to the Home Office. However, I shall undertake to see that my colleagues in the relevant Departments—the Scottish Office and the Department of Health—read what he said and are aware of his concern.

Mr. John Greenway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving that undertaking and I know that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow will be, too.

I shall not refer directly to the measure, but rely on my memory of it. In the Bill we have created a framework whereby, at a trial of fact, the person who is unfit to plead will be represented and there will be a guardian ad litem arrangement which seeks to ensure that the accused's interests are properly protected.

1.51 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I rise for only a few moments to congratulate the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). His Bill, like the previous one on the subject, has all-party support and, as he said, support from a variety of organisations that want justice to be done and do not want people to be subject to distress due to a situation over which they have no control.

Some of the legislation being amended is 150 years old. It sometimes takes the House a long time to catch up with developments that have taken place. We are also amending legislation that was enacted about 15 years ago, but some of it goes back further, as we are all aware. The assurances given by the Minister that the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will be looked into mean that the Bill will be made to apply and work.

I add the Opposition's congratulations to the hon. Member for Ryedale on not shying away from a difficult subject that is fraught with enormous complexities which many people would want to avoid.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Football (Offences) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Sir J. Wheeler.]*

1.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir. J. Wheeler) on his enterprise in bringing forward the Bill and the good judgment that he displayed in securing its speedy passage through Committee to Third Reading today. It is a considerable achievement and all who are concerned to see football in this country rid of the offensive and violent behaviour that has too often disfigured it in recent years will welcome the measures contained in the Bill.

In Committee, hon. Members asked me to look again at a number of issues. I hope that the House will bear with me if I seek to reassure those hon. Members that it is right for the Bill to be left in the form in which it left Committee and in which it is now.

I have given further consideration to the point raised about the condition in clause 1 restricting the offences to a period of two hours before kick-off, or the advertised time, whichever is earlier. Some hon. Members questioned whether two hours was long enough. The Government believe that the provision of pre-match entertainment to encourage supporters to turn up early, which I think lay behind the worry, is a good initiative, which we support. However, even at the largest fixtures, it is unlikely that a significant number of supporters will arrive more than two hours before kick off. A two-hour period is used in part IV of the Public Order Act 1986 and I am not aware that it has proved inadequate. I believe that the amendment that we made in Committee will prove wise and sufficient.

I have thought with the greatest care about the points made in Committee about the formulation of clause 3. However, I remain of the view that the wording that we now have is right. I will briefly explain the policy considerations and practicalities that have influenced me in reaching that conclusion.

Clause 3, as amended in Committee, creates a new offence of taking part in chanting of an "indecent or racialist nature." Any spectator at a football match who repeatedly utters any words or sounds of an indecent or racialist nature, in concert with one or more others, is guilty of an offence.

Lord Justice Taylor considered that the provisions of the Public Order Act would not always cover such objectionable behaviour. Under section 4, chanting or a single shout would be an offence if another person feared that immediate unlawful violence would be used against him or that the chanting would provoke violence. Under section 5, the chanting must be likely to cause "harassment, alarm or distress" to a victim—I stress, to an identifiable victim. Lord Justice Taylor considered that racialist chanting at a football match should be an offence without the need for an identifiable victim, and I agree.

We needed to think clearly about the context in which the proposed offence would be committed. At a designated football match, attended probably by thousands of people, the crowd may sing, shout, groan, gasp or sound like the House of Commons on a particularly good evening, in an atmosphere of considerable tension and excitment—again, like the House on occasions that we can all remember. The

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

volume of collective sounds will be considerable. In that noisy and volatile atmosphere, racialist or indecent chanting is not only socially objectionable but becomes, potentially at least, a risk to public order.

Against that background, it would be a mistake to criminalise a single racialist or indecent remark that might not be widely audible in the ground; to do so would set the threshold for criminal behaviour too low. We wish to prevent group chanting, which is repeated and loud and may spark trouble, and if it occurs, to prosecute and punish the offenders.

There are other practical considerations. Some hon. Members questioned the ability of the police to identify and remove those committing the proposed offence. The police do not foresee too much difficulty. Police inside a ground will generally be able to identify those who are chanting repeatedly. Some officers may be directed to the offenders, and in particular to their ringleaders, by their colleagues operating closed-circuit television. An officer may then be in a position to hear the words or sounds uttered by offenders, but securely identifying a person uttering a single shout would be much more difficult. The police will decide whether offenders should be arrested, either during the game or at a later stage.

Evidence from closed-circuit television will play an important part in identifying offenders and securing their conviction for offences in the Bill. I hope, therefore, that the House will accept that there are persuasive reasons of policy and enforceability for preferring the formulation adopted in Committee.

Clause 3 is designed to deal with group chanting of indecent and racialist matter, which presents the public order and social problem. The Bill sets that offence at a lower threshold than current law. Such conduct should be an offence only when it is made especially objectionable by being carried out in concert with others.

Some members of the Committee asked about the removal of perimeter fencing. Lord Justice Taylor recommended that, for the safety of spectators, fences should be lowered and spikes and overhanging projections removed. He considered that if fences were lowered, it would be prudent to have a criminal sanction against running on to the pitch. I agree, although it is beyond the scope of our discussions on the Bill to consider whether the perimeter fences should be lowered or even removed. That is a matter for the local authorities issuing the safety certificates. The Football Licensing Authority will be working closely with the clubs, the police and the local authorities to ensure that adequate provision is available for spectators to escape on to the pitch in an emergency.

The Bill embodies the three recommendations made by Lord Justice Taylor in his report following the tragic events at Hillsborough by making it an offence to throw anything at or towards the players or spectators, to take part in racialist or indecent chanting or to go on to the playing area "without good reason". That latter qualification will ensure that, if there is an emergency and the pitch is a necessary way of escape, no offence will be committed.

This is a welcome and necessary Bill. I commend it wholeheartedly to the House and express my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North for his initiative in bringing it before us.

2 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am glad to welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister and to confirm that the Bill has been considered in great detail by the Standing Committee and has received the wholehearted support of all that Committee's members, who also agreed with the Government's improvements and amendments.

Those of us who serve on the Select Committee on Home Affairs are especially grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for his courtesy, his interest in the progress of the Bill and his support for it. His comments were welcome indeed, and I add my support to what he said.

In Committee, we had a useful debate on clause 1. The Bill sets a time limit of two hours before the start of a match. In that regard, my hon. Friend's reference to the Public Order Act 1986 is entirely appropriate. It is a perfectly fair and reasonable prescription with which I know that those who take an interest in the game of football agree.

The Bill goes on to deal with the objectionable practice of racialist chanting, and chanting of a threatening nature. My hon. Friend the Minister explained carefully why the Committee felt able to agree amendments requiring the offence to be proved where one or more persons are engaged in the action. I am satisfied that the police will have adequate powers to deal with incidents that cause great offence and that the Bill will be extremely useful to the game of football.

The Committee agreed to one other amendment, omitting the reference to Scotland. When it first considered the subject, the Home Affairs Committee felt it proper that Scotland should have the opportunity to enjoy the protection of the creation of offences under the Bill. However, the Committee and others concerned with the game of football fully agree that the law in Scotland is adequate and that the Scottish police have no particular difficulty. I am glad to assure the House, therefore, that the removal of the reference to Scotland is entirely satisfactory from every point of view.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My hon. Friend will know that when the Select Committee investigated the policing of football hooliganism, its members went to a number of fixtures. Our junior Clerk and I went to the Skol cup final at Hampden Park in Glasgow and witnessed the entire police operation with the chief constable. The chief constable told me that he was anxious that we should not, in the course of our deliberations—from which this Bill follows—do anything to impede or impair the flexibility that the police in Scotland enjoy when policing football. Scottish common law is very different from ours. There are clearly occasions when the law in England, Wales and Scotland should run in parallel, but in this case Scottish law is superior to the law of England and Wales. The police in Scotland appear to have done a tremendous job of ridding Scottish football of much of the hooliganism that was, until five or six years ago, associated with the game there.

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments and his agreement to omitting reference to Scotland from the Bill. My hon. Friend was burdened by the Committee with the duty of attending a game of football in Glasgow to witness the effectiveness of the policing operation——

Mr. John Greenway: On a Sunday.

Sir John Wheeler: Such is the measure of my hon. Friend's devotion to the inquiry on which the Committee had embarked. He is right to say that the Strathclyde police have worked out a formula for the policing of football. That formula, in association with the common law of Scotland and other legislation, has provided them with a highly effective method of policing. I have no wish to see those arrangements disturbed by the Bill and we are delighted to agree to the omission of Scotland from it.

Football has gone through a difficult period in recent years. The Committee's report on policing football hooliganism, which was well received by all with an interest in the game, will help to deal with improving the game for players and spectators, and will also help the clubs and be in the interests of the public. The adoption of the three offences originally recommended by Lord Justice Taylor will set fair the game of football in the coming season, assuming that the Bill receives support, as I believe it will, in the other place. The future of football also depends on the establishment of the new Football Licensing Authority, which will do an important job for the game. I am glad that the authority, together with officials from the Home Office, is doing such excellent work in support of the game.

I conclude by referring to the work of the national football intelligence unit. During the Committee's inquiry, we formed the view that it is an organisation of great merit, containing especially dedicated police officers. The offences created under the Bill will be especially useful to the police, and the unit will be able to ensure that the police are possessed of all the information that they need to manage the game of football. The Bill leaves the House for the other place with the ringing endorsement of all those who have an interest in the game, and in the belief that it will contribute to the future of that important sport. I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), has been able to lend his support and prestige to it.

2.10 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am glad that the Bill has reached this advanced stage so soon after publication of the report by the Select Committee on Home Affairs into the policing of football hooliganism. Today's debate brings to an end a period of three or four years during which Parliament has tried to wrestle with the problem of football hooliganism.

I was not in favour of the proposal in the Football Spectators Bill for an identity scheme. We have had many debates about the best way to deal with football hooliganism and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) said, that Bill contained an extremely important proposal for the establishment of the Football Licensing Authority. My Bill and that authority will form a pincer movement for the better policing of football and for the greater safety of spectators.

The horrific tragedy at Hillsborough two years ago showed that better policing and the safety of spectators cannot be considered separately. From the time that I watched on television the events at Sheffield that Saturday afternoon, I have been convinced that the erection of fences to stop people running on to the pitch was the ultimate cause of the tragedy. There was no means of lawful escape from the ground. The erection of fences, a measure designed to deal with the problem of hooliganism, gave rise to a far worse problem and caused the deaths of 95 people. Folk will say that there were other causes and contributory factors, and that is true, but if the fences had not been there people would have had a chance to escape.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Does my hon. Friend agree that we should commend the greater resources that have been made available to the game following publication of the Taylor report? Those resources will enable clubs to bring their grounds and amenities up to date and provide for the greater safety of spectators.

Mr. Greenway: I entirely agree. Perhaps I should remind the House of my interest as president of York City football club. The measures in last year's Finance Act, introduced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he was Chancellor, were warmly welcomed throughout football. They are another feature of the change in atmosphere to be perceived in the world of football and its relationship to the House. The Bill is part of that change.

The help provided by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department in guiding the Bill through Committee and on to the statute book must not be underestimated. I know that he agrees that the House should remind people, particularly those associated with football—spectators, those running the clubs, the Football Association and the Football League—that the measure has not been introduced to enable the police to arrest more young people on a Saturday afternoon and lock them up. We are introducing it because we want to prevent the sort of tragedy that occurred at Hillsborough. It is a preventive measure. People should know when they attend a football match that if they misbehave—three specific forms of misbehaviour are specified—by chanting abuse, throwing missiles or running on to the pitch, the wrath of football and of the law will come down heavily upon them. We are talking of behaviour that can lead to a considerable tragedy if it is not curtailed. It is not merely anti-social behaviour. It must be the hope of us all that the Bill will discourage such behaviour. In the long term, that will be why the measure will be recognised as a great boost for the game of football. It can help us to rid football of the hooliganism that has besmirched our national game for far too long. I greatly welcome the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Water Requirements (Planning) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.15 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is a conservation measure. We live in a conservation-minded age, and the Bill would have the effect of ensuring both the conservation and preservation of our water supplies. As the poet sang:

"Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my Song."

But "sweet Thames" would not run softly, let alone the song, if efforts were not being made constantly to keep the great river in order. Surprisingly few people realise the extent to which the world-famous river is used merely as a conduit to bring water from hundreds of miles away to our great capital city.

My Bill would require a person seeking planning permission for a new building to send an estimate of the annual water requirement to the area water company at the same time as submitting the application for planning permission to the planning authority. I have secured all-party support for my Bill.

There are two objectives behind the requirement. First, water supply companies should be able to plan ahead. If they have warning of planning applications, they will know what level of building activity there will be in future and how much water they will be called upon to supply. Secondly, we must try to instil a "conservation mind" into those who make applications for planning permission. If the Bill is enacted, applicants will have to contact the local water authority and open a channel of communication between themselves and the authority. In that way, the authority will be able to say, "If you arrange the water supply in this way, a way that is different from that which you are intending, you will be able to save perhaps 25 per cent. of the amount of water that it is estimated will be consumed under the original requirements."

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): There is a requirement in my hon. Friend's Bill for a certificate to be submitted which shows that an estimate has been made of the quantity of water that will be used. However, there is no requirement for the water authority to act in any way. The suggestion that the authority would become involved in the planning of the extension seems to be a good, but perhaps a pious, hope.

Mr. Summerson: I trust that it would be both a good and a pious hope. It would open a channel of communication. If time permits, I shall read some of the responses that I have had from water authorities.

The demand for public water supplies has increased by 70 per cent. over the past 30 years. That is a significant pointer to an increasingly affluent, and effluent, society. We all tend to forget that what goes into a building must also go out. It is not only the supply of water to a premises that a water authority must bear in mind; it must also treat the used water that comes out the other end.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my hon. Friend clarify one point? He referred to water authorities, but I was under the impression that since privatisation there are only water companies. There is only one authority—the National Rivers Authority. It may have been a slip of the tongue, but if there is indeed some other water authority, I hope that my hon. Friend will tell me.

Mr. Summerson: I can set my hon. Friend's mind at rest; I meant water plcs. I should have said plc, especially as it has one less syllable than authority, and time is short.

We should ask ourselves about the uses of water. We take it for granted that when we turn on the tap, water will come from it. We use water for washing cars, watering the garden and washing clothes. Some people even drink it. It is used in various domestic facilities—for example, every time that we use the lavatory it takes two gallons of water to flush it. A bath takes 18 gallons; a washing machine cycle takes 25 gallons; and a hosepipe or sprinkler can use 220 gallons an hour. In manufacturing industry, it takes one gallon of water to produce a pint of beer. I hope that no one asks me how that comes about; it is a figure that I have been given. It takes 1,000 gallons of water to produce one tonne of steel, and it takes 6,600 gallons to manufacture one motor car. In the Thames Water area alone, 600 million gallons of water are used every day. That is equivalent to the total volume of the Albert hall being emptied and refilled every 75 minutes. That gives us some idea of how much water is being used.

Thames Water is considering building a new reservoir in Oxfordshire to supply the rapidly expanding towns in the Thames valley, such as Witney and Swindon, and to ensure supplies of water to London. The idea is to send water down the Thames to London, where it will be stored in reservoirs. That is all part of a continuing effort, going back many years. I remember my days as a land agent, in the early 1970s, when I helped to look after a farm on the chalk in Oxfordshire. In those days, Thames Water had what was known as its ground water scheme, where bores were drilled in the chalk and ground water was pumped out and sent down the Thames to arrive, eventually, in London.

The Bill states that anyone seeking planning permission for a new building has to send an estimate of the annual water requirement to the water plc. If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, I would seek to table amendments in Committee to state that that would not be a requirement for a single building. It would have to be a requirement for developments of a minimum size, perhaps 10 houses or flats, a factory of 5,000 sq ft. or an office building of perhaps 10,000 sq ft. Obviously it would be absurd if every time someone wanted to build on a conservatory or a bathroom, he had to send details to the water plc as it would certainly swamp it in paper.

I mentioned to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) that I would quote comments by various water plcs and here we go. South West Water says:

"There is no doubt of the importance of making our customers aware of the cost and value of the water required to support their proposals, and any advance information which can be provided to the water companies is extremely useful for planning purposes."

North West Water stated:

"It is helpful for customers and potential customers to be more aware of their requirements for water and, of course, we are always keen to know as soon as possible of potential new demand for our services."

Severn Trent Water stated:

"It is a very good idea"—

I hope that my hon. Friend is listening—

"and should be extended not only to the erection of a building, but to any change or alteration in any building that requires planning permission."

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am certainly listening to my hon. Friend; I am merely disagreeing with him. For example, how is anyone who builds a new factory unit to know who will occupy it? If it is occupied by a paper-making industry, it will use an incredible amount of water as opposed to some other industries. One has no idea what sort of tenant will occupy the new building. Will these estimates be of any use and will they have any meaning at all?

Mr. Summerson: When most people build a factory they know perfectly well what use it will be put to. As I said, channels of communication will already have been opened between the developer and the water plc and I hope that they will both make use of it.

Southern Water stated:

"It would be of assistance if your proposals could be extended so that notification is given also to the sewerage undertaker."

Welsh Water said:

"We have long felt that any planning applications should be formally referred to ourselves for all the obvious reasons."

Northumbria Water stated:

"Consultation with water undertakers has become more tenuous as we are no longer statutory consultees under the Town and Country Planning legislation."

One of the main reasons why I have introduced the Bill is that there are many rivers throughout the country which are in danger of drying up altogether, due to use and abstraction. I make no apology for it, but I shall read out the names of those rivers. In the Anglian region; they are the River Hiz, the Hoffer brook, the River Slea, the Redgrave and Lopham fen site of special scientific interest, the River Glen, the East Rushton SSSI, the river Mun, the River Deben, and Hollesley-Black ditch.

In the north-west area, there is the River Lowther. In Severn-Trent, there are Dover beck, the River Worfe, Battlesfield brook, Rufford lake, Leomansley brook and Black brook (Tamworth).

In the Southern area, there are the River Darent, Wallop brook, the River Little Stour, the River Nailbourne, St. Mary Bourne, the River Meon, and River Hamble.

In the Welsh area there are the Frome, the Garren, the Gamber, the Monnow, the Alun, the Afon Clywedog, and Cefni reservoir.

In the Thames area there are the Misbourne, the Pang, the Ver, the Wey, Letcombe brook, the Upper Kennet, the Thames Head, the Ampney, the Churn, the Coln and the Windrush.

In Yorkshire, there are the Derwent and the Wharfe, and in Wessex the River Piddle, the Allen and the Wey. All those rivers are in danger of drying up.

As I said at the outset, my Bill is a conservation measure, and I hope for the sake of the rivers that I have mentioned that the House will give it a Second Reading.

2.29 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) is to be congratulated on presenting the Bill, and also on being the nicest of men—as I had the honour to be able to say in his constituency as recently as Wednesday. As we have already heard, he is also the most romantic of men: I felt that the opening lines of the poem with which he began his speech set it in context in an excellent fashion.

None the less, I have some reservations about the Bill —about its enforceability, for example. My hon. Friend suggests that we should all put in estimates of how much water we use. I have no idea——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 3 May.

Private Members' Bills

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had not even moved the Second Reading. Surely I should be allowed to do so before anyone can object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

RESERVE FREE TRAVEL SCHEME (LONDON) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS (ANIMAL TESTING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 26 April.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

PARISH COUNCILS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Corbyn: With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 26 April.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

EDUCATION PROVISION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 May.

COAL IMPORTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken. Second Reading what day?

Mr. Corbyn: With the agreement of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 26 April.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

HOSPITAL SCHOOLS IN LONDON BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

COURTS (RESEARCH) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

SMOKE DETECTORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 April.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I right in thinking that it was the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) who objected to all but two of those Bills—including my Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill? If so, can *Hansard* record it, so that the people will know who is objecting?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The identity of hon. Members who object to Bills is not recorded.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely it was out of order for an objection to be taken before I had moved the Second Reading of my Hare Coursing Bill. As a result, it was impossible to tell who had objected. If it was the Government Whip, that is significant: many animal lovers who want an end to hare coursing would be annoyed if the Government were responsible for the objection, and will take that into account.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The procedure was perfectly in order. Objections can be taken at any point immediately after the title of a Bill has been read out.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must plead guilty to making a fundamental mistake in objecting to the Smoke Detectors Bill. I understand that the Bill to which I objected is entirely different from its predecessor and I wish to withdraw my objection if that is possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman cannot do that. At least he has been able to record the fact that he made an error; the objection must stand, however.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point. He will take time away from the Adjournment debate.

Plumbing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.34 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Before I begin, I welcome in particular the presence here of the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martyn Smyth), who, like me, is a prominent member of the all-party plumbing registration group, my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who is here to support what I have to say, and also my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). In particular, I welcome the fact that the Under-Secretary of State is here. I look forward to his response to several of the points that I intend to make. I hope that at the end of the debate the country at large will be much better informed about the state of plumbing in the United Kingdom.

Ten years have elapsed since I drew the attention of the House to the standard of plumbing in the United Kingdom. *Hansard* of 10 April 1981 detailed my concerns at the time and the Government's response. I have initiated this debate as the chairman of the all-party plumbing registration group, since members of the group —and many others—continue to be concerned about standards and the inadequacy of controls in order to maintain health and safety.

Immediately following the 1981 debate, at the Government's invitation, discussions and corespondence took place about the three issues that I raised at the time —first, the lack of training in the plumbing industry; secondly, the ineffectiveness of the regulations and byelaws covering plumbing work; and, thirdly, the lack of regulation of those undertaking plumbing work.

I do not intend to dwell on the first issue—the lack of training—save to say that there is no evidence to suggest that more training is being undertaken today than 10 years ago. While competent and responsible plumbers face intense and unfair competition from so-called cowboys, there is little incentive to train. I earnestly hope that the changes to plumbing training currently in hand, which will be linked to national vocational qualifications, will lead to an improvement. I certainly welcome the new tax relief on the fees paid by individuals training towards such qualifications which was announced in the recent Budget statement. As a nation, we need to create an adequate pool of craftspeople with both practical and theoretical skills in plumbing, using the well-established vocational training facilities available.

The main concern that I share with colleagues in the plumbing registration group is the lack of enforcement of statutory regulations and byelaws covering plumbing. Correspondence with Ministers and the debate on the Water Bill in the other place on 8 May 1989 reveal that the Government consider that health and safety standards for plumbing are adequately dealt with through building regulations and water byelaws. My colleagues and I dispute that. The technical requirements are meaningless without proper enforcement.

Building regulations covering sanitary plumbing, unvented hot water systems and drainage are enforced by local authority building control officers. Contraventions undoubtedly take place which are not detected because building control officers do not know what work is going on and where. Although new buildings may be subject to inspection, work on existing properties goes largely unreported and unseen.

The effects of faulty sanitary plumbing are not only unpleasant but can adversely affect health. I am sure that most of us have heard the familiar gurgles emanating from the waste plumbing systems when staying overnight in hotels, or even in our own homes. These are usually due to water in the U-bends of the trap seals being sucked out. That causes soil pipe gases to enter buildings. The problem is faulty workmanship. The results are headaches, nausea and general poor health. A visit to the doctor may result in the diagnosis of a bug going round and the prescription of unnecessary, ineffective and expensive drugs. One old age pensioner in London's east end felt so unwell that her doctor prescribed antibiotics. When a registered plumber inspected the sanitary plumbing he found no trap seal at all. She had been breathing in foul air. When the plumbing was rectified the old lady made an instant recovery. Many others have suffered in the same way. The Building Research Establishment is certainly aware of the effects of faulty sanitary plumbing, but I understand that the Government currently have no statistical evidence of its overall impact on the nation's health.

Incorrectly installed hot water systems can also pose considerable safety hazards, including risks of explosion and scalding. Again, I understand that the Building Research Establishment has accumulated evidence of incidents at home and abroad in recent years showing the catastrophic effects of such explosions, which are akin to the results of a missile attack. The safety of hot water systems could be better dealt with in regulations made under the Water Act 1989. I should welcome a reaction from my hon. Friend the Minister to that suggestion because inspection of such systems is currently divided between water byelaw inspectors and building control officers. Water contamination and explosions could result through confusion about enforcement.

I believe that the Department of the Environment is proposing to introduce amendments to the building regulations which would require unvented hot water systems to be installed only by competent persons, who would be required to give notice to building control officers but not to water byelaw inspectors. I warn the Minister now that notification will be very limited. I am informed that less than 10 per cent. of systems installed to date have been notified to local authorities, so it will be reassuring if the Minister will not only publicise the statutory requirement to give notice but encourage local authorities to prosecute cases coming to light in which installers have failed to give such notice. Unless building regulations are properly enforced, there is little point in having them.

That also applies to water byelaws made under section 17 of the Water Act 1945 by water undertakers in England and Wales. Those undertakers have a duty to enforce their byelaws. Inspection on most new property may be carried out because the work comes to the attention of the water undertakers, but there continues to be a gap in the enforcement of byelaws in existing buildings. I first raised that issue in 1981 and the Government acknowledged the difficulties. Since then, new water byelaws have been introduced following widespread consultation. Similar provisions also apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Water byelaws are intended to assist water undertakers to

[Mr. Robin Squire]

maintain adequate supplies of wholesome water, and failure to do so may be a criminal offence under the 1989 Water Act.

I understand that the water industry is reviewing the future of water byelaws, including their enforcement. That is timely, because it is as well to remind the House what water plumbing may do. It may pose risks to health as a consequence of contamination from backflow or back siphonage of foul or dirty water, the contamination of drinking water systems, and the use of inferior material in plumbing systems. Plumbing may also waste water through the installation of substandard or inefficient appliances and fittings.

Water byelaws dealing with those matters pose considerable responsibilities for the water industry, with potentially serious implications for the health of their consumers if the requirements are not adequately enforced. The United Kingdom water industry now has the added responsibility of conforming to the European Community construction products directive and drinking water quality directive and the subsequent regulations. Water byelaw enforcement is therefore of even more significance.

I understand that the last known formal study into byelaw enforcement was commissioned by the Department of the Environment in the late 1960s. The results published in 1971 were appalling. They revealed that 61 per cent. of the 1,300 installations surveyed contravened the water byelaw requirements specifically relating to back siphonage. Professional plumbers are cynically aware that the situation has not improved. Indeed, it is likely that matters have worsened, for infringements are seen every day.

We now have further evidence. The South Staffordshire water company decided six years ago to intensify its programme of industrial and commercial inspections. The company has so far inspected about 90 per cent. of all industrial and commercial properties within its area at least once. Those inspections have revealed a staggering 48,000 byelaw infringements, of which 25 to 30 per cent. involve potentially serious water contamination risks. They included direct contact between mains water supplies and cyanide, arsenic, chemicals, acids, canal water, mortuary post-mortem rooms and sewers. In one case, snails and legionnaire's disease bacteria were found in cold water storage systems supplying the operating theatre of a hospital. In another instance, the mains water supplies of a funeral parlour was insufficiently protected against backflow contamination which could occur while chemicals were being used during the embalming process. In a third case, 99 byelaw infringements were found in one industrial plant; 24 of them were submerged mains water inlets connected to vats of phosphoric acid. The fourth and final example involved a junior and infants schools where inadequately covered cold water storage systems supplied wash basins in the toilet area where childen obtained water for drinking.

If time allowed, I could give many more examples. Almost every imaginable risk has been discovered at some time. Fortunately, due to that water company's diligence all but the very minor infringements found have now been rectified and a rolling programme of re-inspection is being carried out. In one case, it cost £100,000 to put the plumbing installation in good order.

Such monstrosities cannot be exclusive to the South Staffordshire water company. The number of infringements unearthed could well show the extent of the problem in other parts of the country. If so, that disposes of the belief that plumbing standards are adequately dealt with by water byelaws alone. Who installed such potentially lethal plumbing systems? Obviously it was incompetent, so-called plumbers who neither knew nor cared about correct installation or compliance with water byelaws.

It would be helpful if the Minister could reassure the House and the parliamentary plumbing registration group to the contrary. With that in mind, perhaps he will inform the House of the annual average number of water byelaw inspections carried out by water undertakers on new domestic and non-domestic supplies and on extensions and alterations to such supplies and of estimates for the value of such work. In addition, is he aware of a system for the reporting and publication of information on either backflow contamination incidents or the health problems associated with water quality inside buildings? In that context, it would also be helpful to know the number of prosecutions brought by each water undertaker for infringements of water byelaws during the past 10 years and the number of convictions obtained.

The information, that I hope that the Minister may be able to provide will help the House to appreciate the extent of water byelaw enforcement. If, by chance, the Minister is unable to supply some of those details, I strongly suggest that the Government promote another in-depth investigation. The House and the public need reassurance that health and safety standards are not being compromised by inadequate enforcement or even by the commercial priorities of the water industry.

The final issue with which I wish to deal is the regulation of those who undertake plumbing work for gain. I make no excuse for raising it again because a successful resolution of the issue would raise standards and be of considerable benefit to the public as well as to those who are responsible for the enforcement of statutory requirements.

Unlike the position in many other countries—including some member states of the European Community—anyone in the United Kingdom can undertake plumbing work for gain, call himself a plumber or set up in business as a plumbing contractor and advertise as such. Successive Governments have believed that voluntary self-regulation was the best means of improving standards. The 105-year-old register of plumbers maintained by the Institute of Plumbing—which is based in my constituency—is cited by Ministers as the most effective way of achieving public recognition of a reputable plumber.

As an honorary fellow of the institute, I know that public acknowledgement of its work is appreciated. However, voluntary self-regulation applies only to plumbers registered with the institute. They need not be registered and, indeed, some currently plying their trade have been removed from the institute's register for failure to meet the conditions of voluntary registration. It is also difficult for registered plumbers to continue to maintain standards by, for example, conforming to water byelaws when they face unfair competition from incompetent and irresponsible cowboy operators who are either ignorant of

or indifferent to water byelaw requirements. Self-regulation is effective only when it carries some meaningful sanction.

The Dutch and German practice where, by law, licensed plumbers are required to use approved water fittings installed in accordance with approved codes of practice is a good example. Eventually, our full integration into the European Community will result in European standards for the most common plumbing fittings and a European code of practice for installations. I am confident that our Dutch and German colleagues will wish to retain their superior practice which, unless the Government modify their stance, will place the British plumbing industry, its manufacturers and its installers at a considerable disadvantage.

There is no room for complacency. Plumbing needs to be put on a similar footing to gas installation work. I speak 20 days after the introduction of the statutory registration of gas installation businesses. Members of the parliamentary plumbing registration group applaud the Government's stance on the regulation of those who undertake gas work for gain. Gas is a hazardous substance and should be adequately controlled to protect lives and property. Official statistics of deaths and injuries from faulty gas works have proved the need for statutory regulation. The effects of faulty plumbing work are not so obvious, but that is no excuse for inaction. There are 23 million buildings connected to mains water, supplying 60 million inhabitants and protection from sub-standard plumbing work is no less important. Compulsory registration, perhaps based on protection of title, would be of great assistance to the regulatory authorities, would be enthusiastically received by competent and responsible plumbers and is vital to the health of the general public.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on his perseverance. As he said, it is 10 years since he first raised the subject in the House. My hon. Friend, who is an expert on housing issues, feels strongly about regulation of the plumbing industry. I am glad that he has been supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth).

I agree that this subject deserves serious consideration by the House. It is much to the credit of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch that his unstinting efforts on behalf of the Institute of Plumbing have kept this issue alive in parliamentary circles over the past 10 years. My hon. Friend again spoke eloquently today in support of his arguments for improved standards and tighter regulation.

Standards of plumbing are a subject close to the heart of any civilised person. I am sure that we have all complained from time to time, perhaps particularly when travelling abroad, when there are not only gurgles but perhaps smells which show a lower standard of plumbing than we would regard as satisfactory at home.

We in the United Kingdom rightly demand a high standard. One of the few things that might be guaranteed to gain immediate cross-party agreement would be a failure in the plumbing in the Palace of Westminster. I am sure that all hon. Members would take much comfort from the presence among us, in the form of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch, of a fellow of the Institute of Plumbing. I have no doubt that he would rush to our assistance. We rely on the plumber. Rather like the dentist, we would prefer not to have to see him too often, but we are pleased that he is there when we need him.

As the plumber occupies such a position, it is distressing when the so-called cowboys of the industry try to exploit it. Not only does the consumer lose out in poor quality work, but the vast majority of reputable plumbers suffer from the backlash of public opinion based on the performance of a disreputable minority.

In recent years, we have confronted the problem of the cowboy builder. The House will recall that, at the Government's instigation, a working party was set up in 1987 to look into the problems associated with the activities of unqualified and unprofessional building contractors. The chief executive of the Institute of Plumbing was a member of the working party. Significantly, although the working party recommended that further consideration should be given to the statutory registration of building trades, it did not go so far as to endorse or recommend such schemes.

In welcoming the report of the working party, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside made it clear that the Government were looking to the building trade and consumer groups to develop an assessment and approval mechanism for builders' guarantee schemes, which would promote the reputable builder. As a result, the Office of Fair Trading provided a forum for the industry and consumer groups to develop that approach. That work is being carried forward in close consultation with the industry and I understand that it is being consulted on the second draft of the fair deal contract.

I must, however, emphasise that the Government's view on regulation of the industry, including the compulsory registration of trades, has not changed. We believe that any form of statutory registration places an unnecessary burden on industry which will tend to hit hardest those least able to cope—small businesses—and may be bureaucratic and create a barrier to competition.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I appreciate the tribute that the Minister paid to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) about his honourary membership of the Institute of Plumbing. If something went wrong with the plumbing in the Palace of Westminster, would the Minister turn to the hon. Member for Hornchurch or to my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), who is a master plumber?

Mr. Yeo: Armed with that additional information, I have no doubt that it will relieve my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch if I give an unqualified assurance that, should the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) be available, we shall look to him.

Those responsible for maintaining the Palace of Westminster—I hope that I am not making a claim that cannot be sustained—take great care to select reputable, qualified and well-trained plumbers to undertake any necessary work.

The circumstances in which the Government believe that statutory registration is justified are when health and safety considerations are of overwhelming importance. The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) (Amendment) Regulations, which came into effect last month, provide

[Mr. Yeo]

for a statutory registration scheme for gas installers. In that case, the Government considered that exceptional reasons justified the introduction of such a scheme.

Clearly, the installation of gas is potentially extremely dangerous. Evidence shows that a disproportionate number of gas accidents were attributable to the work of gas installers who were not registered with the voluntary scheme run by the Confederation for the Registration of Gas Installers. No such equivalent evidence is available for the plumbing industry.

We believe that health and safety standards are adequately controlled through the building regulations and water byelaws. My Department recently consulted on proposals to amend the regulations relating to unvented hot water systems. One proposal would require such systems to be installed by competent persons who have undergone appropriate training. The proposal was considered necessary because of the potential for explosions if the systems, in particular the safety devices, are installed incorrectly. Those systems are still relatively new to the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch made a specific point on the notification of unvented hot water systems under the water byelaws. The legislation does not require their installation to be notified and, therefore, it would not be appropriate to include guidance on this matter under the building regulations.

My hon. Friend is correct that, in the past, the number of unvented system notifications made under the building regulations has been disappointing. My Department is considering ways of promoting a greater awareness of the need to notify the building control authorities of installation of those systems. We shall shortly publish a free booklet on the building control system in England and Wales drawing attention to that. The manufacturers of these systems also have a role to play and we shall encourage them to include information on notification in their packaging.

For many years, the Building Research Establishment has carried out research into improving the performance of plumbing systems. Its research has provided a major input into both the development of the building regulations and British standards.

Protection of public health has long been ensured by the water byelaws which control the fittings and installations on customers' premises up to the point where water is drawn off. All water companies have made new byelaws based on a model prepared by my Department in 1986. The latest byelaws incorporated further measures to safeguard public health and safety. They took into account recommendations in the report of the Committee on Backsiphonage in Water Installations. Those were intended to prevent the contamination of water and to protect water from backflow and backsiphonage in mains and all types of connected water services. They also included more stringent requirements for cold water storage cisterns and WC flushing apparatus.

Generally, plumbing work in new premises and major extensions is carried out by building contractors or specialist plumbing firms. For the most part, such work is done by competent plumbers, many of whom may be registered with the Institute of Plumbing, which produces work that conforms with the byelaws. Indeed, many water companies recognise the competence of certain installers and accept certificates as evidence of compliance with byelaws.

I accept, however, that the large amount of renovation, alteration and maintenance of domestic water supply installations can create problems, because much of this work is carried out by householders themselves or by non-specialist people with little or no knowledge of the byelaws.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch quoted the large number of byelaw infringements discovered through a comprehensive survey of properties in the area of the South Staffordshire water company. He suggests that it is representative of the problem in other parts of the country. Water companies are under a duty to provide an adequate and wholesome supply of water. If a company fails to meet the statutory requirements, the drinking water inspectorate may take enforcement action. The serious infringements in the South Staffordshire area occurred mainly in industrial and commercial premises. The risk of water contamination and backsiphonage, particularly from industrial processes, is clearly higher in those premises, and water companies should therefore be particularly vigilant about carrying out inspections of those premises.

One matter of special concern to my hon. Friend is training.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): We seem to be concentrating on the supply of water to premises, but plumbers also deal with the disposal of water after it has been used. The largest park in my constituency, Valentine's park contains Valentine's mansion, from which a cutting was given to Hampton court for its vine. The park has a large, impressive lake. When I was a child I used to be able to paddle in the stream that fed that lake. That stream has now been cut off from the public and fenced round because too many false connections have been made to the surface water drainage system, which now takes foul water into the lake. That is totally unacceptable. Is my hon. Friend the Minister certain that the Government attach enough importance to ensuring that only qualified people have the right to connect up to both the water supply and water disposal systems?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend raises an important matter, but I hope that the general thrust of my remarks will assure him that the Government attach sufficient importance to the need for well-qualified and well-trained plumbers to carry out those important tasks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch will be interested to know that over the past three years some 1,500 water industry employees have undergone one-week training courses; 150 plumbing teachers from technical colleges have also been given training on water byelaws and 1,000 employees from the public and private sector have attended overview courses.

My hon. Friend asked about the number of byelaw inspections, the incidence of backflow contamination, health problems associated with water quality in buildings and byelaw enforcement. I am sorry to say that such information is not available centrally and cannot be provided in a form that relates solely to water byelaws. He also mentioned that the water industry is reviewing the future of water byelaws. My Department provides an observer to the committee that has been established for

that purpose. The Government will be interested in the committee's findings and conclusions. However, until they are available, it would be inappropriate for the Government to promote an investigation.

My hon. Friend mentioned the implications of European Community legislation. The Water Act 1989 made provision for water byelaws to be replaced in due course by national regulations. Those arrangements are having to be reviewed in the light of developments in the EC. One vital function of the present United Kingdom water byelaws is to prevent waste and undue consumption of water. The importance of conserving our supplies has been emphasised by our recent experiences of successive years of drought. I hope that that matter will be given its proper weight in Community legislation. The European committee for standardisation covers not only the European Community but the European Free Trade Area as well. The successful harmonisation of product standards across 18 diverse states is difficult.

It has been contended that the lack of a statutory registration scheme in this country places United Kingdom plumbers at a disadvantage when seeking work in other European Community countries. I do not agree. I am in favour of measures to bring down the bureaucratic barriers to the movement of labour throughout the European Community. It would be inappropriate for the United Kingdom to erect barriers of our own.

Of course, I would not argue with my hon. Friend that plumbing work should be carried out by competent plumbers with the necessary qualifications and that the public should be able to identify those plumbers easily. As I mentioned, the Office of Fair Trading is working closely with the industry to improve such recognition.

Self-regulation by the industry is the key. The Institute of Plumbing has maintained a voluntary register of plumbers since 1886, which I commend. The 11,000 plumbers on the register today must be appropriately qualified and undertake, at all times, to uphold the dignity and reputation of the craft of plumbing and safeguard the public interest in matters of health and safety.

I believe that the best route to higher standards is through the marketplace. I want a consumer-driven process, under which well-informed customers demand well-qualified plumbers to carry out good-quality work for everyone's benefit, so that the customer has a choice. If the consumer is not prepared to pay a little extra for some assurance of quality and standards, no amount of regulation imposed by the Government will force him or her to do so. Additional regulation measures would face some of the enforcement problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch referred. I am convinced that the industry would not gain further freedom of movement in the EC by introducing statutory registration in the United Kingdom. The Government and the water industry are ensuring the continued protection of public health and safety through the water byelaws and building regulations. It is far better that we should do so in a free and open market.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 22 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Rail Services (North-West)

1. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in improving rail services to the north-west.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): British Rail is planning to upgrade Intercity west coast main line services, involving investment of some £750 million in new rolling stock, signalling and track improvements. British Rail recently invited tenders for the new trains.

Regional railways' north transpennine express services from Newcastle to Liverpool have already benefited from the introduction of the latest class 158 diesel units. They were brought into the service in January this year.

Mr. Butler: What provisions will be made for direct passenger services between the north-west and the channel, given that the regional sets that British Rail was meant to produce will not be ready on time? Is there any news about the location of the freight terminals in the north-west, a decision that has been long awaited?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend will know that there are design problems with the trains for daytime through services. It is not a resource constraint on the Government but a problem with the manufacturers designing trains that will be able to run on the lines north of London where there is overhead electricity and a need to split the longer TGV trains which will serve the capitals. I very much hope that those services will be in place as soon as possible. In the interim between the opening of the tunnel and those trains running, we expect that British Rail will run services into Waterloo from the north-west so that passengers can interconnect quickly. As for night services, there is no reason to believe that they will be delayed on the west coast main line.

For freight services, British Rail intends to operate two terminals, one in Liverpool and one in Manchester. I hope that before too long British Rail will have made the final decisions about the precise locations.

Mr. Fearn: Does the Minister agree that an overnight sleeper service is desirable from the channel tunnel to the north-west if for no other reason than that the tourism industry in the north-west and in Scotland requires such a service?

Mr. Freeman: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important. If he has not seen the designs of British Rail and of some of the potential suppliers of those services, perhaps he might avail himself of an opportunity to do so and comment on the quality of service that will be available on sleepers and on overnight services from Paris and Brussels, which will run non-stop through London and up the west coast main line.

Mr. Sumberg: Will those improvements in the rail service to the north-west, which I welcome, lead to an abandonment by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) of the proposed Greater Manchester northern and western relief road? Will the Minister have a word with him to tell him that the rail service is improving and that therefore he need not proceed with the plan, which is much resented and disapproved of by my constituents?

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly convey my hon. Friend's sentiments to my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, but I am bound to say that road investment in the north-west—especially in the Greater Manchester conurbation—has been significant in recent years, although there is a great deal further to go. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will deal with the specific point that my hon. Friend has made.

Mr. Snape: May I return the Minister to the question of rail services and especially to rail safety in the north-west? Is he aware that three of the most senior operating managers on the London Midland region have been removed from their jobs at a moment's notice because they were courageous enough to speak out about the impact on safety of present financial policies? Does he accept that in the event of a serious accident on British Rail arising from those policies, we shall hold the Secretary of State and his fellow Ministers responsible?

Mr. Freeman: Safety is the pre-eminent concern of not only British Rail, but the Department of Transport. I am aware of the specifics of the case of the three individuals who have been named. They are not the only guardians of the quality of safety on British Rail. Responsibility rests primarily with the chairman and with the board of British Rail. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of rail safety not only in terms of resource expenditure, but in ensuring that standards on existing equipment are maintained.

Speed Limits

2. **Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to limit the speed of vehicles on leaving motorways.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): It is the responsibility of every motorist to drive safely and that includes observing the speed limit. We are monitoring the use of experimental yellow bar markings on slip roads to make drivers more aware of their speed.

Sir David Mitchell: Will the Department erect repeater 70 mph speed limit signs on the A303 west of the M3? Is my hon. Friend aware of the number of deaths, injuries and other accidents that have occurred on that section of road, including a nine-car pile-up into the back of a farm tractor at the weekend?

Mr. Cope: I am well aware of the excessive speed at which many motorists travel on that stretch of road and of the number of accidents that have been occasioned. I know that the police take the issue of enforcement seriously. Earlier this month, they booked 59 drivers on that stretch of road. The average speed at which they were travelling was 94 mph. I do not think that the speeding is so much inadvertent as deliberate and that is why I am sceptical about the idea of putting up repeater 70 mph limit signs. I have asked the Transport and Road Research Laboratory to look at that section of road to see what can be done to increase compliance with the speed limit. Largely as a result of the pressure from my hon. Friend, we have in the roads programme a major improvement to the part of the road between Bullington Cross and Andover, where many of the serious accidents have occurred. I hope that we shall be able to implement that soon.

Fishing Vessel Losses

3. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many United Kingdom registered fishing vessels have been lost in each of the past four years; and what was the number of fishermen drowned in such vessel losses.

The Minister for Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Figures for 1990 are not yet available. For the years 1986 to 1989 inclusive, the numbers of United Kingdom fishing vessels lost were 19, 14, 22 and 22. The numbers of related deaths of fishermen were 11, four, 18 and 16.

Dr. Godman: Since I tabled the question, the Portsmouth trawler Wilhelmina has been lost, with its six-man crew, as the Minister will know. He and his officials need to do far more to enhance the safety of fishermen. When will he acknowledge the need for the provision of immersion suits on every fishing vessel over 10 m long? The carriage of such suits would save the lives of some fishermen. When will the Minister come to terms with that need?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman will know that an investigation is continuing into the Wilhelmina. It is always sad and unfortunate to have to record the loss of a fishing vessel. Over the past 20 years, the number of losses each year has not changed very much, although in each case it is a particular tragedy. I will look at the question of immersion suits.

Mr. David Martin: My hon. Friend will recall that I raised with him last week the loss of the Wilhelmina J, a Portsmouth vessel, over Easter. There was a memorial service last week in Portsmouth, where the incident was taken very seriously. We all have sympathy for the relatives of the six people who lost their lives on board that vessel. My hon. Friend has assured me that an inquiry is proceeding as fast as it can and I do not wish to anticipate its findings. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the Zulfikar, the Cypriot ship involved, was stopped off Lisbon, earlier than it was at first thought possible to do as it sailed to Egypt, and that evidence will be gathered as soon as possible? Perhaps the lessons that can be learnt are——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us have not the lessons now, but the question to the Minister, please.

Mr. Martin: Perhaps the lessons once the inquiry has reported could be that technological devices can be improved. Should not the application of radar transponder devices and collision avoidance for smaller vessels also be covered by legislation?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. The whole House shares in the sympathy for those involved in the tragic accident of the Wilhelmina. It is always tragic when fishing vessels go down because they are usually from small communities and the effect on such communities is substantial.

I confirm that the inquiry is taking place and that the inspectors have already interviewed the master of the ship involved. The application of transponders will be brought to the attention of the inspector and he will probably address it when he makes his recommendation. I hope that we shall have an interim report in the next few days. When we shall be able to publish any of it remains to be seen.

Mrs. Ray Michie: The Minister will recall the sinking of the fishing vessel Antares, which sailed from Carradale in my constituency, in which four of the crew were lost. Does he agree that in view of the special circumstances and evidence surrounding that tragedy, the Ministry of Defence should take responsibility for funding representation for the families at the forthcoming fatal accident inquiry? If the Ministry of Defence continues to refuse to do so, will the Department of Transport consider helping those families, who have suffered a great deal already?

Mr. McLoughlin: The inquiry into the loss of the Antares is in progress. The points that the hon. Lady makes are first and foremost for the Ministry of Defence, but I shall bear in mind her comments and consider possible solutions.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister agree that we need a complete overhaul of safety in all aspects of shipping? In respect of the incident about which we have just heard, does he agree that the failure of the Department of Transport and the Ministry of Defence to get together and resolve the matter is matched by the failure to approve and test the specification for the pinger devices which could do so much to improve safety when submarines are around? Was not that research interrupted because of the Gulf war and when will the Minister reach agreement with the Ministry of Defence so that our fishermen can fish in safety?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am fed up with the Opposition attempting to make party political points on what is a serious matter. If we are to start making party political points—I have tried to avoid doing so—we can look back and see that total losses were 37 in 1975, 35 in 1976, 37 in 1977, 38 in 1978 and 42 in 1979. Those were far greater losses than take place now. How dare the Opposition make cheap party political points?

British Rail Pay

4. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the British Rail pay round, consideration has been given to a share participation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I regret that a share participation scheme would

not be possible for British Rail while it remains a nationalised industry, but this will become an attractive option once British Rail is in the private sector.

Mr. Gregory: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if it were possible for British Rail to be denationalised, the employees could benefit from a share option scheme? Indeed, those parts of British Rail that have been denationalised already benefit from such schemes. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm, for example, that at British Rail Engineering Ltd. in York, people with the same qualifications as employees of British Rail are offered a pay differential of between 23 and 36 per cent? Does not that show the way forward for British Rail, as opposed to the old-fashioned trade union policies adopted by the trade union barons?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Indeed, in 1990 BREL made a free allocation to employees of some of the 20 per cent. of shares bought by managers. Clearly, it is part of any privatisation to increase the opportunities available to employees. In previous privatisations employees have always come forward enthusiastically. That is one of the main advantages of introducing an industry to the new environment of the private sector.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. David—Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: That is my brother; he is younger than me.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. He slipped my memory for a moment!

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that the employees of British Rail are not interested in share participation schemes? They are not interested in the offer that has been made by British Rail for their wages. They are not interested in what the Tories have to offer in respect of privatisation. They want the same kind of treatment as is being handed out in wages and conditions to the head of British Rail, who is picking up more than £200,000, and the other top directors who pocketed a 22·7 per cent increase last year. The Government should give the employees that treatment.

Mr. Rifkind: The chairman of British Rail is a man of exceptional ability. If we are to expect British Rail to achieve the progress that has been made in many other industries, it is crucial to ensure that the person who is attracted to take over responsibility for the industry is paid a salary commensurate with such ability. The current pay negotiations are primarily a matter for British Rail and I hope that British Rail employees will take into account the fact that inflation is now falling rapidly. That is increasingly recognised throughout industry as well as in the public sector.

Channel Tunnel

5. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the channel tunnel rail link.

7. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to make an announcement on the route for the channel tunnel high-speed link.

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to receive British Rail's proposals for the channel tunnel rail link soon and will want to discuss them with Sir Bob Reid. The Government will reach their conclusions on the project as speedily as possible, but it is too early to say when announcements may be made.

Mr. Bowden: In his discussions with Sir Bob Reid, will my right hon. and learned Friend impress upon him the benefits which will come from a route that is aligned on a junction at Stratford, as that will offer not only direct through trains from Stratford through King's Cross to the west country, but the opportunity for through trains, freight and passenger, to the whole of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I am certainly aware of the advantages that it is often suggested the Stratford connection would bring. I certainly expect British Rail fully to have considered that option with the other options in its current survey.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Chris Smith.

Mr. Tony Banks: No, Mr. Speaker. I tabled Question 7, which was linked with this one.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, it should be Mr. Anthony Banks first.

Mr. Banks: Thank you, Sir. You obviously had a good weekend.

It would be more helpful if the Secretary of State could give us a more precise date instead of "soon" for receiving British Rail's decisions. As he will know, all of London is waiting for this decision, not least his colleagues who have marginal constituencies and who have more than a passing interest in the line that will come through London. Will the Secretary of State bear it in mind that there are strategic implications and that the whole future prosperity and economic welfare of the east end is bound up in his decision? Will he give an undertaking to the House that he will consider the decision in terms of its strategic significance and importance?

Mr. Rifkind: Some time ago British Rail made it clear that it expected to make its recommendations to the Government this month. That may still be the case, but, obviously, that is a matter for British Rail. I fully appreciate the hon. Gentleman's points in the latter part of his question. Indeed, I would go further and say that British Rail's recommendations and the Government's decision on the high-speed link have potential national significance. It has implications not only for London and the south-east, but for the country as a whole. Therefore, I assure the hon. Gentleman that not only British Rail but the Government will address these matters with all the seriousness that they deserve.

Mr. Dunn: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many hundreds of people and many institutions and firms are awaiting anxiously the announcement of the final route? When he considers the route will he bear in mind the fact that we have been waiting for many, many months? Will he confirm that when he has made his decision on the route it will be reported to the House in the first instance and will not be announced during the summer recess?

Mr. Rifkind: I have indicated the seriousness with which I view these matters and, clearly, it is important not only to reach a decision but to do so as expeditiously as possible. I cannot anticipate when a conclusion will be

possible, but I certainly appreciate the desirability of the House's being given an opportunity fully to consider any conclusion that the Government may reach in due course.

Mr. Rees: To follow the Secretary of State's comment about national implications—this is a matter for us in Leeds, Yorkshire and the north in general—is not one of the problems to do with signalling arrangements? At the weekend I was informed of a serious problem arising from cheap, shoddy, signalling arrangements in Leeds. Will the Secretary of State consider that carefully? It is no good talking about a high-speed link, if the existing basic signalling is not up to standard.

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that signalling is crucial to the smooth and acceptable operation of a railway service and I shall be happy to consider his points. I again emphasise the importance of the channel tunnel to areas north of London as well as to the south-east. Many would convincingly argue that the benefits of rail freight are all the more substantial the further north one goes, because of the longer journeys involved.

Mr. Wolfson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that proper consideration needs to be given to the strategic implications of a high-speed link to the channel tunnel? Does he agree that good rail links, comparable with those of the TGV in France, are generators of economic growth and prosperity? Will he give due weight to that in his deliberations?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I agree that good rail links are highly desirable. The public debate on these matters is somewhat different in north-west France, where there is great enthusiasm for any such proposed rail connections, from that in the south-east of England, which has a quite different economy and much more congestion because of the burden of population and where such matters are conducted differently. However, the basic principle remains the same; rail links are crucial to the benefits of the channel tunnel on both sides of the channel.

Mr. Chris Smith: When the Secretary of State meets the chairman of British Rail will he make two essential points to him? First, it is important to ensure that there are fast and direct links from the channel tunnel to all parts of the country, not just to London. Secondly, in order to achieve that, it is not necessary to place an intolerable burden of extra congestion on King's Cross and its immediate area. Will he ensure that British Rail looks seriously and carefully at alternatives to King's Cross and does not dismiss them out of hand?

Mr. Rifkind: I expect the survey being undertaken by British Rail to consider the points that the hon. Gentleman has made. The implications for King's Cross and the alternative option of Stratford have been suggested by a number of quarters. British Rail's conclusions will carry additional weight if it can be seen to have considered all options fairly, objectively and responsibly.

Sir Robert McCrindle: Whereas my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Kent and south-east London have varying degrees of apprehension about the fast link, is not it at least as important to remember that the people of east London, north London and Essex, by and large, support the Stratford option? Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear that in mind in his consideration of the matter?

Mr. Rifkind: The points made today by my hon. Friend and by other hon. Members will emphasise to British Rail, if it needed reminding, that the House and the country expect that the study should look at all the options in a credible and objective fashion if British Rail's conclusions are to command the level of national support for which it hopes?

Mr. Prescott: Does the Secretary of State accept that this is not a matter entirely for British Rail and that the Government have the overriding responsibility to see that there is a high-speed rail link from the tunnel not only to London but to areas beyond—the midlands, the north, Wales and Scotland? When he makes his decision, on receiving the report from British Rail, will he consider making a statement before the summer recess, or will his judgment be based on electoral considerations?

Mr. Rifkind: I must await British Rail's recommendations. On the routes north of London, I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that, thanks to Government approval and support for British Rail, the electrification of the east coast line will be completed in the very near future. That will make a dramatic difference to rail services on the east coast. It will enable British Rail to continue to say that, apart from the networks of France and Japan, its railway network, especially inter-city, is one of the fastest in the world. That requires on-going investment of the sort that I have outlined and it is right to emphasise that British Rail today has one of the fastest rail networks in the world, other than those in France and Japan.

Transport Infrastructure (South Cumbria)

6. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the transport infrastructure in south Cumbria.

Mr. McLoughlin: The current road programme for south Cumbria includes major improvements costing some £50 million. These proposals represent a very substantial investment and should greatly improve the trunk road network in south Cumbria.

I understand that British Rail is currently looking closely at options for improving the rail service between Preston and Barrow.

Mr. Franks: My hon. Friend will be aware that the south-west corner of Cumbria, particularly the town of Barrow, is probably one of the least accessible parts of the country. In view of the area's need to broaden its economic base following cuts in defence expenditure, will my hon. Friend give urgent priority to improving the local infrastructure, and particularly to an early commencement of a bypass at Dalton-in-Furness on the A590?

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand my hon. Friend's point and what he said about the A590. Those matters are currently being considered by my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic and I hope that we shall soon be able to help my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks).

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that west Cumbria would be greatly assisted by rapid improvements

to the west coast line, which will require a certain amount of investment over the next five years? Will he undertake to discuss with the chairman of British Rail how the state can help to improve those services?

Mr. McLoughlin: We are always willing to consider, with the chairman of British Rail, any proposals or investment programmes that British Rail wishes to pursue.

Mr. Jopling: Is my hon. Friend aware that, if the most serious and urgent problems of Barrow and the surrounding area are to be dealt with, as they must be, Ministers must apply their minds and their time to making special efforts to ensure that road communications are improved, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) said, including the Lindale to Newby bridge stretch of road and the railway line to Barrow, where connections with the main line are haphazard, to say the least?

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand my right hon. Friend's concern. As I said in my original answer, British Rail is currently considering the matter.

A69

8. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for improving the A69 road between Carlisle and Hexham.

Mr. Chope: We are improving the A69. I had the pleasure of opening the A69 Brampton bypass on Thursday. The preferred route for a bypass of Haltwhistle was announced on 10 December last year and we are now proceeding towards publication of the statutory orders. Other recent improvements include the provision of climbing lanes, and more will be done as required.

Mr. Martlew: Was not a political decision taken by the Minister last year to transfer responsibility from the Manchester regional office of the Department of Transport to Newcastle, and have not the consequences of that decision, which was taken without provision for extra manpower at Newcastle, been longer delays in projects to improve the A69, the Dalton bypass in the south of Cumbria and, most important to my constituents and to me, the proposed north-west bypass at Carlisle?

Mr. Chope: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. The transfer was made to put more resources into the major programme of road infrastructure and investment in Cumbria, amounting to £186 million. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will ask the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) which of the schemes in that £186 million programme in Cumbria would be cut in the event of there being a Labour Government. I am writing to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East today to ask which of the 53 schemes that we are announcing for the coming financial year would be cut in the event of his being responsible for these matters.

Mr. Amos: Does my hon. Friend agree that the north-east has been treated fairly with regard to new road construction. If my hon. Friend considers the characteristics of and the accident record for the various types of vehicles which use the A69, especially heavy lorries and caravans, I am sure that he will agree that that stretch of road needs to be dualled urgently.

Mr. Chope: I understand my hon. Friend's point. That is one reason why I spent a lot of time last Thursday considering the A69 to see what possible further improvements could be added to the programme, in addition to the £186 million already in it.

Rail Services

9. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide for compensation for rail users on lines such as the Chelmsford-Liverpool Street line who suffer from poor quality of service.

Mr. Freeman: Not at present, but the best way to improve quality of service is by investment in new rolling stock and infrastructure. That has happened for example on the Northampton route and will happen, in May, for the Chiltern route.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In the light of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Conservative party central council in Southport, can my hon. Friend the Minister say how the possibility of a citizens' charter would benefit commuters on the Chelmsford-Liverpool Street line and other lines in the British Rail network?

Mr. Freeman: I think that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's speech is relevant to British Rail in that it requires quality targets to be set and communicated to customers, and for there to be some form of redress where appropriate. It is certainly appropriate to British Rail, particularly where there are monopolies—one thinks, for instance, of Network SouthEast. British Rail is already moving towards setting fare increases directly related to the achievement of quality on individual lines—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) laughs, but he will know that there is a distinction between the service from Southend to Liverpool Street—where a real fare increase followed an improvement in the quality of service—and the service from Southend and Fenchurch Street, where there has been no real fare increase because there has been no improvement.

Ms. Abbott: Does the Secretary of State accept that, as well as the plight of Chelmsford to Liverpool Street commuters, he should consider the plight of commuters in London generally? It has been revealed today that London is the most expensive commuter city in Europe—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. It was my fault.

Ms. Abbott: We pay more in general and more for single journeys. Why should London commuters continue to pay astronomical fares for an increasingly shabby and sub-standard service?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Lady should ask the Labour party spokesmen on the subject. I suspect that they would not agree with her, and neither would I.

Mr. Tony Banks: Come on.

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will restrain himself, I will answer the question.

I am sure that neither the Opposition spokesmen nor the Government would agree that it would be a sensible course of action now to cut fares on Network SouthEast. Investment would be a much better use of resources. Would the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) cut fares and, therefore, investment?

Tyne Valley Rail Service

10. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the extent of achievement of the performance targets set by his Department for the operation of the Tyne Valley rail service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: British Rail recognises that the quality of service on some lines in the north-east is lower than the customer is entitled to expect and it is taking steps to improve its performance.

Mr. Amos: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he give the lie to those mischief makers in my constituency who say that the Tyne Valley line is to be closed? Will he confirm, first, that British Rail has no plans to close the line and, secondly, that when British Rail is privatised, as I hope that it soon will be, the line will continue to receive a large subsidy from the Government?

Mr. McLoughlin: I can certainly confirm that there are no plans to close the Tyne Valley services.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear on a number of occasions that the fact that we are seeking to privatise British Rail does not mean that we would not continue to offer subsidies to provincial rail services.

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is not from the relevant part of the world.

Mr. Flynn: My question is connected.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may continue.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that part of the improvement of service on the Tyne Valley line involves the improvement of safety? Is he not alarmed at the 700 accidents that have occured, some on the Tyne Valley line where passengers have fallen from trains? There was one such accident in my constituency a fortnight ago, when a man fell from a moving train into the path of another train, and 100 passengers have been killed in such accidents. Should not the Minister press British Rail for a fresh, independent investigation into such accidents?

Mr. McLoughlin: Any accident of that sort is serious and each one is individually dealt with by the railway inspectorate. There is no common consistency in the accidents to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Railway Policy

11. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek an early meeting with his continental counterparts to discuss railway policy.

Mr. Rifkind: I regularly see my community counterparts at meetings of the European council of transport Ministers. Railway policy was a major item on the agenda of our last meeting in Brussels on 27 March.

Mr. Adley: Has my right hon. and learned Friend noticed that while we discuss the privatisation of our railways, Community countries—with the possible exception of one small country—carry on improving their already excellent rail systems? Has he also noticed that in our party the main proponents of railway privatisation tend to be those who delivered the poll tax to a grateful nation? Will he please ensure that we do not have a poll tax on wheels; and will he not muck about with the rail system in such a way that he has to come to the House and tell my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) that he cannot demand privatisation and a continuing level of subsidy at the same time? There is no sense in continuing heavily to subsidise the system if one's purpose is to privatise it. We need a transport policy that seeks deliberately to transfer traffic from road to rail.

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that my hon. Friend is out of touch with the mainstream of European opinion on this matter. Not only are the Dutch Government considering the privatisation of their railways, but the European Commission has expressly called for the introduction of competition to the railways. Therefore, on this—though on no other matter I disagree with my hon. Friend—I prefer the views of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), who was quoted in the *South London Press* on 12 April as saying that a privatised rail network may provide a "higher standard service".

Ms. Ruddock: The Secretary of State misquotes me, of course, as I made it very clear that even if privatisation could provide a higher standard of service it would also undoubtedly provide much higher fares. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman meets his continental counterparts, will he take advice from them on fares? He cites the Dutch Government, who intend to double the number of people travelling on public transport in the next 20 years. Surely in this capital city we should be doing the same. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman really want to get people off the tube and off the railway into their private cars, thereby causing further congestion? Has he seen and does he agree with the editorial in the *Evening Standard* today which says that when people begin to lose confidence in their Government's ability to run a railway they will question their ability to run anything else?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady has some explaining to do because the *South London Press* directly quotes her observations on this matter, to the effect that a privatised railway network may provide a higher standard of service. I note that the hon. Lady has not withdrawn that observation.

The hon. Lady should realise that if she wishes, as I wish, to encourage more people to use the railway service, it is manifestly clear that the best way to do that is to ensure that the railways face the same competition as other transport services. Experience with the airlines, buses and other forms of transport has invariably shown that the travelling public get a better quality of service when choice is available. That is why the Dutch and Japanese Governments and the European Commission are pointing

in that direction. On past form, we shall have to wait only a few years before the Labour party comes along in the same direction.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the work of the Crown prosecution service.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Last year the Crown prosecution service completed proceedings relating to nearly 1·6 million defendants in the magistrates court and more than 140,000 defendants in the Crown court.

Mr. Marshall: What success is the Crown prosecution service having in recruiting additional staff?

The Solicitor-General: Over the past year recruiting has been very successful. The rate of recruitment has doubled, with a net gain of 210 lawyers in post, which means that vacancies have fallen from 23 to 15 per cent. That has been heartening to the service, and efforts are continuing, especially in areas still under stress.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Solicitor-General believe that the process has speeded up as a result? Is this having any impact on the numbers of people held on remand?

The Solicitor-General: I think that it is having a good effect on the efficiency of the service, on the ability of the service to carry out its review and on the ability of lawyers in post to do more of the work in court—as well as on their general reviewing work—and that is to the general benefit. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a statistical answer on speed, but if he writes to me I can send him the information.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Solicitor-General will recall that the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, which set up the Crown prosecution service, received all-party support. Nevertheless, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and I raised questions about the relationships between the heads of the services, chief constables, salary levels and the professional status of the service's employees. Obviously these were matters that would be judged over time. I remember that we asked for a review after five years and that the Attorney-General rejected our request. We now have a report from the Public Accounts Committee, which draws attention to the fact that two and a half years after its inception the objectives of the service have not yet been met and that it is costing twice as much as the previous arrangements. Those are matters for which the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General are directly responsible, so it seems fair to ask the Solicitor-General what he intends to do about them.

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman should remember the constructive and frequently praising remarks of the Select Committee on Home Affairs when it carried out its review nearly a year ago. The salaries, the career structure and the training scheme that have been brought into place in the past year have all had an excellent effect on morale within the service and on the recruitment that I have described to the House.

The Gulf

31. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will set out his duties in relation to the conduct and aftermath of the Gulf war and observance of human rights and international law.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): As the Government's principal legal adviser, I give advice to Ministers on any matter involving domestic or international legal issues.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Attorney-General the question of which I gave his office notice this morning? What has been the Government's legal and other response to the request made by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan on behalf of the United Nations refugees committee that sanctions should be lifted? Is not it desperately urgent, in view of the sweltering summer and the likely outbreak of hepatitis, cholera and typhoid? If we are to help the Shias and Kurds, do not we sometimes have to talk to Baghdad?

The Attorney-General: It is true that the hon. Gentleman, in his invariably courteous way, gave me notice of his question earlier today. I have to say that the matter is one of policy for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the provisions of Security Council resolution 687, which was adopted on 3 April, and especially paragraph 20, which lifts sanctions imposed by resolution 661 in respect of foodstuffs, subject only to notification to the sanctions committee.

Mr. Winnick: Will any steps be taken with the relevant international bodies to ensure that those responsible for the crimes committed in Kuwait during the terror of Iraqi occupation and the crimes further committed against the Kurds will be tried by an international tribunal? As Nazi war criminals were tried in 1945-46 for crimes against humanity, why should Saddam Hussein be exempted from the same rules? There is undoubtedly a strong case that he should be tried as well.

The Attorney-General: These matters depend upon a clear understanding of all the facts when they become available. The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve agreed—I think that it was last week—to work towards bringing criminals, and Mr. Saddam Hussein in particular, to justice. It is necessary, first, to have a clear understanding of the facts. The hon. Gentleman will also recall, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, that we do not have Saddam in our power.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

32. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed the Birmingham pub bombings case with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

33. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed the Birmingham pub bombings case with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: I frequently meet the Director to discuss departmental matters, and I last did so on 18 April, but I do not disclose the particular matters discussed.

Mr. McFall: Will the Attorney-General confirm that a number of police officers who must have lied and

fabricated evidence are still on duty? Are there any plans to suspend them, or may we expect business as usual in the West Midlands police force?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Devon and Cornwall police force is carrying out investigations of a criminal nature into certain police officers who were named in the judgment of the Court of Appeal. More than that it is not proper for me to say at present.

Ms. Short: The Attorney-General will recall that the trial judge in the case said that if what the defendants were saying was true it would amount to the biggest conspiracy in the annals of criminal history. Can he assure us that he is dealing with the matter that seriously and that he will secure the prosecutions of those who organised it rather than a couple of low-level fall guys?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that the hon. Lady would expect the Director of Public Prosecutions to do more than apply the code for Crown prosecutors in this instance exactly as it is applied in other instances—that is, to look to see whether, at the conclusion of the police investigation, which is far advanced, there is enough evidence to give rise to the realistic prospect of a conviction and the public interest requires a prosecution. That is the test, and he will apply it.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. and learned Friend please advise the House whether the Birmingham Six were released because they could not possibly have carried out the pub bombings, because there was reasonable doubt, or because the evidence on which they were prosecuted was unsafe? That is a matter of public interest.

The Attorney-General: As the Court of Appeal made clear in the concluding words of its judgment, it held that the convictions were unsafe and unsatisfactory on each of two specific grounds. Accordingly, the appeals were allowed. The consequence is that each of the Birmingham Six is entitled to the same presumption of innocence as anybody else in the country.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the basic problem is that the IRA, like the Disloyalists, go around killing people when the answer in Northern Ireland is for people to settle their differences by discussion and disagreement rather than by murder?

The Attorney-General: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend, as the whole House must agree, that that is a consummation devoutly to be wished. As soon as military and paramilitary organisations adopt that rule, we shall all be greatly satisfied and many innocent people will be relieved of the fear of death, let alone of wrongful conviction, from which they have suffered for so many years now.

Appeals

35. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the present average delay between *(a)* date of conviction, *(b)* granting of leave to appeal and *(c)* determination of the appeal in criminal cases in England and Wales; and if he has any plans to speed up the appeal process.

The Solicitor-General: Based on a sample of cases heard by the Court of Appeal in March this year, the average time between the lodging of a notice of appeal and decision by the single judge was just over 12 weeks, and from the grant of leave to appeal to final decision by the full court was just over 20 weeks.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Solicitor-General. I am sure that he realises that one of the greatest causes of complaint by those who are ultimately acquitted is the length of time they are held while the various steps in the process allowing them to appeal are taken. Is there anything that he and his colleagues can do to try to make sure that if an appeal is put in it goes to the front of the queue and that the period for the intervening stages before it can be reduced, possibly by half?

The Solicitor-General: The Lord Chancellor keeps the state of business in the court under constant review and the court itself tries to put cases where the sentences are shorter, and therefore there is a risk of a person serving the sentence before an appeal against conviction can be heard, to the front of the queue and so to order its affairs that cases do not result in injustice.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Assistance

37. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions the Minister for Overseas Development has had with her German opposite number on development assistance.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I met the German Minister for Co-operation, Herr Spranger, at the Anglo-German summit on 11 March. We reached agreement on a wide range of current development issues. I hope to see him early in May. In the meantime, we are in touch by telephone.

Mr. Townsend: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that Germany's criteria for the provision of such assistance are very similar to our own? In her recent discussions with her German opposite number, did she raise the matter of how Germany could best help to solve the vast problem of Kurdish relief, bearing in mind that that country will not be sending any military personnel into the region?

Mrs. Chalker: The answer to my hon. Friend's first question is yes. Obviously, the answer to his second will be embodied in my statement. At this stage, I would say simply that while the Germans may not have a presence in the region, they are contributing to the relief of suffering there.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the need for more international effort to provide appropriate assistance to Kurdish refugees, can the Minister explain to her German counterpart and, indeed, to this House what on earth possessed her to hand out chocolates to starving Kurdish children? Does not such a patronising gesture indicate a degree of insensitivity almost akin to Marie-Antoinette's infamous statement, "Let them eat cake."?

Mrs. Chalker: In a few moments, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, we shall come to a statement on this issue. In the meantime, let me say to the hon. Gentleman simply

that a large number of things were donated for me to take to the children. It would have been wrong to keep those things. What ought I to have done? Should I have prevented those children from having a little joy? How can the hon. Gentleman be so mean?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her reply to the last supplementary question. Can she tell me what progress is being made to persuade Germany and other developed countries to implement the Jamaica conditions, which were put forward by the Prime Minister with a view to reducing the indebtedness of developing countries?

Mrs. Chalker: At the Commonwealth Finance Minister's meeting last September, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister put forward what are now known not as the Jamaica conditions but as the Trinidad conditions. Last week I discussed these with the IMF and the World bank. We are hopeful that debt relief provisions—that is to say, easier terms for heavily indebted countries—will be agreed later this summer. We are working with our partners on the issue, and the Germans are particularly supportive of what we are doing.

Mrs. Clwyd: Did the Minister discuss with her German counterpart the enormous famine facing Africa, with the threat of starvation hanging over 29 million people? What action have the Government decided to take?

Mrs. Chalker: I did indeed speak with my German counterpart about the tragic situation to which the hon. Lady has referred. As she has rightly said, up to 29 million people are affected. I asked the Germans to provide more assistance and to help me to make sure that European Community aid was more speedily delivered to the region, particularly the Horn of Africa. They have agreed to do so, and in my next talks with them I hope to hear more evidence of the movement that has taken place over the past six weeks. I know that the Germans are committed to taking action, their earlier problems having gone away.

South Africa

38. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase aid to South Africa consequent upon the dismantling of apartheid.

Mrs. Chalker: Our bilateral aid programme for black South Africans has grown rapidly in recent years to around £8 million in 1990-91. On present plans, it will rise steadily to over £10 million in 1992-93. We shall continue to play a constructive role in the development of a post-apartheid South Africa.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the system of apartheid blighted the educational and entrepreneurial opportunities of the blacks. Will British aid be directed to those two areas?

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed it will. In fact, this morning I met President de Klerk, and one of the matters that we discussed was how to secure the return of entrepreneurial growth that will stimulate the creation of jobs. In our programme, there is major emphasis on education and community development. By helping black South Africans to secure better education, we fit them for the jobs that we hope will come through the growth that will be achieved once South Africa is fully accepted back into the international financial community.

Mr. Hain: Does not the Minister accept that it is highly premature to talk of increasing aid while township violence increases, while black people in South Africa still do not have the vote, and while political prisoners still fill the prisons? Will she remind President de Klerk that until there is an end to the township violence, which in the past five years has claimed more victims than the number of South African soldiers killed in the second world war, he should not be wining and dining in the capital of the United Kingdom?

Mrs. Chalker: As a matter of fact, 400 political prisoners have been released since February 1990, and more will be released in the coming weeks. The President of South Africa has plans to deal with township violence —but not by putting more people in custody. The South African Government want to reduce violence by action within the communities and a great deal of work is being undertaken to that end. There is a firm determination among members of that Government to proceed with finalising legislation to get rid of apartheid. When they have done that, I am sure that South Africa will gradually become a better place.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

39. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the inauguration of the European bank for reconstruction and development.

Mrs. Chalker: The European bank for reconstruction and development was formally inaugurated in London on 15 April by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Mitterrand. That was an historic occasion, which symbolised the coming together of east and west, and gave the new bank the necessary authority to start operations to support economic reform in central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Carrington: The establishment of that bank in London is greatly welcomed, as it consolidates London's position as the financial centre of Europe. The European bank for reconstruction and development has a primary role to play in consolidating the new-found freedoms of east European countries. What support are the British Government giving to it?

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom's subscription to the capital base is £36·5 million over five years. The total subscribed capital is 10 billion ecu.

Dr. Kim Howells: Is the Minister aware of the enormous cost of dealing with just one problem in eastern Europe —that of cleaning up pollution? Does she agree that the sums mentioned are totally inadequate? As Britain is part of the same continent, what will the British Government do to help?

Mrs. Chalker: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's observations, because central and eastern Europe's pollution problems are horrendous. We are devoting our know-how funds in eastern Europe to providing that know-how to which the Government in each country give priority. I am certain that they will include some

environmental projects. Those Governments will be seeking environmental projects such as those that might be funded by the bank, to solve some of their pollution problems. We must ensure that those problems do not get worse, and that the clean-up starts as soon as possible.

Human Rights

40. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will ensure that the payment of aid funds by Her Majesty's Government to third world countries takes full account of the recipient's record on human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: Human rights is one of a number of important factors that we take fully into account in deciding aid allocations.

Mr. Mitchell: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, with the exception of some humanitarian aid to refugees on the Thai-Burmese border, there will be no resumption of any aid to the Government of Burma until they respect the elections that were held last May in which the Opposition won 85 per cent. of the vote, release the Opposition's de facto leader who is still under house arrest, and un-ban the democratic parties that they have tried to suppress?

Mrs. Chalker: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Iraqi Refugees

3.33 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement following my visit to Turkey and Iran to assess the needs of Iraqi refugees and what more Britain intends to do further to relieve their tragic suffering.

Last Wednesday I reported to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on the first days of immediate relief that we have provided to Iraqi refugees in both countries. On Thursday I left for Turkey and Iran with Overseas Development Administration and diplomatic wing officials, and representatives of the British Red Cross, Save the Children Fund and Oxfam, all experts in the provision of humanitarian relief.

Our objective was to assess the current situation of refugees in the Turkey-Iraq and Iran-Iraq border areas, to stimulate improved communication and co-ordination of all aid donors on the ground and to plan our further relief to the refugees with the Governments and aid agencies of all involved. The generosity of Her Majesty in allowing us the use of an aircraft and crew of the Queen's Flight, and the helpful attitude of both the Turkish and Iranian Governments, and the Iranian air force, enabled my team and me to see a number of camps and have detailed discussions with Ministers, officials and aid personnel in both countries. I was also able to meet senior American and German military personnel to gain a clearer picture of both their immediate and future aid plans.

The plight of the Iraqi refugees is truly harrowing. Assistance is further advanced for those on the Turkish border than for those in Iran. The Turkish system has developed considerably during the last week, but needs continuing supplies. I will return to Turkey's work for the refugees in a moment, but first I deal with Iran. The situation is changing hour by hour. For those in Iran, the rate of delivery of supplies from all sources must be at least doubled, and donors must co-ordinate through the Iranian Red Crescent and with the Government of Iran as well as with the United Nations and international aid agencies.

There are now more than 1·2 million Iraqi refugees in Iran, with many thousands more over the border seeking entry through the three crossing points. The Iranian authorities told me that they are allowing several thousand in a day as they establish more camps and places in them, and provided that the refugees will give up their arms at the border. Around 1 million people, mainly Kurds but also Turkomans, Assyrians and Arabs, have come to the northern border provinces of west Azerbaijan and Bakhtaran, another 200,000 plus have moved on to east Azerbaijan and there are more than 50,000 Shi'ites in Khuzestan in southern Iran across the border from Basra.

Within the northern provinces, the response of the Iranian Red Crescent organisation and their provincial governors is growing daily with help from donors through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Iranian military. Britain was one of the first to supply directly to Orumieh in west Azerbaijan, 160 tonnes so far having been delivered, plus 3 million water purifying tablets. The Iranian Red Crescent works through the provincial governors to secure supplies, distribute them and maintain order in the camps; 55 camps have been established in Azerbaijan and Bakhtaran. The Iranian Red Crescent and local officials discussed their difficulties openly and welcomed our suggestions to help to improve the organisation of supplies and health care.

Our visit to two of the 22 camps near Orumieh, in the foothills of the mountains north of Piranshahr, confirmed that existing facilities are overwhelmed by numbers entering. The queues to cross the border at Tamarcheen are still 3 to 4 km long and there are few or no facilities along the road. On the road and in many camps, conditions of shelter, health, food and water are horrendous and urgently need improvement.

The health of women and children is particularly at risk because of unclean water, no sanitation, limited health care and irregular food distribution. In the mosque at one camp, the first point of arrival, whole families lie huddled together in row upon row with no facilities at all. They move on into tents, where they have little more space, but where ground dampness makes the problem of extreme cold at night much worse. The Iranian authorities are setting up new camps continuously, but need more assistance to do so. The International Committee of the Red Cross is helping but the Iranian Red Crescent needs our help in west Azerbaijan.

After discussions with Iranian Government officials, the Iranian Red Crescent, our own British Red Cross, The Tehran representative of Save the Children Fund and local officials in Orumieh, I have set up under British Red Cross supervision the supply of tents, blankets and ground sheets through Orumieh to the west Azerbaijan camps. This supply operation starts tomorrow morning and will access the area by air either to Yusekova in Turkey or to Orumieh, with onward ground transport to the Iranian camps.

To achieve this, we shall double the number of relief flights to Iran to four flights a week. The ground transport will be organised by between the Red Cross and the Iranian Red Crescent with a resident British Red Cross official working with the British embassy in Tehran to ensure co-ordination of supplies and personnel in this massive effort. We were advised by the Iranian Red Crescent that it needs many more trucks, and this is being examined urgently. We shall purchase food locally wherever possible, as we are already doing in Turkey through the local Red Crescent.

To meet the health needs, I have agreed with the British Red Cross to co-ordinate with Save the Children Fund to set up camp health centres in west Azerbaijan, where we know there is a very great need. We will start immediately with one centre for up to 150,000 refugees with satellite units. This will be managed by Save the Children Fund and will run initially for a period of three months. I expect to extend this and to establish further centres through the British Red Cross.

As a result of our visit, I can also announce today an initial contribution of £2 million from the £20 million pledged by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the ICRC's excellent programme to help refugees in Iran. In addition to the £12 million we have already committed to the European Community for its assistance to non-governmental organisations, and the EC's own contributions to the ICRC and UN appeals. I will be considering further contributions to the UN appeals. We need to know the UN agencies' plans in order to judge how best we can help. I hope this will be soon. There will be further help to British NGOs as plans firm up and are

[Mrs. Lynda Chalker]

agreed. I shall be seeing the United Nations secretary-general tomorrow morning, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) will be meeting Prince Sadruddin Khan in Geneva tomorrow.

In Turkey we are continuing the airlift of relief supplies from this country and the airdrops to the refugees by RAF Hercules aircraft and Chinook helicopters. Meanwhile, urgent action is being taken to establish protected refugee camps in northern Iraq near Zakhu and to persuade the refugees to come down from the mountains as quickly as possible. The United Nations involvement in taking over responsibility for these camps is crucial, as is our overall objective of getting the refugees to return to their homes in peace and security. As I said earlier, the plan is unfolding hour by hour. There are regular meetings with British Red Cross and other agencies, with colleagues in Government and links with our European partners, the United States military and the international agencies. I am most grateful to Michael Whitlam of the British Red Cross, and to all the agencies and to our troops working in Turkey, for the excellent work they are doing.

The message I want to leave with the House this afternoon is that, following our visit, we are stepping up our relief operations to respond to the urgent needs in Iran through our own NGOs and the international agencies. We shall continue our operations on the Turkish border as we establish the protected refugee centres under Operation Haven inside Iraq.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I am pleased to see the Minister back in the House after what I know was an arduous, difficult and distressing journey. She has now seen for herself the appalling conditions in which the Kurdish refugees are living. I welcome the additional assistance that she has announced today. I understand—perhaps she will confirm this—that on the Piranshahr crossing, where more than 1 million people have crossed the border from Iraq to Iran, the situation is even worse than it was when I saw it nine days ago. Is the Minister aware that some of those people have been on top of the same mountain for three weeks? Can she give the House the numbers of refugees on each side of the borders with Turkey and Iran?

The Minister referred to immediate relief. Can she tell us how much aid has gone directly from the United Kingdom to the Kurdish refugees separately in Turkey and in Iraq? Can she tell us on what days and in what tonnage it was received by the Kurds? If she cannot answer that question immediately—I shall understand if she cannot—I should be glad if she would write to me. Will she tell us what contribution the European Community has made to both countries?

Does the Minister agree that, after weeks of miscalculation and poor organisation, perhaps as many as two million people who have fled their homes are dying on the bitter cold mountain slopes of Iraqi Kurdistan, still desperate to get to the borders and having to fight one another for scraps of food?

The Minister has confirmed that the Iranians have been totally overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of refugees. Will she join me in warmly congratulating them on the tremendous efforts that they have made to deal sympathetically and humanely with the human tragedy confronting them?

I welcome the call to double deliveries to Iran. Has not Iran been forced temporarily to slow down the stream of refugees attempting to cross the border because it simply cannot handle any more? Is the right hon. Lady satisfied with the treatment of the refugees on the Turkish border? Will she confirm that the safe havens will hold only about 360,000 refugees and will not be able to take refugees from the Iranian borders?

Does the Minister recall that on 28 March, during an Adjournment debate on Iraqi Kurdistan, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) called for assistance to the Kurds and I also called for humanitarian aid? Why did the Minister say on a BBC programme two weeks ago that I must have been clairvoyant to have anticipated that need? It did not take clairvoyance to realise what was happening: we all knew. Perhaps today the Minister would like to withdraw her comment.

Will the Minister admit that the Overseas Development Administration is not structured to deal quickly and effectively with a crisis of this type; or is it simply the case that, once again, the Foreign Office has been following the United States approach, based on its cool relationship with Iran over the hostages? Does she agree that, although we must make every effort to secure the quick release of the hostages, emergency humanitarian aid for the Kurdish refugees must not be affected by any other consideration?

Will the right hon. Lady tell us whether it is true that the Treasury has refused the ODA extra money to pay for the emergency effort? Surely the existing aid budget cannot possibly afford the £1·5 million a week for Hercules aircraft and Chinook helicopter flights without taking money from famine relief in Africa and from vital long-term development programmes throughout the third world. Does she also agree that in this country we need the equivalent of Medecins Sans Frontieres, the French medical relief agency, which was on the border of Iraq and working within days?

I make an urgent plea to the Minister. Will she urge the British Government and the United Nations to back any viable suggestions which will enable the Kurdish people to return to their own homes and country as soon as possible to live in peace and security in Iraq?

Mrs. Chalker: As the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) anticipated at one stage during her long question, I shall have to write to her with some of the details. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) complains about the length of my statement. Had I not given the facts and figures, the questions would have been even longer.

The queues at Piranshahr appear to be shorter than they were when the hon. Lady was there nine days ago, but that does not mean that there are not thousands and thousands of refugees in the foothills and not on the road. I do not necessarily believe that, because the queues on the road are that much shorter, the number trying to cross the border is substantially smaller.

Immediate relief is and has been going to Iran for the Kurdish people for more than three weeks, but it is not only for Kurdish people, as I made clear in my statement. I cannot tell the hon. Lady how much has been received by the Kurdish people, because in the camps that we visited we found a mixture of groups with, as I said, Arabs, Assyrians, and Turkomans as well. They were all refugees —and they were all Iraqis. The hon. Lady asked me to

detail what had gone to Kurdish refugees; I cannot do that. The relief sent out more than two weeks ago by the Overseas Development Administration to Iran was received and distributed within a week, I was told, and the supplies that went out last week were being distributed as we were there on Saturday.

The European Community contributions are being made to both countries, but we have not been given details of that so far. We have despatched more than 440 tonnes of goods to Turkey and more than 160 tonnes of goods to Iran. We know that in Turkey and in northern Iraq more than 200 tonnes of our supplies have been dropped by the C130s. Aircraft with further supplies are flying daily to the Turkish-Iraqi border, and nine helicopters have joined the airlift there.

On Iran, I have announced the further help of field health centres and more supplies flights. However, the logistics of distribution need to be worked out carefully with the Iranian Red Crescent. I am afraid that the hon. Lady will have to wait a little longer for those details. The important point is to get on with getting the supplies there and to ensure that the routes to the refugees are getting supplies rather than to keep asking for endless reports, which only holds up the supply to the refugees.

It is true that, for sound reasons of health care and of anxiety about the violence in the camps, there has been a slowing of the stream of Iraqi refugees across the border into Iran. The treatment that we saw in the early days on the Turkish border has improved, and people are now working better together than they were two weeks ago.

The safe havens will be able to accommodate more than 360,000 people provided that they succeed and that the Iraqi troops continue to leave the safe havens in peace so that people can gradually begin the return. It is intended not that people should remain in the safe havens, but that they should pass through them and go back to their own towns down routes supervised by the United Nations.

I am well aware that many people believed that there would be a substantial refugee flood across the borders, but even the Governments of Iran and of Turkey never envisaged, even on 28 March, the size of that flow of refugees.

The hon. Lady asked me whether my Department was structured to deal with such crises. We have never before had to deal with 29 million people at risk of starvation in Africa and at the same time a refugee crisis in Iran and in Turkey. We have increased the staff in the relevant departments, and we will send people to help to cope with the immediate needs both in Tehran and in Ankara. My own head of population is the co-ordinator to the whole relief project in Turkey and in Iran, and will be able to travel freely between the two countries to do what is necessary to ensure that the co-ordination is as good as it can be.

We cannot achieve any of that as a single donor or even as European community donors. I am concerned about the lack of speed of the United Nations in dealing with the problems. That is why, 10 days ago, I spoke to the Secretary-General, and I will be with him tomorrow morning to take the matter further. As I said, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will talk with Prince Sadruddin Khan. We believe that we will be able to do more as the days unfold.

However, what I have announced today is a response to the most urgent need—the need for health care and for continuing supplies. I am grateful both to the Turkish Government and to the Iranian Government for the welcome that they gave our offer and for their helpfulness in trying to make it happen on the ground, where it matters to the refugees.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am aware of the importance of the statement, but today is a private Members' day. I ask hon. Members to put single questions and not to go on to give us the benefit of their views.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her impressive and constructive initiative to relieve the appalling misery of the Kurds, following upon the dynamic leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in setting up the safe havens. Does she agree that the condition of the Shi'ites in the south is a cause for massive concern about their safety? Will she make it clear to Saddam Hussein that military force will be used to stop him further oppressing the Shi'ites in the south and that such use will be entirely consistent with the United Nations resolution?

Mrs. Chalker: I hope that the memorandum of understanding signed by the Government of Iraq with the United Nations will mean that the refugees—the Shi'ites in the south and many others in the north—will have their safety protected. If it is insufficient, further action will be taken, as I told my hon. and learned Friend in the Select Committee evidence session last week. The International Committees of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are working in the south. We believe that the French will be doing more in that area. Although we imagine that at present there are only 50,000 Shi'ite refugees, they certainly need protection and help, as do all the other Iraqi refugees.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does the right hon. Lady recall that last week she made a point about the release of the western hostages? Is it not strange that this afternoon she has made no reference to that matter? Is she aware that, until pressure can be brought on Israel to release the hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners held in the appalling conditions of the prison camp at Khiam, and until Sheik Obeid is released, after his criminal abduction by Israeli forces, there can be no progress on the question of the release of western hostages? [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Have some sense about why not. What pressure can be brought on Israel to make her conform to standards of international conduct in such matters?

Mrs. Chalker: On the fifth anniversary of the taking of John McCarthy as a hostage, I was asked what I could do. I said that I would do my best. I told Dr. Velayati that the purpose of my visit was to assess what further help we could give in providing humanitarian relief to Iraqi refugees in Iran. My statement this afternoon has been on the subject of the Iraqi refugees. Separately from discussing Iraqi refugee help, I asked the Government of Iran on humanitarian grounds to use their influence to secure the release of the hostages. I explained that, if they were released, it would be possible to transform our bilateral relationship.

Dr. Velayati said that the taking and holding of hostages was against the policy of the Iranian

[Mrs. Chalker]

Government, and that they had made efforts to secure the release of the hostages and would continue to do so. I told Dr. Velayati that we, too, were opposed to the taking and holding of hostages by anyone. I said that we had made that clear to the Israelis many times and that we would continue to do so. We had a good discussion on the subject.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I congratulate the Government on the speed with which they have responded to the tragedy. My right hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the problem of polluted water. What is the international relief community doing to ensure that types of food which could make a tragic situation infinitely worse are not sent to these areas? I am thinking in particular of the difficulty that could arise with dried milk powder. If one adds polluted water to it, one provides a culture which simply allows the disease organisms to multiply. That could make the tragedy infinitely worse and more awful.

Mrs. Chalker: I must tell my right hon. Friend that we have indeed been discussing with the agencies how to get a supply of water by water piping. We shall be supporting a project, which Oxfam is carrying out with the help of Army engineers, to bring water to camps which have no supply. Some camps, particularly in west Azerbaijan, have water supplies, but the water is not pure. That is why 3 million water purification tablets went in the hold of our plane last week. We are also providing advice to the camps about water testing, so that it is known which camps must use which purification methods. That will be done through the field health centres. I appreciate the importance of milk powder being mixed with pure water for baby milk, and that message will also be delivered clearly and consistently.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Minister answer the question put to her by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about the treatment of refugees by Turkish soldiers on the Turkish side of the border, where there have been killings? Given the Turks' inhumane treatment of the Kurds, what representations did she make on their behalf?

Mrs. Chalker: I certainly made it clear to those in the Turkish Government and others to whom I spoke that inhumane treatment of refugees of any race achieves nothing. In the early days, there was action which should never have taken place. I believe that the position has improved; I was certainly told that it had by those running the camps. Given the sheer fear and everything else that was wrong in the earliest days when people were teeming over the mountains, it is hardly surprising that things went wrong. What is important is that the Turkish Government are trying to put matters right and, I believe, are succeeding.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the good standing of the United Nations as an effective force is once again on the line? Will she confirm that not only the British Government but this House and the British people look to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take the swiftest possible action both to ensure that aid continues under its agency and to secure the future of the safe haven plan in Iraq?

Mrs. Chalker: I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend, as I had some difficulty in getting certain people in the United Nations to understand the urgency. I exclude from that comment some local people in places such as Tehran and Ankara, who are sincerely trying to help. Many people who for various reasons cannot do relief work in other countries, such as the Sudan, are coming into the area and switching their personal efforts to work in Turkey and Iran. The operation will not succeed until the United Nations organises the whole matter centrally and, indeed, gives a swift reply, which sadly to date we have not had.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In view of the demand that Iraqi troops withdraw from the safe havens and of reports that Saddam Hussein is simply replacing military personnel with police personnel in some refugee areas, can the Minister assure us that that will not stop emergency relief getting through to the people who require it?

Mrs. Chalker: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that people such as Terry Waite and John McCarthy are small in number but great in the injustice from which they have suffered for some five years? The fact that the Iranian Government now ask us for aid, having turned it down on other occasions when it suited them, should give us a proper opportunity to say that humanity may suffer, but we are not prepared to let those people suffer such grave injustices and may not help unless the Iranian Government are willing to help free those people who have suffered unnecessarily and unjustly. The Kurds are suffering in great numbers, but all justice involves single people, and single people who have done no harm are suffering a cruel, unjust fate thanks to the Iranians.

Mrs. Chalker: I repeat that the help provided for Iraqi refugees has no bearing on the hostage situation. Some newspapers have linked the two issues. We are giving aid to the Iraqi refugees for humanitarian reasons. Many Iranian families are sharing their homes, their goods, their possessions, their food and their shelter with Iraqi refugees. The Iranian Government have not asked for help for themselves; they have asked that those people who have come to their country for shelter should be assisted. That is what the international community is doing and must continue to do.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The emergency aid is very important, but the real answer, as the Minister said, is for people to be able to go back to their homes. Will she tell us more about the Government's thinking? Safe havens, yes, but we do not know what the answer is for Shi'ites in the south. How will the refugees be protected when they go home? Will UN military forces be deployed? I see no other option. Is that the Government's thinking?

Mrs. Chalker: It is fair to say that the eventual solution, especially in the Shi'ite south, has yet to be worked out. The UN forces are coming up from Baghdad and hope to establish corridors down which the Iraqi refugees may pass on their way back to their homes. That is being worked out, and we do not yet have the answers from the United Nations.

In the meantime, it is critical to get the Iraqi refugees down from the mountains, or they will freeze to death. It is extremely difficult to distribute the relief supplies. I was in the back of an RAF helicopter and was roped in to push out supplies. We did not use the flight simply to observe; we delivered on every flight we made. It is dangerous work, but it must be done, and we will do it. However, it is only a temporary solution and we must get people down from the mountains. Safe havens will achieve that in the first instance, but further developments must follow, and we are working hard on those.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): May I ask my right hon. Friend what many people want to know? Why is the United Nations dragging its heels over accepting responsibility for the protection of the Kurdish refugee camps? Has not a great opportunity been lost? Whatever happened to the new world order? Will my right hon. Friend use less than diplomatic language to bring home this point to the Secretary-General tomorrow?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure my hon. Friend that, when necessary, I can use extremely strong language. I shall do so to get the results that we all want. The United Nations should be fully prepared to take on its humanitarian responsibilities. Local United Nations representatives are trying hard. It is at the centre and the top that we must get things sorted out.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We have now had four statements on this issue in the past eight days. Is it not apparent that it is a lot easier to kill people in war than it is to feed them by the humanitarian means now being used? The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) spoke about the new world order. We were promised that, when the clean, clinical war was ended, there would be a new world order, but all we can see is a winding trail of human misery on the mountains of Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

Those of us who opposed the bombing of the Kurds are now more than ever justified in pointing out that before people, in the coalition or otherwise, talk about war in the middle east or anywhere else, they should remember that it is easy to talk about it, easy to execute, but very difficult to end.

Mrs. Chalker: I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman thinks that we should have left Saddam Hussein and Iraqi troops in Kuwait. The allied forces followed Security Council resolution 678 to the letter. Although the House does not wish Saddam Hussein to continue in office for one moment more, the matter must be sorted out by the Iraqi people. Until then, we must see how much help the international community can give to protect the Iraqi people.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) accept the thanks of the House for their visits, which have helped to maintain world interest in this tragedy at a time when the attention span of the international media is remarkably short? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should look to those countries that have felt unable, once again, to back Britain and America in sending military resources to help sort out the problems to provide greater financial resources in the humanitarian effort?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those countries that find, for whatever reason, that they cannot support our efforts in establishing safe havens in Turkey, Iran or Iraq, can contribute to relief by donating money. No nation can stand aside while this international tragedy continues. I hope that there will be a proper response to the United Nations' appeals, but I remind the House that that a proper response will come only when countries know what the United Nations intends to do with the money that it collects.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scale of the effort on behalf of the refugees is huge because, once safe havens have saved the refugees' lives, we shall have to help them to return to the places from which they came? The natural supply routes to the Kurdish areas lie through Baghdad and up the Tigris and the Euphrates valleys. Therefore, we must insist, through the United Nations, that Baghdad permits the transport of food and supplies and the restoration of towns and villages to their rightful owners —the refugees. Will she explain that problem carefully to the Secretary-General and ensure that such provision is made?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall do my best to explain why the United Nations must play a much more active role right away. However, a tremendous amount can be done in the interim to give the immediate relief to the Iraqi refugees and I am also working on that to ensure that it happens. I believe that the solution to the Iraqi refugees' problems against Saddam Hussein will take a long time to reach finality. In the meantime, there is much work to be done in providing relief. In that sense, the United Nations must get its act together.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): May I take it from the Minister's helpful statement that the practical priorities lie in getting people down from the mountains and reducing the queues and that, until those problems are dealt with, the suffering will continue? However, equally important are the political priorities, including a co-ordinated European effort, an effective United Nations takeover—I am grateful for the Minister's comments because the United Nations needs that push —and a political solution that guarantees that the peace treaty will protect the rights of all minority groups in Iraq and the adjacent countries in the middle east.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman is right. Bringing people down from the mountains and giving them a secure place is one of the first priorities. However, providing clean water, health care, food and shelter are also critical to saving lives, particularly as we bring down the most sick people first; others may remain on the mountains for days or even weeks until they can be brought down.

The hon. Gentleman is also right in saying that there is a political priority within the European Community. I believe that the European Community countries are working well together in this respect. We want an effective United Nations reaction, but it is taking a long time to get up and running. The peace treaty must encompass the long-term security of the Iraq people. Without that there will be no peace.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): When Martin Woollacott of *The Guardian* filed his copy to his news desk on 27 March, millions of refugees were on the move and it did not take clairvoyance to predict what would happen—it was then well established.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

On a more constructive note, may I ask the question that I asked the Secretary of State for Defence the other day because what he then described as hypothetical is reality? Discussions are taking place between the Iraqi Government and the Kurdish leadership. If those discussions lead to an agreement, will a British Minister go to the United Nations to seek a resolution to underpin any agreement that the two parties draw up? That is important for the Kurdish people because, if that initiative is taken, I believe the camps will empty and the people will go back to their towns, cities and communities in Kurdistan.

Mrs. Chalker: I well understand the hon. Gentleman's final question. We need to look carefully at that subject, because there is no doubt that we are all trying to establish peace in Iraq for the ordinary people of Iraq who have been so cruelly deceived by Saddam Hussein and his ambitions. However, there is absolutely no doubt that it is not a straightforward objective to achieve, so I ask the hon. Member to be a little patient. No stone will be left unturned to bring peace to the Iraqi people. If what he has described is the right way to proceed, we shall so proceed, but I shall not give a commitment in case something else comes into the picture. I think that the hon. Gentleman will understand that.

At the end of March, we asked the Turkish Government and other Governments how many people were approaching their countries trying to come in. The figures were nothing like those reported even in *The Guardian* newspaper. I believe that there was some anticipation by some press that was certainly not being reported by the Governments of the area.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her strenuous efforts to help refugees in Iran and Turkey. Does she not feel that other countries should be pulling far more weight? It is not just a question of the United Nations. What has happened to the European Community money? Is it not apparent that many countries are more than happy to leave us to it? Where is everyone else?

Mrs. Chalker: I know that certainly one British voluntary organisation received 2 million ecu of the European Community money within 24 hours of appealing for help to carry out its relief operations. There are probably many more such incidents with which I have not had time to catch up in the few hours since I landed back in this country.

The European Community countries are seeking to give help. My anxiety has been that the help has not been sufficiently co-ordinated. That was why I met French and German diplomats, and many others, in Ankara. I shall seek to do all that I can to see that the European Community countries pull together, but I believe that Britain, having given help relatively early, can pass on information and try to improve the overall help. We should not stop just because we are not satisfied with the actions of others.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Given the scorching summer heat that is now upon that part of the world, and its consequences for bringing the waterborne diseases,the "silent assassins" that bring hepatitis, cholera and typhoid —who is right: Prince Sadruddin Khan, who, on behalf of the United Nation's refugees, says that there have to be conditions for sanctions to be lifted, or the Attorney-General, who said during Questions Time that there was no legal impediment to bringing in the necessary provisions?

Will the Minister clear up whether Mr. Salinger is right in suggesting that it was the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) who talked the Americans into all this? That is what he said to Mr. David Frost. Was he right?

Mrs. Chalker: I often see videos and television programmes that make me wonder where the information put across on them came from. The hon. Gentleman's final question falls into that category.

Nobody is unaware of the danger of waterborne diseases, although the areas in the northern provinces in which most of the refugees are now gathered are not as hot as the hon. Gentleman suggested. It is because of the dangers from waterborne diseases that one of the main objectives of the first camp field centre, with its satellites, that we are setting up will be to sort out the public health needs of the camps in west Azerbaijan, as well as mother and child health. We are giving special attention to that serious matter.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the success of her mission. Does she agree that the fate of the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ites in the south has underlined how fatal it would have been to appease Saddam Hussein? Will she assure us that the Government will seek to block his attempt to sell £2 billion worth of oil on the world market so long as he practises butchery in Baghdad and in northern and southern Iraq?

Mrs. Chalker: We regard Saddam Hussein's appeal as totally unacceptable. The answer to my hon. Friend's first question is yes.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I tell the Minister, for what it is worth, that I am in complete agreement with her observation that the protected refugee camps ought to be administered by United Nations personnel as soon as possible? The terrible problems created by the war require decisive intervention by the United Nations. As yet there has been none.

What discussions have taken place in the security council on the urgent provision of supplies and the restoration of essential services to other areas of Iraq?

Mrs. Chalker: To the best of my knowledge, the Security Council has not discussed those matters in such detail. The British ambassador and the representatives of other European Community countries have discussed the question, but the Security Council has not. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his other comments.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I welcome what the British Government are doing. I should like the Minister to spell out in more detail what contribution some of the rich Arab oil sheikdoms and the Japanese are making to providing humanitarian relief. What may happen if the United Nations is not prepared to police the safe havens? Is the right hon. Lady aware that the British Government might have to dig themselves in for a long haul? Saddam Hussein will bide his time until the protection for the Kurds is removed, before finishing off

the job that he started some time ago. Will the British Government give an undertaking to maintain a military presence until the safety of the Kurds is assured?

Mrs. Chalker: Japan has sent money for supplies. I believe that it may have been used for local purchase in Turkey, but I do not yet know how much it was. I shall try to find out what each country is doing, because co-ordination of information, among other things, has been desperately lacking in the past three and a half weeks. We seek to act on a bilateral basis with other donors, but in the rapidly changing situation we cannot know at all stages what each country has done. I hope in due time to be able to give the information to the House.

The position of the United Nations is worrying, but I believe that it fully intends to fulfil its responsibilities. The question is, how soon? We envisage needing to stay in the area for several months rather than weeks, but we shall do all that we can to ensure that United Nations personnel will be present to look after the refugees. The United Nations disaster relief organisation and the High Commissioner for Refugees exist to do just that.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Minister will be aware that many hundreds, if not thousands, of tonnes of much-needed materials have been collected by voluntary organisations to send to the Kurds. Does she know how much of this material has gone overseas, how much is in storage, and how much will go next week? Is some of the material included in the figures which she has given the House?

Is there not a great problem about the capacity of RAF aircraft and aircraft that we are hiring? Should we not be seeking to hire aircraft such as American C5 Galaxies, which can carry 125 tonnes? Presumably such aircraft could land readily at Iranian airports, bearing in mind that Iran Air operates Boeing 747s, which can carry 100 tonnes of material. Such aircraft are coming to the United Kingdom to collect material.

Mrs. Chalker: Huge quantities of relief supplies from quite small voluntary organisations and from more major organisations, such as the Save the Children Fund, the British Red Cross and Oxfam, have gone with our initial airlifts. We shall continue to operate our airlifts, and tonight we are flying out for Oxfam water equipment and vehicles for the water project that is being participated in by the Army in Turkey. That is one example among many of what is taking place. We have agreed already to help British Aid for the Kurds—a new organisation—in just that way, and we shall continue to provide that assistance.

We seem to have adequate capacity with our cargo planes, some of which will be flying to airports that are not served by Iran Air and therefore may not have the capacity to take a Galaxy or a 747. Provided that they can take 707s, we can get supplies in quickly and efficiently.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is not the simple truth that the Government both underestimated the need and were far too slow to react to a problem that was evident as long ago as 27 March? Was it not only when my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) went to see the plight of the people for herself that the Minister was stirred into action?

Will the Minister admit that it was unwise to appear to link humanitarian aid to the release of the hostages? We are all, of course, fighting for their release. Will she admit that even now the aid that she has announced this afternoon is not enough? The much maligned German Government are sending five planes a day, while we are talking of only about four planes a week. The German Government have announced aid amounting to £130 million over the past few days while we have anounced aid of only a few millions today. The French Minister with responsibilities for aid visited the area and was present throughout Easter while our Minister has only recently visited it, and has only just returned.

Will the Minister join us in thanking the British people for the way in which they have volunteered—I speak of doctors and nurses—to go out and help? We thank the British people for the way in which they have given financial assistance. Will the Minister admit that if we are effectively to tackle such a huge problem we shall need just a fraction of the determination and the resources that went into fighting the Gulf war?

Mrs. Chalker: I am quite surprised at the hon. Gentleman.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am not.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. and learned Friend seems to think that his intervention was true to form. Never mind, I remain surprised.

None of the Governments in the area had made available to us at the end of March any of the information which the hon. Gentleman claims to have known about. I was pleased that the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) could go to the area. I know that her trip helped a great deal to bring these matters to the notice of the British people, who indeed have been generous. Nothing that the hon. Lady was doing and saying was not being told to us through other channels.

I am well aware that it is easy to appear to be competitive on these occasions. I have no intention of taking up that position. The Iraqi refugees need all the help they can get. We, the British people, will give all we can, and the Government will put in more resources. What I have said today I described as initial and immediate. We cannot deliver immediately without preparing for that delivery. That became clear to me as I worked with the experts over the past 10 days to try to make the whole system more efficient.

May I say for the umpteenth time that I have never linked the questions of aid and the hostages, although many newspapers sought to link the two. I have always said that help to the Iraqi refugees is quite separate and quite different from any of our bilateral considerations. However, I would have been severely criticised had I gone to Tehran, the first British Minister to go there for 12 years, without having mentioned it. When I was asked, "Will you mention the subject of the hostages when you go to Iran?", of course the answer had to be yes.

Let us put some common sense into the matter and understand that, together with our partners throughout the world, we shall go on giving humanitarian aid to Iraqi refugees and we shall try to make the communications and co-ordination much better. At the same time, we shall work bilaterally to seek the release of innocent hostages.

Points of Order

4.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I will be able to assist you and the House. As you know, there has been intense public speculation about and interest in the GCE O-levels of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, with the result that many hon. Members are being asked by the press to supply details of their O-level qualifications and school reports. For the record, I have a list of degrees as long as my arm, most of which were purchased very cheaply from the back pages of *Private Eye*, something which I would encourage the Prime Minister to do. Would it assist you, Mr. Speaker, if Members of Parliament now lodged copies of their GCE O-level certificates with the Registrar of Members' Interests so that any press inquiries can be speedily resolved by the registrar himself?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could log his four O-levels voluntarily.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order refers to this afternoon's questions. Is not it unseemly in the parliamentary sense, as well as being deeply offensive, for a Minister responsible for shipping to claim that more fishermen are lost at sea under a Labour Administration than under a Tory Administration?

Mr. Speaker: This is a continuation of Question Time. I am not responsible for answers that are given at the Dispatch Box.

Statutory Instruments &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the three motions on statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Fisheries (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Funeral Industry

4.32 pm

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I beg to move,

That this House considers there is a need for an investigation into prices and practices of the funeral industry with a view to seeking to provide a Bill to establish a funeral industry registration council and to give that council powers and functions for the regulation of firms and individuals offering funeral services and arrangements; to provide the council with powers and functions to ensure that persons employed as funeral directors shall be trained and qualified to approved levels and to require the registration of all firms and persons providing funeral services with the council; to impose requirements upon such firms and persons; to make provision for the adequate training of persons employed as funeral directors; to make provision for a code of conduct under which all such firms and persons shall provide their funeral services and to ensure a satisfactory level of consumer protection for these services; to define offences under this code of conduct and specified penalties; and to make provision for other related matters.

Several hon. Members were intrigued when they learned that it was my intention to table a motion about the funeral industry. On three or four occasions, over three or four years, I have called in this Chamber for an inquiry into the prices and practices of the industry. In 1989, I secured an Adjournment debate, in which I dealt in detail with a report issued by the Office of Fair Trading. I dealt with some of the unpalatable experiences that several of my constituents had endured. These related both to price and to treatment.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is it envisaged that the funeral industry registration council to which the motion refers would cover the whole United Kingdom, or would it be restricted to England and Wales? Over the years, I have received many complaints about the high cost of funerals in Scotland and about related matters.

Mr. Cunliffe: If the motion were accepted, and a registration council were set up, I should like it to embrace all four countries in the United Kingdom.

I referred to the Adjournment debate on this subject in 1989. In view of the time constraints, one is restricted in one's comments in such a debate. Indeed, the convention is that the time is shared equally between the Member raising the subject and the Minister replying.

For me, this whole matter started in 1977 or 1978, when a constituent wrote to me following the deaths, first, of her father and then, within a matter of months, of her mother. The services required in the case of the second funeral were exactly the same as those required in the case of the first, but, to this lady's amazement, there was a price difference of £108. To some people, funerals are extremely expensive, and this lady was rather distressed, as she was not in employment.

In the first instance, my constituent contacted the company involved. She was told that, between the dates of the two funerals, the original firm had been taken over by a larger company, and that that company had laid down certain guidelines about standards and profit margins. When I examined the two accounts, I discovered that the £108 was accounted for by an increase in coffin price and an increase in what are known as professional charges. That is something to which I shall refer in considerable detail later.

I wrote to the company.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): What is the name of the company?

Mr. Cunliffe: I shall give the name later. In fact, since the takeover, the name has changed. The firm is now owned by a multinational company. Later, I shall refer in great detail to it and to other companies. When I wrote a letter to that company, I received a reply similar to that sent to my constituent, but I was pleased that it included a £100 refund.

Within a matter of weeks, there was a similar incident involving another firm of undertakers in my constituency. When I wrote to that company, I received almost the identical reply that I got from the first, and another £100 rebate for the constituent concerned. I began to think that, if the profit margins were so high that companies could make rebates of that size every time they received a formal inquiry into the cost of a particular funeral, those margins needed investigation.

In my research, I discovered that there had been a gradual takeover of many traditional, independent funeral directors in the north by large companies. As costs were also rising rapidly, I sought an Adjournment debate, which coincided with the publication of a report by the Director General of Fair Trading, which had some startling things to say about certain practices and establishments, and about a tendency to create monopolies.

There was also a 30-question survey of about 900 people who had recent experience of dealing with funeral directors. At that time, the National Association of Funeral Directors operated a voluntary code of practice, which made for greater clarity in respect of estimates, the type of funeral, and the services to be provided—a hearse or limousine, embalming, and so on—in ensuring a reasonably simple and dignified funeral. According to the OFT investigation, that code of practice was being honoured by only 25 per cent. of funeral directors.

Dying is a taboo subject which touches people's sensitivities and emotions. The job of the funeral director is one which requires superb diplomacy, and there is a natural reluctance to delve too deeply into the question of cost at the time that a funeral is being arranged.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Did that survey make the point, in respect of advice being sought by any individual, including even a distant relative, that the person who makes the initial contact with the funeral director is liable for the cost at the end of the day?

Mr. Cunliffe: I have no knowledge that that is the case, and it was not covered by the investigation that I mentioned.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does the hon. Member for Leigh have any evidence that the percentage of funeral directors abiding by the code of conduct has increased from 25 per cent. since 1989, or has it remained static?

Mr. Cunliffe: The National Association of Funeral Directors represents a respected and honourable profession, and I shall refer to it in due course. I shall also give more figures later, but there has been some response to the inquiry's findings in respect of that earlier code of conduct. I shall quote also the new code of conduct that was adopted in May 1990.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The hon. Gentleman rightly draws attention to the need to maintain high standards of service—I am entirely with him on that—and competition if those high standards are to be achieved. Will he comment on the increasing practice in some parts of the country, whereby local authorities make a monopolistic municipal deal with one funeral director? The intention might be to provide a lower-cost service, but it will be subsidised by the community charge payer. Might not that ultimately harm competition and the protection available to the members of a community, if it results in fewer companies and less choice?

Mr. Cunliffe: Municipal authorities are not allowed to own any form of funeral company. They are permitted only to provide a service, and it cannot be related to any element of the community charge under existing legislation —and I do not imagine that such a thing will be allowed in any future legislation.

There are approximately 650,000 funerals a year, but the number is declining, and I shall explain the reasons for that. There are about 2,500 funeral directors, with a total turnover of from £250 million to £270 million a year in direct funeral costs, and another £100 million to £120 million in ancillary services such as the provision of flowers, cards, the saying of masses, and so on. It is therefore a pretty big commercial operation. One does not like to associate commercialism with a distressing aspect of life, but that commercialism is a fact.

Why have large undertakings moved into the industry? Is it because they find certain aspects of it extremely profitable? That is a cause for concern.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The hon. Gentleman makes the point, as he did in his Adjournment debate in 1989, that the funeral industry is making excessive profits. Is not it interesting, however, that the Co-operative Wholesale Society recently saw fit to dispose of its undertaking business? In view of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, why should it have done so?

Mr. Cunliffe: In recent months, other large companies have decided to sell. The reason is all to do with investment and profit margins, and I do not exclude any organisation of whatever size and character from criticism—and in some cases compliments. I shall return to that issue.

In 1989, on average, the cost of funerals increased by 28 per cent. more than inflation and there was some harsh criticism, some people believed quite rightly, of the industry's performance. In fairness to all the organisations connected with the industry, I should say that such increases above the rate of inflation have not continued, although, in my view, funerals are generally overpriced.

I decided that if I intended to comment on or to criticise the industry, I had to carry out an inside investigation, which I did with the help of several researchers. I investigated the average cost of a manufacturer's coffin throughout the country compared with the amount charged by the funeral companies.

In the meantime, as there had been scathing criticism of the industry, I introduced the Funeral Industry Bill, a simple Bill which called for the establishment of a compulsory code of practice for funeral directors and the funeral industry. The Bill called for written estimates, for full price lists, for the code of practice to be prominently displayed and for details to be given of the cost of the

[Mr. Cunliffe]

coffin and its fittings, the hearse, funeral cars, care and removal of the body, embalming costs and administrative charges.

Funeral directors are now developing public relations of a highly sophisticated standard. People now pay for their death on hire purchase and for pre-arranged funerals. Lovely velvet phrases such as "Dignity in Destiny" are being trotted out, and I shall deal with that issue.

My Bill sought to bring the questions that were being asked about the industry to the fore and to subject the abuses and practices within the industry to public scrutiny. That is also what I seek to do today.

In my Adjournment debate in 1989, I gave some simple illustrations. At Christmas of that year, I took the liberty of spending two days "on the tools" at a coffin manufacturers. I did an "A to Z" follow-through and I spent a couple of days working as an engineer at a factory that supplies coffins to some of the large companies that I shall describe later. I looked at the prices of coffins—invoiced, costed and supplied, giving the firm's name—which was very good of the coffin manufacturer. The problems that I mentioned earlier about profit margins were evident. I shall give the 1989 figures, but update them with those of other manufacturers to be fair to the industry.

I have some funeral bills with me—those that I mentioned earlier—and it appears that the average cost of the two main coffins that were being produced for cremation at that time were £18 for the cheapest and £27·50 for the dearest, depending on the grade. All the coffins were given names of splendour, such as "Queensbury" or "Richmond"—velvet titles are again attached to them. I was able to trace coffins through from the manufacturers to funeral companies involved, including those used by the constituents that I previously mentioned. I found that the average price charged by the funeral director for a £19·50 coffin was £154. I have the bills here.

Then I looked into the cost of dearer types of coffin. They range from the simple basic models that I have described to those made of solid oak. The average margin between the cost of production and supply, and the final price charged, was between 400 and 500 per cent. In some instances it was 1,000 and in one case it was 1,100 per cent. The profit margins are identifiable.

The more that I research the industry and the more letters that I receive, the more convinced I become that there can be only two areas where profits are down—the price of the coffin and the professional charges.

I decided that I might as well research the matter properly, and I went to work in two funeral parlours. I showed great respect, and I did a sort of apprenticeship by trying out embalming for about four hours—although not on a real body—which was quite interesting. These are the facts of life. It is "feet on the ground" not feet in the ground.

I also assembled coffins, putting on the handles and the nameplates and, as an ex-engineer, I used time and motion studies to prove how long it took and how it was done, whether by high technology or manually, using a screwdriver or a hammer.

Then I decided to look into professional charges. I was investigating two small independent undertakers and I asked what the professional charges embraced. Embalming was a separate charge and was an extra £25 or in some cases £40. I asked the companies to give me a professional charge that was generous to themselves and was not the minimum price. They told me that on average they charged for 10 hours' worth of professional charges, which would give them reasonable profit margins.

However, one of the takeover companies has a standard professional charge based on 40 hours per funeral, which is roughly £350, although it depends on the region, as there are large regional differences in the prices of funerals. During debates on the radio and on television, the companies stuck to that figure, and they have done so again during the past few days. We have substantiated that matter within the industry.

I shall read some of the letters that I have had from funeral directors with 30 and 40 years' experience, who have had doubts and they relate evidence that I suggest is conclusive that such professional charges are a direct rip-off, as are coffin charges.

Disbursements are a separate matter and include the vicar's charges, church services, and gratuities. No one is arguing about the cost of those.

Let me quote the up-to-date figures. I have received strictly confidential information giving the names of 19 firms that operate throughout the country under one name, UKF. It is not a large company, but it has taken over 19 firms. I shall mention larger firms later. I am referring to 1990 prices. I have ignored the 16 per cent. increase in the price of coffins on 1 September 1990. A Chester coffin, supplied for £33·12, costs £170 to £200. The Norwich coffin, supplied for £60, costs £330 to £350.

The firms point out, however, that the accessories must not be forgotten. Metal handles cost £8·54 per set, but a charge of £42 is made for them. Nameplates can be supplied in plastic or metal. Plastic nameplates cost 69p. If all those costs are added up, they amount to only a reasonable £55, but the funeral charge totals £615. I asked the firms involved, and they did not try to hide the charges. One United Kingdom company has a published turnover of £2·5 million and profits of £500,000. It does not deny those figures.

Mr. Ashton: I understand that the latest figures supplied by Hodgson Holdings, the biggest entrepreneur in the business, show that its predicted profit will be £5·3million on a turnover of £30 million. Has my hon. Friend had any dealings with that firm?

Mr. Cunliffe: I have had many dealings with it, especially with its previous chief executive. After a brilliant entrepreneurial career, unfortunately he has recently left the company. Far be it from me to speculate about the reasons; I do not know. However, I admire the entrepreneurial skill with which the company that my hon. Friend mentioned was built up. Its turnover increased from £14,000 to about £78 million.

The industry is contracting. The reason is that people are living longer. During the next few years, the annual number of people who die—at present 650,000—will come down to about 600,000. That leads to other problems, including the money that will have to be found for the care of the elderly. As a compassionate nation, however, we ought to be prepared to meet the challenge.

According to the Royal College of Nursing, the startling fact is that in 1985 there were 2,416,000 women

over the age of 75 and that by the year 2001, which is not that far away, that number will have increased to 2,802,560—a 16 per cent. increase. In 1985, there were 525,000 women over the age of 85. By the year 2001, there will be 840,000, a staggering increase of 60 per cent.

In 1985, there were 1,202,000 men over the age of 75. By the year 2001, that figure will have increased to 1,598,660—a 33 per cent. increase. In 1985, there were 158,000 men over the age of 85. By 2001, that figure will have increased to 321,900—a 110 per cent. increase. One does not need to be a great mathematician to realise, having studied those figures, that the industry is contracting. Most of us welcome that fact.

I have received many letters about funeral company takeovers. There has been a tremendous reduction in the number of independent funeral directors. In the past, one did not shop around for the best price funerals. Automatically one went to the local undertaker who had been used by the family for generations. Hundreds of them have disappeared in recent years. At a private meeting with the chief executive of Hodgson Holdings, Howard Hodgson, I asked him, "How on earth can you reconcile the increased demand for your services with your masquerade of using the name of local family undertakers? The many letters that I have received prove it."

Mr. Ashton: Is not it a fact that Mr. Hodgson has said that, when he buys companies, he buys their good will, not their assets? The good will is the name over the shop, and that is what he pays for. My hon. Friend is right about that being a form of deception about the service required.

Mr. Cunliffe: My hon. Friend is right. Good will is attached to the name of small family undertakers. I discussed the problem with Mr. Hodgson. These large companies are employing high-profile publicity methods. Actors and acresses are used, including Sir Harry Secombe, who sings on some of the tapes. Incidentally, that firm is no longer called Hodgson Holdings but PHK International, and it has a French chairman. It has cornered 15 to 16 per cent. of the market. Another company has cornered 25 per cent. of the 650,000 deaths each year. Just a handful of companies control the market.

I was impressed by Mr. Hodgson, a young entrepreneur. When I spoke for the first time in the House in a debate on industry—this was in 1979—the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told me that the Government's policies would lead to a galaxy of entrepreneurs, the like of which had never before been seen in this country. I do not think that at that time we envisaged that the growth industry would be the funeral industry. However, this young man moved into it and did a remarkable job by turning Hodgson Holdings into a highly professional company which, as I have already said, has now been taken over.

Having absorbed hundreds of local undertakers, the companies have created a problem. I illustrate that point with a letter that I received:

"From the Manchester Evening News . . . I see that you are to raise a question in the House with regard to big companies making "take-overs" in the funeral business and to the large price increases which stem from this. I applaud you in this endeavour because I have personally experienced unease in these methods. I have been engaged in the funeral business on my own account for the last 36 years at least and have attained our professional qualifications of Dip. F.D. and am a member of the BIFD"—

not the National Association of Funeral Directors—

"In 1974 I formed by own limited company in my own name but as I neared retirement age, I decided to sell my share capital"—

to a firm that I shall not name. Again, it was a local firm hiding under the aegis of a big company, which is Hodgson Holdings.

The letter continues:

"However in 1986 I was to discover that"

the company

"had been taken over by Hodgsons Holdings of Birmingham and that my consultancy was included but only as far as the Employees Protection Act allowed. Very quickly after take-over I came to realise that I simply could not accept their methods or standards . . . I refused to sign my acceptance of the terms of contract being offered to me and resigned the consultancy as soon as was possible.

I find it hard to accept that having sold a limited company a 2nd time buyer can trade in my name"—

which illustrates the point that I am trying to make—

"but not continue in the style of limited company . . . I feel most strongly that the professionalism that can be reasonably expected is now being rapidly eroded"—

the professionalism and standards of our funeral directors—

"I also consider that there is a further danger in that the professional bodies which were formed to uphold the principles".

I put that issue to the National Association of Funeral Directors. The letter continues that to a great extent that body is being

"membered and officered by servants of these same big companies."

I have had a great deal of experience in such matters. Just recently, I have dealt with some television programmes and people who were supposed to represent the associations but who, at the end of the day, were playing the company men. That is understandable. Hundreds of funeral directors have been taken over, but what happens then? They face conflicting loyalties—the companies or their profession. The honourable conduct of their profession is challenged by profit motives and margins. People are subject to pressures about their beliefs and qualifications for this honourable profession.

I challenge the NAFD: "Are you company men first and directors of your association second?" That is the issue with which we must deal. On every programme on which I have appeared during the past three or four years, people have said that they represented the NAFD but basically, they put the companies' view. They spoke for about 40 hours about the price of funerals. I am trying to make the profession—the industry—first class and honourable, to dignify it and to give it status in the form of registration. At the moment, anyone can be a funeral director.

The NAFD must make up its mind. Why does it oppose compulsory codes of conduct, but want a compulsory form of registration for funeral directors, for companies and for training? It cannot have it both ways, and that is the problem. The more independent funeral directors that are taken over by the big battalions, the greater will be the conflict of loyalties. That is one of the problems that must be endured. Unless we do something, the problem will accelerate and the industry will be treated with contempt.

Mr. Bowis: I should like to clarify—for my sake and perhaps for that of the House—the point that the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) is making. He spoke about trying to maintain professionalism and good practice when small companies are taken over. I entirely agree, but a few minutes ago—when he quoted the letter—he implied that, when a small company continued under

[Mr. Bowis]

its old name despite a change of ownership, something misleading—if not dishonest—occurred. If that is what he is saying, there is a principle that crosses professions, including bankers. For example, there is no longer a Mr. Coutts at Coutts and Co. and the same is true of soap powders, bookshops and Fox's glacier mints. Fox's was taken over by Rowntree, which was taken over by Mackintosh. The change of name is not important, but, as the hon. Gentleman is rightly saying now, it is important that the standard of service continues irrespective of ownership.

Mr. Cunliffe: I shall reply to that question by repeating what I said to Howard Hodgson: "If you want a Rolls-Royce or Marks and Spencer image, why do you still retain the identity of the village undertaker? If you seek to raise the standards of professionalism and commercialism, why do you do that?" There is no answer. With respect, one would not suggest that, because bookmakers have lifted themselves up, we should all make lords of bookmakers.

There is no reason for companies to be so secretive. The public will understand and they would prefer an honest description of the undertaking with which they enter into a contract to the faceless men in boardrooms—not just in this country. I shall speak later about some foreign companies that are buying their way into our industry.

I received a second letter from an established funeral director, in which he said that he was pleased with my stance on the funeral profession on a television programme. He wrote:

"I was a Funeral Director for 30 years until March 1988 and very proud of my calling but not any longer. My company was purchased by Hodgson Holding's plc in March 1988. This, I strongly add, was not with my blessing but back stabbing in the Board Room allowed this."

That is as good a way to put it as any other. The letter continues:

"In 1987 and 1988 I envisaged that if the trend of takeovers was to carry on the Funeral Profession would finish up being owned by large multiple monopolies and the bereaved families when they were at their lowest ebb could only finish up getting not as good personal service and higher charges. The matter was reported to the Monopolies and Fair Trading Commissions by myself"

but nothing came of it.

The writer goes on to say that he worked in the private trade. He says that he is not of my political complexion or disposition. He states that there is massive exploitation of employees, but, because of his contractual restrictions, he cannot say much more. What he does say is too much because of the restrictions placed on him. He wrote:

"I wish I could say more but . . . free speech is not allowed."

I would not go as far as that, but he states that it is far better that he does not write in detail about the companies under his control that were taken from him.

He submitted pages from the Merseyside telephone directory, which have been ticked to show every company that has been taken over. There are 18 companies in that region. About 14,000 funerals a year are carried out in Manchester and Liverpool. The service is fairly typical, although it is cheaper than in some other regions. The companies bear witness to the points about which we have been talking.

Municipalisation is another relevant factor. What do authorities seek in providing a funeral service? The first intention is to provide a reasonably costed and dignified funeral service. A quotation is provided containing the full cost, including, importantly, disbursements prior to the funeral. Most companies separate the two costs. Funeral directors cannot negotiate disbursements because they are fixed. That is a fair comment. The service has to be a full service with the basic trimmings and with no corners cut. Everything must be managed with dignity and the service should be indistinguishable from any other funeral service. The funeral service must always benefit the residents within the local authority area, in terms of the service itself and in terms of a possible increase in the number of cremations carried out in council crematoria. Are the criteria met?

I advised two authorities on the municipal provision of funeral services. The services that we negotiated are described as follows:

"I feel that without a doubt a 'reasonably priced, dignified' funeral has been provided and all the costs are known before a funeral takes place, thus providing some protection for consumers when at their most vulnerable. Criteria two, I feel also has been met in that a full service is provided to a very high specification".

I have compared the service with that provided by private suppliers, from the manufacture of coffins, through all the elements to the funeral service itself. All that has been thoroughly examined. The municipal services are equally good. No problems are attached and there is more direct control even than that of a funeral director in a private company.

The costs are well known. We have provided protection for the consumer and the services have been personally vetted on a random basis. The service is not distinguishable in any shape or form from other funerals. To date, there has been no adverse comment. I put that point to the National Association of Funeral Directors which mainly defends the large companies. How can it reconcile the fact that some of the large companies are now putting in tenders to provide municipal funeral services, with all the elements of the simple basic funeral about which I have talked, at roughly £350 to £400? They are the companies that, when not providing the municipal funeral service, charge about £800 to £900. They are the same firms. Are they short of work, or are they undercutting because there is a bit of a recession? What is happening? For many years, I served on the Bolton metropolitan authority. It provides a funeral service at £375, with disbursements included. Wigan provides such a service, with qualified people from the National Association of Funeral Directors.

There is a need to examine the matter in some detail —and I should prefer a Select Committee to do that—to lift the lid off the industry in every facet and to give evidence on it. If the NAFD or the big boys in the association gave open evidence, it would be subject to scrutiny by the House and by the public. What has the association got to lose by that?

I want to quote the classic example of Hodgson Holdings. I must be fair and say that it is not the only big battalion in the industry. There are Greggs, Chosen Heritage and Quartz, among others. Two of those companies comprise 35 to 40 per cent. of the industry now. The more mergers that take place between the companies, the bigger the potential for monopoly takeovers which will create an even worse position in terms of artificial prices.

I do not accuse the companies of that at this stage, but I refer to the words of Howard Hodgson. He said that Hodgson Holdings now had 11 per cent. of the industry and was moving into the range of 15 per cent. He hoped that it would climb to 25 per cent. I do not believe that the aim of 25 per cent. being controlled by one company and 25 per cent. by another will be achieved, but that has been said clearly by the heads of the companies that I have mentioned. I make no comment on what happened to the person about whom I have spoken, because he has since left.

The aims of the Bolton municipal service are clear:

"The scheme provides a dignified funeral service at a reasonable cost . . . The collection of the deceased from within the borough or within a 10 mile radius of the borough boundary."

That is fair comment. We should not like subsidies to other authorities which could be used to subsidise other features. That service also includes

"Embalming, dressing and a place at the funeral undertakers' Chapel of Rest. Free conveyance to the Chapel of Rest for relatives with transport difficulties. All arrangements at the crematorium or cemetery. A hearse and following limousine. A second hearse as floral car. The Funeral Service. An oak veneer coffin".

On the figures that I have supplied, an oak veneer coffin alone can cost £590 from private suppliers. The service also includes fees charged by the doctor. One company charges an average of £42·50, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) knows. The service also includes a clergyman and the crematorium. The list of services continues:

"Transport of deceased to church or chapel prior to disposal."

The figure for all that last year was £366.

The National Association of Funeral Directors believed that it was unfairly criticised by the Office of Fair Trading. It has replied on many points, and I acclaim the fact that it has drawn up a substantial, important and dignified code of conduct. Hodgson Holdings wrote to me that it agreed with the Bill that I proposed on a code of conduct. The National Association of Funeral Directors said that it agreed, as did the big companies and the trade unions. Yet there is some opposition to the compulsory registration of the code of practice. I do not understand the logic of that.

We must consider how other elements in the industry react to any form of criticism. Their reaction is understandable. Although we as politicians are usually calm and meek, we become all prickles, like hedgehogs, when we are criticised. I understand that.

I am convinced, and I want the Department of Trade and Industry to understand, that there is cause for concern and a need for a genuine examination of the industry. Certain matters have still not been resolved. I hope that the Minister will give me some assurances and possibly undertakings, as the previous Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs did when I last debated the matter. The previous Minister promised that there would be immediate and urgent talks with the industry and the National Association of Funeral Directors. I hope that the Minister will have something positive to offer at the end of this debate to me and to other hon. Members who may speak in the debate.

I return to the report. It says that the code can have value only if it is demonstrably taken seriously and complied with. It also says:

"The Office is disturbed and disappointed by the survey's findings that, to a significant extent, the key requirements of the code—those relating to price lists, written estimates and the basic simple funeral—are not being observed."

I venture to say that there has been a vast improvement, and I commend those in the industry who brought it about. It was brought about mainly by the association through the high standards in its code of practice. I pay fair tribute to that improvement, and rightly so. However, there is room for further improvement. The registration, licensing and regulation of funeral directors and companies will help to make them far more professional and raise the standards and values that we attach to the industry. That is what the Office of Fair Trading sought to do and what some of us seek to do.

The report says:

"Compliance with the obligation to explain the types of funeral on offer is somewhat better,"—

we concede that—

"but still not as good as the Office would like. . . . Moreover, the performance of NAFD members in most of these respects is not conspicuously better that that of non-members . . . some funeral directors do not believe that the principles which the Office, and the Price Commission before it, have sought to establish in the industry are relevant to the way in which they do business."

That is regrettable. I cannot understand a profession that is reluctant to lift its standards and values. However, the report said:

"the Office would not want to see the code dismissed as worthless. Implementation of the recommendations aimed at improving the code ought to encourage efforts to secure greater compliance. More generally, therefore, the Office's final recommendation is that the NAFD should indicate, within six months of this report, what specific steps it proposes to take in order to achieve greater compliance with the code."

I am glad to say that the NAFD has made tremendous progress. I hope that the Minister will dot the i's and cross the t's. I applaud the association and acclaim its success. Nothing that we say in this debate in any sense invalidates the fairly good reputation of 95 per cent. of our funeral directors. I do not seek, and nor would the House seek, to distort the image that they have successfully built up.

My motion asks the Minister whether more formal intervention is needed. The report said:

"More formal intervention may, however, be needed if the efforts of the NAFD and of individual funeral directors do not lead to visible improvements in the operation of this market. In that event, the Office would want to review the options under existing or new legislation."

That was said not by me but by the OFT, which the House has set up to defend consumer interests. This is the will of Parliament. The report said that in the event of a lack of visible improvements, it might have to consider referring the industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. We are moving rapidly in that direction. The only thing that will stop it is a decline in the industry due to a contraction of the number of funerals. However, the House should remember that, if the big battalions remain, the number of funerals is smaller and large companies increase their share of the market, they will creep nearer and nearer the notorious 25 per cent. of the market, when the MMC has to say halt. As some people will remember, that happened to one great funeral organisation in the United Kingdom.

I am sorry that the National Association of Funeral Directors treated the making of an order as a threat. It

[Mr. Cunliffe]

wrote to me on the subject. I am not exactly accountable to the Director General of Fair Trading and nor is he to us. The OFT report said:

"Another more specific and immediate possibility might be the making of a price marking order under section 4 of the Prices Act 1974 as amended. Such an order can be made to require charges for specific services to be indicated and may stipulate the manner in which any charge should be indicated."

That is a serious step to take.

The previous president of the association wrote to me last year on the matter. The association produced a new code in May 1990, which I commend to the House, entitled "The Role of the Funeral Director". It is a splendid document. It could do with having the i's dotted and the t's crossed—not by compulsion but voluntarily—but it is a step in the right direction. Mr. John Lodge, the national president of the NAFD wrote:

"Dear Mr. Cunliffe,

I am grateful for the interest and support that we have had from you and your fellow MPs following the publication of our report 'The Role of the Funeral Director' which I sent to you in February.

Parliamentary pressure"—

that is us to them, and rightly so—

"has been considerable and the Director General of Fair Trading has felt obliged to publish a long and detailed defence on the OFT's handling of its report on funerals."

The OFT has been put on the defensive.

"I am sorry to tell you, however, that it looks as though the OFT is trying to penalise our Association for daring to criticise its report by seeking a Price Marking Order against our members. We have just negotiated our new Code of Practice with the OFT and the possibility of a Price Marking Order has only ever been mentioned as a means of ensuring cooperative negotiations. We cooperated fully as we have always done. So why is the OFT applying for an Order now? Surely we are entitled to write to you and our other MPs without risking sanctions for doing so?"

I take the point. The association has the right to make representations to us. Mr. Lodge continues:

"I enclose a copy of the new Code of Practice which is being published this week. Its predecessor was the only registered Code to have run its full ten years without need of review."

According to the Office of Fair Trading, it was not necessary to review the code when 75 per cent. of it was not honoured until inquiries were made and estimates sought for the survey.

The letter continues:

"We have always cooperated with Government agencies and this new Code is a product of such cooperation. In return we have been the victim of a damaging and unfairly compiled report. The Director General's long defence of his Office's conduct still leaves some major questions unanswered. Three of the more important are:

Why was the publication of the report not delayed until the survey data on which it was based was available? Why were damaging allegations made on the basis of uncorroborated evidence? Why did the OFT issue such a sensational press release?"

Far be it from me at this stage to comment on that. I assume that those remarks have been put in writing to the Director-General of Fair Trading. I am confident that he will have replied, as Government agencies usually do, in technical, civil service gobbledegook, plus a few facts. I applaud that.

Recently, a journalist wrote about the regional disparities in the price of funerals, and mentioned a recent survey carried out by an independent body, the Odd Fellows Manchester Unity friendly society. The survey was conducted in February, so is up to date. The newspaper report states:

"Burial costs in the North West are among the cheapest in the country.

Local funeral directors are charging an average of £864 for a burial complete with extras such as cars, plot fees, and obituaries.

That compares with bills of up to £990 in towns in the South West."

I do not know where the difference lies or how the figures are broken down. Why are there such vast regional disparities when the big firms in the industry and independent ones that are trying to establish their reputation are competing on price?

The report continues:

"Cremation costs are also lower in the region—the average all-in cost being £656."

The survey points out that, although the average basic funeral cost is £548, the cost including cremation is £574. The survey returns to the problem of funeral bills segregating disbursements from the cost of the funeral and professional charges. The report states:

"basic costs bear 'little relation' to the final bill to which disbursements have to be added—£345 in the case of burials and £152 for cremations."

As a plug, it continued:

"Leigh MP Lawrence Cunliffe, who has campaigned for years to cut the cost of funerals, welcomed the . . . survey.

Mr. Cunliffe said funeral directors in the North West had been forced to be more competitive as a result of his recent campaign."

That is a trivial point. I put it fairly and squarely to the House that the upturns and downturns in the industry and the price disparities are irreconcilable. Something must be wrong. We must act to restore some form of public confidence in the industry.

Great, distinguished public relations campaigns are taking place. It is now assumed, with some good reason, that the prices of funerals which are escalating more rapidly in some parts than in others, are a cause of public concern and need public scrutiny. There is something in that.

It now seems that hire purchase systems are being introduced into the funeral industry. Large companies are involved in public relations exercises. There is even a pack for Westminster people—for us—to pay for our funerals well in advance of our demise. The splendidly packaged HP system lists questions which may occur, such as why one's family should be faced with substantial amounts of funeral debts and bills; and suggests making provision by paying on a regular basis into a "Dignity in Destiny" scheme. The glossy package is entitled "Dignity in Destiny" and provides:

"A Pre-arranged Funeral Plan with Price and Service Guarantee".

The slow but sure and methodical Americanisation of our industry is conditioning us to believe that we have a responsibility not to burden our relatives even in death.

The glossy brochure incorporates "The Westminster Plan" and "The Windsor Plan". What do they ensure? They offer a guaranteed price for the funeral of one's choice. Relatives will not be faced with additional, unexpected bills, no matter how high costs rise. They guarantee the quality of the service—something which we should all like to establish once and for all. Payments can be made in a single lump sum or can be spread in instalments. They guarantee to observe one's wishes regarding funeral arrangements. They offer free advice and trained counsellors. One can join a plan at any age without

a medical examination—someone is on to a good wicket there. I am not suggesting that one would want to take advantage of that, but it has some attraction.

Mr. Ashton: Is my hon. Friend aware that newspapers and Age Concern have analysed some of those schemes which have been found to pay as little as 1 per cent. interest on the money invested which is repaid at the time of the funeral?

Mr. Cunliffe: I have sought some financial advice on this, although I am not a steward of the industry. One funeral director of a large company, who has a prominent position in the region, wrote to me off the record and asked me not to repeat that people would do far better by putting their money into a building society account or a long-term national savings certificate.

Mr. Burns: Can the hon. Gentleman elaborate a little on what happens if an individual tragically dies before completing all the instalments? Is there a built-in insurance policy within the instalments paid to take account of that, or would the relatives of the deceased face a problem if they did not complete the instalments?

Mr. Cunliffe: There is a partial commitment to honour a high percentage of the funeral costs, but there is always, as in hire purchase agreements, a clause at the bottom of the page. There are about five schemes. Some firms say that the costs are not fully covered under the insurance, and there is some controversy about whether a company should offer 100 per cent. protection.

Such schemes condition people's minds—politicians can be accused of that. It is a bit like the conflicting loyalty between the funeral director and his company. When I was telling my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about the debate, he said, "It's like being a shop steward. You prove that you are a first-class guy and the next thing the company wants to make you a manager and you change sides." I said that that happens to politicians, too. He said, "That's my mate Dr. Death. He ought to be the Minister of Funerals as he has changed parties twice and perhaps will a third time." I said that that was rather uncharitable. Most politicians have scruples about their party, and we all have the right, as does a funeral director, to change.

Other hon. Members wish to contribute to this serious and possibly controversial debate. I shall therefore conclude by saying that I agree with some of the points made by the National Association of Funeral Directors. It has met at least part of the challenge. I shall do it the honour of referring to its wonderful booklet in which it speaks of the emotional support and the expert advice that it gives in practical services to the industry. It has no doubt tried to gild the lily by its recommendations and standards, but it has met the challenge voluntarily.

The debate involves a sensitive subject and it is important to end with a quote from William Ewart Gladstone.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Gosh.

Mr. Cunliffe: The hon. Gentleman will understand the relationship between Gladstone and the new Minister for Funerals should that right hon. Gentleman enter the Conservative Cabinet. He has been in every party, so what is wrong with having a Liberal background? Gladstone said:

> "Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the law of the land and their loyalty to high ideals."

I support that. The National Association of Funeral Directors is the great baron of the funeral industry. This country has always treated its deceased and bereaved with dignity. They have the right to our compassion and understanding at times of great sorrow.

Let us make an honest endeavour to introduce the standards and values that I have exhorted the industry to adopt. It is not imperative but, if necessary, the Government should put the industry on a regulated footing and demand the highest standards and values to secure the comfort that a great nation can offer when mourning its people.

5.54 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) has spoken for an hour and twenty minutes criticising the National Association of Funeral Directors.

Dr. Hampson: With respect, my hon. Friend is wrong. The hon. Gentleman went on that long to stop me making a pertinent and poignant attack on the incompetence, inefficiencies, mismanagement and wastefulness of Labour councils. He went on speaking because the Labour party does not want the next motion, which I have tabled, to be debated.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend made that point well. The hon. Member for Leigh has decided views on the funeral industry, but what stuck in the craw was when the magic word "profit" came into the argument. I shall not detain the House for such a long time.

I have an interest in this debate, in that the coroner of Westminster is a namesake of mine, Dr. Paul Knapman. I am not sure whether he is a relative, but when I bought my son and myself two darkish coats—my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) has his desk next to mine—the secretaries in Old Palace yard called us the undertakers.

In Victorian times, sex was taboo—piano legs were covered, and so on—but death was regularly discussed, and it was not unusual for a family with five, six or eight children to expect to lose one or two of them. People were used to speaking about death. Now the roles seem to be reversed. Every publication seems obsessed with sex, but there is a taboo about death. The hon. Member for Leigh does the House a service by introducing this motion.

However, I am afraid that I must qualify those congratulations. I have read the motion and I like the first line and a bit:

> "To call attention to the need for registration of and a code of conduct for the funeral industry".

The next 14 lines refer to setting up councils, giving powers, and quangos. That can achieve only one thing —to strangle the industry concerned, if that is possible with the funeral industry, in a mass of red tape.

The hon. Gentleman has largely followed, but also elaborated on, the speech that he made in an Adjournment debate on 6 February 1989.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): It was an excellent speech.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman says that it was an excellent speech. That is why we have now heard it twice. I intend to read a passage from the reply of the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), so I fear that some people may shortly be bored to death. My hon. Friend said:

"I would like to remind the House of the context of the OFT report. The Director General of Fair Trading has a duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to encourage associations to adopt codes of practice providing a standard which promotes and safeguards the interests of consumers. There are currently 20 such codes endorsed by the director general and they form a valuable part of the consumer protection framework. The Government are convinced that effective self-regulation is better than regulation."

I hope that the Government's position has not changed from that day to this and that the present Minister, my hon. Friend the member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) will make his usual high-calibre contribution to the debate and largely repeat those words.

For much of the time, the hon. Member for Leigh discussed costs. Again, my hon. Friend the Minister answered him briefly but adequately in the course of the Adjournment debate and said:

"the funeral director has little control over the cost of disbursements included in his bill, funeral directors' own costs such as staff and equipment may have risen above the costs of inflation and the two OPCS surveys are not directly comparable."—

those are the two to which the hon. Gentleman referred—

"Indeed, I did not read the OFT report as necessarily suggesting that funeral directors are overcharging".—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 779.]

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman has quoted a speech which, like me, he seems to know well. I am puzzled especially by the question of who controls the salaries and other staff costs if they are not controlled by the funeral directors. Ministers constantly tell us that businesses are responsible for their own staffing costs, but I suspect that that is a red herring.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand his hon. Friend's speech. He criticises the level of charges. I have never before heard an Opposition Member say that staff do not earn enough, so I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's conversion. He criticised the charges that those companies make. As the hon. Member for Leigh knows, because he has studied the matter in great depth, charges have gone up by 28 per cent. above the rate of inflation in the past 15 years——

Mr. Cunliffe: Twelve years.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman says 12 years, but many industries must have a worse record than that.

Dr. Hampson: Being present by force majeure to try to introduce a motion that I am prevented from introducing enables me to reflect on some of the ideas that have been put before the House. Before I went to university I was brought up in the north-west, where everyone used the Co-operative funeral service. It has not been properly explained why, in this world which the Opposition regard as such a rip-off, the Co-operative Society could not make enough profits and has backed out of the funeral industry. The hon. Member for Leigh seemed to imply that he wanted to return to the highly regulated world that socialists always want, in which local authorities are allowed to run funeral services. However, that would only compound the problem that I was trying to identify in my motion—the wastefulness and misuse of local authority power——

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) has just walked into the Chamber, having been absent for long periods of the debate. He has tabled a second motion which we are unlikely to reach, and is deliberately trying to introduce the subject of that motion into this debate. Is that not contempt of the House?

Dr. Hampson: I apologise for introducing extraneous matters, but they were perfectly relevant.

The hon. Member for Leigh said that he regretted that local authorities did not have the powers to undertake funeral services. It seemed perfectly relevant, therefore, to say that it would be a wasteful exercise on the part of local authorities. We all know that the Opposition wish to prevent me from introducing my motion.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It would be as well if we got on with the debate.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West has every right to be absent from the Chamber because he always ensures that his speeches—in this case, a speech that should have been heard by the House—are full of interest and carefully researched. Therefore, I am not surprised that he was unable to be present for the whole of this debate.

With his usual understanding of the subject, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West asked the same question that I asked the hon. Member for Leigh an hour and 10 minutes ago: if the funeral industry is such a licence to print money, why did the Co-operative Wholesale Society sell its interest in it?

Mr. Cunliffe *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Knapman: I asked the hon. Member for Leigh an hour and 10 minutes ago why that should be so——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Knapman: I was about to give way to the hon. Member for Leigh, who introduced the subject into the debate.

Mr. Cunliffe: The explanation is simple and well known to the House. The Co-op owned more than the Monopolies and Mergers Commission criteria. It had 25 per cent. of the industry and was made to get rid of the House of Fraser, which Hodgson Holdings PHK—Kenyan Securities—bought immediately afterwards. It then added to that to create another monopoly, so it is swings and roundabouts—robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Mr. Knapman: I am—not unusually—slightly confused. Surely the Co-operative Wholesale Society did not have to sell its entire interest in the industry. Is the hon.

Gentleman saying that it did? He spent an hour and 20 minutes saying how wonderfully profitable the funeral industry is.

Mr. Cunliffe: I am trying to give the facts. I said that the Co-operative Wholesale Society was allowed to retain 25 per cent. of the industry. In this case, the surplus was the House of Fraser, which was immediately snapped up by another big company in the industry, the name of which I have already given.

Mr. Knapman: If the Co-operative Wholesale Society was allowed to keep 25 per cent., I presume that the whole thrust of the hon. Gentleman's argument was against that society.

Mr. Foulkes: I can confirm that a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report obliged the CWS to divest itself of that power. Had the hon. Gentleman speeded up his speech and not allowed the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) to intervene, I might have had an opportunity to explain, as a Co-op Member, the position of the Co-op funeral services.

Mr. Knapman: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which suggested that the Co-operative Wholesale Society should not have more than 25 per cent. of that market.

In the course of the Adjournment debate on 6 February 1989, my hon. Friend the then Minister said:

"The fact that during the past few years a number of small independent funeral directors' firms have been taken over—the hon. Gentleman stressed that development—is perhaps an indication that profit margins in some parts of the industry are low."

That is a far cry from the hon. Gentleman's argument. My hon. Friend the Minister concluded by saying:

"It is going too far to say that the market is in any way overwhelmed or dominated by that small number of companies. I am confident that the Director General of Fair Trading will remain alert to what is happening in the market and be ready to take action if and when the need arises."—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 780.]

The Director General of Fair Trading already has those powers. Although I like the first line and a half of the motion, I do not think much of the quangos suggested in the remainder. The Director General of Fair Trading has discretionary powers to refer abuses of monopoly and anti-competitive practices to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and that has happened.

It may be slightly ironic that the Commission investigated the Co-operative Wholesale Society's acquisition of the Scottish funeral businesses of House of Fraser plc in 1987 but, in view of what has been said, I had better not rake that up again.

The hon. Gentleman now has not one—that is the number of cases suggested in the 1989 Adjournment debate—but two causes of complaint. Some 90,000 people live in my constituency and I reckon that they will live for more than 70 years. I must admit that I sometimes speculate idly on whether the increased lifespan is because the national health service is so much more efficient than it used to be. The hon. Gentleman seems not to want to pay the Government that compliment—he apparently thinks that the increased lifespan is because people eat muesli for breakfast—but the average lifespan is certainly going up considerably.

Nevertheless, of that 90,000, every year some 1,200 families suffer bereavement and, if my arithmetic is correct, in the past four years that I have represented Stroud, there have been some 5,000 deaths in my constituency. During that time, I have received no letters of complaint from those 5,000 families about the charges or activities of funeral directors. I wonder how many of my hon. Friends have received letters from their constituents complaining about that subject. It does not seem to be very much of a problem.

In 1989, the National Association of Funeral Directors published an Office of Fair Trading survey showing factors such as the amount paid compared with the expected cost of a funeral and knowledge of funeral costs. Some 75 per cent. of those questioned paid exactly what they expected to pay or less. A further 21 per cent. did not know—which I suppose means that the people did not reply.

In my postbag I receive many letters about whales, tropical forests, battery hens and nearly every other subject, but I have never received a letter about undertakers' charges. That is a credit to the industry, because funeral directors conduct their business at a time of considerable anxiety, not to say trauma, and it would be easy for them to upset customers if they did not provide a good service.

The other part of the hon. Gentleman's speech related essentially to whether there is sufficient quality of service and, if not, what should be done about it—whether we should have quangos and intervention. There have been surveys on this subject. In 1987, there was a survey of funeral arrangements. It was published in 1989, although whether before or after the Adjournment debate of the hon. Member for Leigh, I am not sure. It stated clearly that, of the 600,000-plus funerals in Britain every year, about 200 provoked complaints to trading standards officers. The survey showed that 72 per cent. were very satisfied, 25 per cent. were satisfied, 2 per cent. were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and only 1 per cent. were dissatisfied with the industry's activities. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is aware of those statistics, as he did not mention them in his speech, although he had ample opportunity to do so. Using a massive sledgehammer to crack a nut, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, is not justified.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, when he was Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, had much to do with the privatisation of the water industry. I was always struck by his comment that one should have competition where that is possible and regulation where it is not. There is still considerable competition within the industry. One accepts that where there is not fair competition there should be regulation, but that should not mean legislation—there is already a considerable amount of legislation.

The hon. Member for Leigh could also have quoted from the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Gordon Borrie. The hon. Gentleman did not say a great deal about Sir Gordon's views on the subject, but he has considerable responsibilities for it. Sir Gordon Borrie said:

"People do not arrange funerals often enough to acquire the background knowledge which guides them when they make other major purchases, and they may be in no state of mind to make best use of such knowledge as they have. They do not approach the task of arranging a funeral as they would an ordinary consumer transaction, comparing the prices and services on offer and taking time to come to a decision."

That is perfectly fair, and I think that Opposition Members would certainly agree with it.

[Mr. Knapman]

Sir Gordon Borrie said that, for those reasons, the Office of Fair Trading had supported consumer protection in the form of the code of practice of the National Association of Funeral Directors. The hon. Member for Leigh said that he was speaking voluntarily and thought that I might be speaking compulsorily. I have no interest to declare in the way that he might have been suggesting.

Sir Gordon Borrie continued:

"I still support the code but I am disturbed by the evidence that it is not being adequately followed."

That is the crux of the matter. I am sure that the House would agree with that. Sir Gordon continued:

"I am calling upon the Association to make a swift and positive response to the survey's findings. Otherwise I may have to consider what other options—such as an order under the Prices Act 1974 requiring the disclosure of prices—are available."

That is the important point, because I understand that, under the code of conduct, all prices should be made available, but in only 40 per cent. of cases was that proving to be the case. I think that all hon. Members will agree that that is not right and that the code of practice should be enforced. However, we surely do not need the huge, bureaucratic minefield into which the hon. Member for Leigh seeks to lead us in order to achieve that.

Who is to pay for all this? The hon. Member for Leigh had many lines about quangos and so on, but who will pay for the system? Will we hear the traditional Labour response, "Let the taxpayer pay," because nobody knows quite where the money goes? Or will it be the consumer who pays, by which I mean the executors of the deceased? If consumers are to pay, the hon. Gentleman's arrangement—despite all his talk about reducing the cost of funerals generally—will increase costs. That is the history of over-regulation throughout the ages.

I beg the House not to support the hon. Gentleman. We have an efficient and thriving industry. Certainly, if there are things wrong with it, the Office of Fair Trading must look into them, but we should not create an over-regulated, bureaucratic quagmire. Therefore, I hope that the House will reject the motion.

6.17 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) made a magnificent, superb speech, based on his practical experience. He did the House a favour in moving the motion. He is simply asking that undertakers should give not only a menu but a menu with prices. What is wrong with that? As my hon. Friend said, the issue stems from the Prices Act 1974, which provided that pubs must display the prices of what they sell. Until 1974, they never did. If someone went into a pub, he did not know how much a pint of beer cost, and had to ask. The Labour Government said that all pubs and restaurants should display their prices on the wall. My hon. Friend is saying that the same should apply to undertakers. What is wrong with that?

People buy this product—if one may call it that—or service once or twice in their life. They are not experts and cannot shop around. There is no way that they will have time, within two or three days, to ring the undertakers or go through *Yellow Pages* to see how much is charged. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh read out a list of disbursements: £60 for body removal, £25 for minister's fees, £100 for gravediggers' fees, up to £90 for the cremation, £42 for medical certificates, £12 for the organist, £7 for heating the church and £100 for the flowers. Those are all included in the basic cost. People do not know the cost unless they ask, or are told after the funeral, and then the bill comes as a massive shock to poor people who are not versed in such matters.

The report of the Office of Fair Trading shows that, in Brighton, the average cost of a funeral can be £1,000, whereas in Oldham it is only £400. Why should there be such a difference for the same basic service in different parts of the country? The national average cost is £530, whereas it costs £1,000 in Brighton. I do not know what it costs in Stroud—I should like to know. It is totally wrong that people should have to pay such prices for what is basically, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh described it, an MFI coffin used at the crematoriums, and pay perhaps £150 or £200 for something with a factory price of about £25. Enormous profits have been made in the industry. It is time that the Office of Fair Trading not merely produced a report but acted on it.

As my hon. Friend said, for many years in this country we had a mass of small firms trading on their good will and conducting perhaps 200 funerals a year—as few as four or five a week. That was why it was cost-inefficient. Small firms had to pay a lot for hearses, cars and embalming, and for their premises, but they would do perhaps only two hours work a day. When it was virtually a cottage industry, no one could reap an adequate return unless there were many deaths.

Then in came organisations such as Hodgson Holdings and took over the small businesses. Unlike firms such as Prontaprint and Sketchley the cleaners, such organisations do not offer franchises under their own name. They simply buy the old name. Then, instead of a car being used for two hours a day, it is used all day at five or six different premises. That makes the business much more efficient and profitable, but nobody knows that all these "small firms" are governed by the same company. At least the Co-op puts its name above its shops. When people go to the Co-op they know who owns it, but they think that the other firms are the same little family firms that buried their grandfathers. They are not. Charges can go up by £100 in six months because a firm has been taken over without anyone knowing.

I am sorry that a Department of Trade and Industry Minister is to reply to this debate. The Department of Social Security should reply. It has a great deal to answer for because it has not educated pensioners or families about what to do in these circumstances. The reports that have been mentioned are usually in the quality papers such as *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent*. *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* rarely investigate such matters. As people get older and become pensioners—probably even by the time they reach 50—they would probably be happy to receive Government leaflets giving advice about what to watch for and what questions to ask.

I have with me a letter which I received today from an elderly lady in Worksop, in my constituency. Her brother, who is 79 years of age, has had a stroke. Her sister is 83. None of them has been married, and they are not insured for funeral expenses. They are so confused that they cannot ask how to claim help, despite being on income support. The lady is a widow. Her husband was a miner for 46 years and served for six years in the war. Recently, the mining industry has been offering retired people lump sums to give up their coal allowances. People were warned

not to accept, because doing so would put them above the limit for benefits. That woman has taken £2,000 and given up her coal for the rest of her life, thinking that she has a nice little nest egg—but now she does not qualify for the grant from the DSS because she has £2,000 in the bank. Her husband worked digging coal for 46 years for that money, and a big chunk of it will go to pay funeral expenses. The lump sum also stops people qualifying for cold weather payments from the DSS.

The Minister will talk about free trade and the market economy. He will say that he will not interfere and set up a bureaucracy. But the Labour Government simply ordered pubs to put their prices on the wall. All we need is a similar measure under the same Act saying that undertakers have to do the same and display a price list with details of charges. People would have the right to see a list of prices, and could go to two or three undertakers collecting details of prices—perhaps in the form of leaflets. That is all that my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh is asking for. It would be a great service to many hard-up pensioners if such details were given in advice leaflets at every DSS office.

The industry is being taken over by firms that should operate on a franchise basis, and a great deal of profit is being made out of innocent people in their time of grief. It is up to the Government to protect pensioners and to act on behalf of consumers as well as on behalf of the free market.

6.24 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I wish that I could follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) with the same verve and eloquence. He is a Sheffield Wednesday supporter——

Mr. Ashton: Director.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is a director; I must not denigrate him. Clearly, he is buoyed up by the recent victory. I support Manchester United, as well as Heart of Midlothian, so I feel that a debate on funerals is appropriate for my sombre contribution.

There may be other reasons why people do not approach the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) with complaints. As joint chairman, with the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), of the all-party pensioners group, I know that many members of that group have raised that important issue, and that we have had meetings with the National Association of Funeral Directors. Moreover, once a funeral is over, people may feel that it is not appropriate to write a letter of complaint to a Member of Parliament. The hon. Member for Stroud should not judge by his postbag. I assure him that the all-party pensioners group has received representations, which it has taken up with the National Association of Funeral Directors.

I used to work with Age Concern Scotland before I entered the House. That organisation, too, was worried about the matter and had received a number of complaints. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have been in the House for a long time, and will be able to confirm that old people and the relatives of people who have died are in a vulnerable position. They cannot haggle about prices. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) has said, at such a difficult time people cannot negotiate for the best price. They cannot necessarily exercise the same judgment as they would when making another kind of purchase.

I speak as a Co-op-sponsored Member of Parliament. I freely declare my interest, which is on the Register of Members' Interests. Anyone who cares to read the record knows about that interest. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) here tonight. He, too, is sponsored by the Co-op and I know that he will associate himself with what I say.

The Co-op is one of the biggest undertakers in the country, if not the biggest, but that statement masks the fact that it is not a monolithic organisation. There is much misunderstanding about the structure of the Co-op movement. There is local control and much sympathetic understanding of the needs of consumers, especially elderly and, in this case, bereaved people.

About 30 of the 80 local Co-operative societies in the United Kingdom provide funeral services. The biggest provider is the CWS—the Co-operative Wholesale Society—which is very strong in Scotland and south Wales. It supplies funeral materials to other societies and runs coffin-making works in Manchester and Glasgow. There is also the CRS—Co-operative Retail Services—the biggest Co-operative funeral business in England. All the societies combine to offer a funeral pre-payment bond, which enables people to make provision for their funerals.

That is one example of the way in which the Co-operative movement not only sees people as customers but aims to provide them with a service. It thinks not in terms of profit but of providing a service to the members of the Co-operative movement. Similarly, the Co-operative college has helped the launch of the Bereavement Trust, which brings together social work professionals and funeral staff, who all help and counsel the bereaved.

The main worry of the Co-operative movement is the unlimited access to the profession. Cowboy operators are free to lower standards and to charge whatever prices they like. That emphasises what my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh said about the transparency of prices. The existence of cowboy operators is especially regrettable in a service in which reliability, sensitivity and integrity are expected by the public, as the families using the service may be unable or unwilling to exercise rigorous consumer choice. The Co-op therefore feels that more consumer protection is needed. The only way of achieving that is through a registration system that would allow only trained and reputable people and companies to offer this service. The industry would be represented on the registration council that the Co-op movement proposes. Rightly, there would be consumer and independent representatives.

The report of the Office of Fair Trading on the funeral industry found many causes for concern similar to those I have outlined which worry the Co-op. The OFT, with the National Association of Funeral Directors, has developed a voluntary code of conduct. Although the good faith of the association is not in doubt, many Co-op funeral departments are active members of the local NAFD branch but are worried that voluntary self-regulation will not work. The association will find it difficult to discipline or expel members who provide its subscription income. As the House would expect, many of the worst offenders—those who engage in bad practice and charge high prices—are not members of the association. Accordingly, they

[Mr. Foulkes]

are beyond the theoretical scope of the code. We want to give the association a fair wind, but we are sceptical about its success.

The Co-operative movement would like to see introduced a Bill—it has discussed it with my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh because of his concern—that would go much further than the NAFD code in many respects. The main difference is that the movement believes that the protection of consumers must have the backing of us all.

The Government could help reputable funeral businesses to keep down their prices by introducing the zero-rating of VAT for all funeral services. At present, most funeral costs are exempt from VAT, which means that businesses cannot reclaim the VAT that is paid on their inputs. The Government are negotiating with the European Community on the harmonisation of VAT sales in the single market, and we support the progress that has been made now that the Community has accepted the principle of zero rating for social goods such as food.

We believe that funerals should be included in the list. It is a service that has to be used by everyone eventually. It is not a purchase that can be delayed or forgone, however much we might like it to be. Funeral arrangements take place at a time of financial uncertainty, and possibly financial stringency for those who have to pay. The increase in the rate of VAT that was announced in the Budget makes it all the more necessary to move to positive zero rating for funerals. I hope that the Minister will give a specific and positive answer to the suggestion that zero rating should be adopted.

We in the Cooperative movement are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh for all the work that he has done. We are pleased that he succeeded in obtaining a place in the ballot and thus was able to initiate a debate on the funeral business. We hope that the Minister will give sympathetic consideration to a matter of great concern for the Co-operative movement and for those of us who are members of the all-party pensioners group, which has discussed these matters on several occasions and on whose behalf I speak this evening. I hope that the Minister will recognise and respond to the eloquence of the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh.

6.32 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): First, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) for the force of the arguments that he deployed, for his well-informed contribution and for the long-term interest that he has taken in the subject, which means that he is one of the premier spokespersons on the funeral business in this place. I pay tribute also to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) for his informed contribution to the debate. Similarly, I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

We are used to death in the House. One took place fairly recently when a political career was killed off during the autumn as the result of a murder most foul and treacherous. There is more than a whiff of political morbidity coming from No. 10 Downing street at present. More than 600,000 deaths occur in Britain each year, and almost all require the services of a funeral director. The debate that we have today is nothing new. Funerals have been seen as a burden on the poor for more than a century, and for more than 100 years people have used friendly societies, burial societies and industrial assurance companies to help them to meet the cost of funerals.

The majority of people working in the funeral business are well trained. They are competent, compassionate and professional. They take a pride in their work, which has an honourable and well-documented history going back over 3,000 years. It is right that they should be rewarded for their service. I welcome the acknowlegement of my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh that he has witnessed an improvement in the performance of the trade. There are, however, no grounds for complacency.

In April 1976, the Labour Government's Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection asked the Price Commission to report on funeral charges and associated charges such as the cost of coffins, burials, cremations and the like. The commission's findings were that most people were not given written estimates. Only 70 per cent. were given oral estimates. Action was taken to introduce improvements and a code was produced in 1979. It is sad that, in the 1980s, the quality of information and service seemed to slip back in some sectors.

The 1979 code contained six simple provisions. It provided that practitioners in undertakers' businesses should keep their dealings with their clients confidential and that they should advise them on certification, registration of death and associated matters. The code stated that all clients should be given full information about the services offered and that they should be handed a price list or a leaflet setting out prices. It was set out in the code that those who offer funeral services should offer a basic, simple funeral if that was requested and required.

The code included the provision that clients should be given a written estimate to cover the charges and that the charges should not go beyond that estimate. It was stated that fair prices should be detailed and that clients should be provided with detailed accounts. These were simple recommendations. It is amazing that, after 12 years, not all the recommendations have been adopted by all practitioners in the funeral business.

The report of the Office of Fair Trading, which was published in July 1989, arose from complaints about non-compliance with the code and other matters that had been made by the general public. As we have heard from hon. Members on both sides of the House, costs increased by nearly 30 per cent. between 1975 and 1989. Apparently the cost of coffins and the level of professional charges increased beyond the rate of inflation. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh cited the example of the price of a £19 coffin increasing by as much as 1,000 per cent. Another, more luxurious, coffin—a coffin that will be requested by some—with a wholesale price of £60 increased to £350. My hon. Friend gave examples of handles costing up to £8 subsequently being charged at £42. He spoke of plastic nameplates increasing in price from 69p to £65. We support his contention that basic prices have increased and that the added value on basic products is considerably less than the price eventually charged.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh has given a new meaning to the letter RIP—not rest in peace but rip off, as prices soar. The report of the Office of Fair Trading focused on the code of practice of the NAFD, the key requirements of which were not being observed by members of the profession. The shortcomings were detailed. They included a failure to provide price lists, a

failure to supply written estimates to clients, and a deep-seated reluctance to provide all the details of a modest and basic funeral.

Last year, the NAFD published in its trade magazine the results of its own random inspections to check whether its members were complying with the code. Up to a year after the report of the OFT, half the inspections revealed that funeral directors were still failing to fulfil the code's requirements of price lists and written estimate forms.

Labour makes five key demands. The funeral code must be applied to all funeral directors, it must extend to cover pricing, and every customer and potential customer must be given a detailed breakdown of funeral costs. It is not satisfactory that a grieving relative should have to organise a funeral after someone has passed on. It is just as important that everyone should be able to make inquiries, irrespective of whether they require a funeral today, tomorrow or sometime in the future and get a price list from every funeral director.

That brings me to the excellent point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley about the registration and regulation of all practitioners. By simply registering practitioners, we would have an additional check that the best codes of practice and the highest professional standards were being adhered to. That additional check is necessary, and should be applied to all funeral directors.

We desire to drive out the bad practices, albeit in a small minority, which are prejudicing the standards of the best practitioners in the industry. We must ensure that a price-marking order is drafted in line with section 4 of the Prices Act 1974, to compel all funeral directors to display prices and to provide full itemised costs for all potential customers. It may not be necessary to enforce that measure, but the fact that it would be hanging over the tiny minority of unscrupulous practitioners would be a threat.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I should be most interested to know how many complaints the hon. Gentleman has had from his constituents about the affairs of funeral directors. Can he tell the House who would pay for the panoply of regulation he suggests, which is so typical of socialism?

Mr. Griffiths: We know that the hon. Gentleman is assiduous in speaking for the No Turning Back group. He acknowledges that freely, and the Minister also nods his assent. The hon. Gentleman is leaving the Minister short of time to wind up.

The facts are quite simple. The public is demanding regulation of the trade. I have a number of excellent practitioners of funeral services working with the Co-op and in the private sector in my constituency and I would not seek to malign them. I have received only one complaint in the past six months, but it was a serious complaint at a time when the individual concerned was in a great deal of emotional distress. My constituents will not welcome the account of today's proceedings and the barracking from Conservative Members. If I am pressed to name the individual who complained, I shall do so, having asked that person for permission.

I have been a Member of Parliament since 1987 since when I have received several complaints. Every Member of Parliament will be aware of problems in the funeral industry. It would be surprising and, frankly, astonishing if, given that there are 600,000 funerals each year every hon. Member were not aware of one or two complaints. It is perhaps a tribute to Opposition Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh that their constituents are able to make their complaints known to them. I am not surprised that Conservative Members are shaking their heads and saying that they have no complaints.

Mr. Knapman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: If the hon. Gentleman had considered the matter so important, I am sure that he would have raised it in his speech.

We backed the Director General of Fair Trading when he spelled out what must be done. More formal intervention may well be needed. My hon. Friend the Member for Leigh suggested that the matter should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I shall certainly welcome the Minister's response to that suggestion, as I do not believe that it can be ruled out.

I hope that the Minister will investigate the information that my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh gave the House about bids by private firms for municipal funeral services. It cannot be right that a bid of £350 a funeral for a council contract is being made by a company charging its customers double that in the private sector. Surely the Minister is not satisfied to let matters rest there. Surely he must investigate the unjustified price increases in identical funeral in less than month. More than £100 more is being charged for the same funeral.

In short, we need a more positive approach from the Government backing the Office of Fair Trading, supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh and other hon. Members in their efforts to make the industry more accountable, and, most important of all, strengthening the rights of the relatives and friends of the 5 million United Kingdom citizens whose deaths will necessitate funerals in the next decade. We want the Minister to respond positively to those questions.

6.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Edward Leigh): The hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) has chosen a subject for debate which is of interest to all hon. Members. I am sure that the House will have listened with great interest to his comprehensive speech. I am sure that every one of us has had experience of losing loved ones. Often the bereaved feel vulnerable and unable to cope with the practical problems associated with death. They look for support and help and for someone to take over the responsibility of sorting out details and making arrangements.

The hon. Member for Leigh quoted Gladstone, and we all agree that how we treat our bereaved is a measure of the tender spirit of the land. The majority find the help and support from their funeral director adequate. Despite some of the comments made today, we should not forget that there is no evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with the industry. The report by the Director General of Fair Trading in January 1989 produced no such evidence.

As we have heard today, some 650,000 people die each year in the United Kingdom. Most of the associated funerals are arranged by funeral directors. In 1986, the last full year in which the Office of Fair Trading separately recorded complaints about funerals, there were only 126 complaints. My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr.

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

Knapman) said that he had received no complaints from his constituents, although I accept that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) put a different interpretation on why there had been so few complaints.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in eight years a Member of Parliament, I have not had one complaint from my constituents? I can tell the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) that I have full surgeries. Sellmans, Stacey and John Short and Son in my constituency provide a splendid service, as I am sure the Co-op does—otherwise, I would have received complaints. Is my hon. Friend aware that companies such as John Short and Son produce a full price list, as the hon. Member for Leigh requested? Is it not correct to say that the Opposition want another panoply of controls for which the customer will ultimately pay?

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend makes his point most effectively. I shall take up one of the points he made.

Since becoming the Minister responsible for consumer affairs, I have received only a handful of complaints about the quality of service provided by funeral directors. I do not dismiss the concerns of those involved in the particular cases, but I urge hon. Members to keep the issue in perspective, as I am sure the hon. Member for Leigh would wish.

We are considering an industry with a long tradition of service to the community. The face of the industry is changing in a number of ways. The hon. Member has referred to increased concentration. There have been changes of ownership and a number of small independent firms have disappeared. People are more likely to find that their local undertaker is part of a group rather than an independent. We should not assume that this is necessarily a change for the worse. There have been changes in society, too. Most people no longer expect their local funeral director to be someone they know—they just hope to receive an efficient service at a reasonable cost carried out with sensitivity to their wishes and feelings. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) raised that point in an intervention.

I do not think that we should expect the funeral industry to look today as it did 20, or even 10, years ago. Equally, we should not jump to the conclusion that changes in its structure mean that excessive profits are being made and that people are being ripped off.

Of course, concern about the cost of funerals is not new. Since the 19th century, organisations such as friendly societies, burial societies and industrial assurance companies have made payments to their members to cover the costs of funerals. In 1949, the then Government introduced a death grant of £20 to cover the necessary expenses of a decent funeral. In 1976, widespread concern about the cost of funerals led the then Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection to ask the Price Commission to report on funeral charges and associated charges, including the prices of coffins, burial and cremation. It will be of interest to hon. Members that the commission concluded that, although there was scope for some reduction in funeral charges, profits were not generally excessive. Nevertheless, the commission made the following important observation:

> "In the relationship between funeral director and client the former has a marked psychological and commercial advantage, so that the balance of bargaining power is tilted in his favour"—

a point made by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) in a characteristically powerful speech.

> "Owing to the distress which usually accompanies a bereavement, those who seek the funeral director's services rarely obtain more than one estimate. For the same reason, the funeral director is able, if he wishes, to influence the relative degree of elaboration of the funeral. We have, however, been assured that this is the exception rather than the rule."

The commission was therefore concerned that the normal forces of competition did not work effectively in this industry because of the special circumstances surrounding services associated with death. To shift the balance more in favour of the client, and to try and encourage clients to make informed choices, the commission recommended that funeral directors should give clients a written estimate, and that a basic simple funeral should be made available, and its price displayed in a prominent position.

The Director General of Fair Trading was asked by the Government to negotiate a code of practice with the National Association of Funeral Directors to cover those points. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud said, that code of practice exists today. I do not think that I need go into great detail about it, as it was read out by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths).

Let me put this matter in perspective. The report of the Office of Fair Trading pointed out some significant factors that need to be borne in mind in considering the cost of a funeral. First, the funeral director has little control over the cost of disbursements included on his bill, such as the cost of the burial plot, the cost of providing an organist, and the cemetery or crematorium fees. Secondly, the funeral director's own costs, such as those incurred in the provision of staff, vehicles and embalming equipment, are also to some extent outside his control and may have risen at a rate above the rate of inflation.

At this stage, I should say a bit more about costs. People tend to judge the amount of work involved in arranging a funeral by the amount of time they actually see spent—the visit to their home by the funeral director, and the work that he does at the funeral itself. Clearly, a lot more work is involved. I should not like to hazard an estimate of how much, although I know that the hon. Member for Leigh has his own views on the subject, and we listened with some interest to those views. It is clear that, when the time factor is taken into consideration, along with the industry's overheads, which reflect large items of capital expenditure, a funeral is never going to be cheap.

That point was clearly brought out in the report of the Director General of Fair Trading. It is important to remind the House that Sir Gordon did not claim that funeral directors were overcharging or making excessive profits. Comments made in the Director General's report have been quoted out of context, sometimes giving the impression that Sir Gordon took a view on the question of profits. That is not correct. Indeed, he had no basis on which to take a view, as he had not collected any information about funeral directors' costs and margins.

However, he did emphasise that the cost of a funeral is substantial. He recognised that the bereaved sometimes find the final sum larger than they expected. That is why he recommended improvements in the code of conduct of the National Association of Funeral Directors, to provide

more information about prices and about the itemisation of estimates and bills. I listened with interest to what the hon. Member for Bassetlaw said about itemisation, and I shall certainly give the matter consideration.

The funeral directors' association also called for better publicity for the option of a basic "no frills" funeral. I have noted the remarks of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) about VAT. The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to comment at this stage, but I will give the matter some thought.

I shall deal further with the question of overheads when I comment in more detail on competition in the industry. In the meantime, I want to return to the report of the Office of Fair Trading. The Director General concluded that members of the public needed more information about the price of funerals, including more comparative information, to encourage the bereaved to make an informed choice. He wanted, among other things, to see more publicity for the basis funeral and better itemisation of individual charges in estimates and accounts. I repeat that I shall consider carefully the comments of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw on the question of itemisation.

I am afraid that the National Association of Funeral Directors was not totally in agreement with the report of the Office of Fair Trading, and there would be no point in pretending that it endorsed the conclusion drawn by the OFT from the survey. But it did accept that changes in the code of practice were necessary. Accordingly, revisions were made, and a new code promulgated. I shall not go into that code in great detail, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South did the House the service of reading out its main points. It is an extensive code, the purpose of which is to reassure the public. For instance, it makes absolutely clear the need to observe the confidence of every client, to render good service at all times, to ensure that advertising is in good taste, to provide clients and the general public with full and fair information, to give a written estimate of all funeral charges, and to come up with an itemised account. I should like to deal with those matters in more detail, but unfortunately time does not permit.

I do not think that legislation to regulate the funeral industry is either necessary or desirable. In this respect, I listened to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud. It is not my purpose to encourage people to go round complaining about the service that they have received. However, there is no substitute for the informed consumer's taking considered decisions in his own interests. I accept that clients of funeral directors may not have at the top of their list, or in the forefront of their minds, the need to make an informed choice, but legislation will not change that. Ultimately, it must be for the individual to judge whether he has received good service. If he feels that the National Association of Funeral Directors has put in place a system of conciliation and arbitration is of the utmost importance, and I am glad of this opportunity to give publicity to that valuable initiative.

There have been changes in the industry. We have heard about them in this debate, particlarly from the hon. Member for Leigh. However, the Co-op remains dominant. In this respect, the whole House is grateful for the particular expertise that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley brings to the subject. In addition, there are still a large number of independent funeral directors.

The funeral industry is not the first in which small, independent firms have experienced difficulties. The fact that a number have sold out to groups does not necessarily reflect predatory behaviour on the part of the latter. A number of factors, including increased competition, may have contributed to the changes in the industry. There are signs of more active marketing of different products—for instance, the range of packages to enable one to meet the cost of a future funeral by regular payments. I accept, of course, that the hon. Member for Leigh does not give much credence to these packages. Such arrangements are not new in themselves, but their development in the upper part of the market are.

There were some remarks about profits. It has been claimed that some funeral directors are making huge profits. On this point, other hon. Members, like me, will have read the report of the Great Southern Group's results for 1990. The group, which is quoted in the unlisted securities market, suffered a 9 per cent. downturn in pre-tax profits. The setback occurred despite an overall gain in market share. I hope that this reference to the profits of the Great Southern Group shows that there is another side to the story.

Mr. Cunliffe: Does the Minister concede that the You Care group made a year's profit of £500,000 on a turnover of £2·5 million? Does that not reflect a balance? The Minister talks about competitiveness. Surely this is a classic example of how one company can out-compete another?

Mr. Leigh: I cannot comment on the profits to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, but I repeat that we must put the industry in perspective.

I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Leigh, which lasted more than an hour and 20 minutes. I think that the hon. Gentleman was trying to intimate that the industry's profits are generally excessive. I do not think that that is in fact the case. The hon. Gentleman is nodding his head. The insistence of the Director General of Fair Trading on the inclusion of stricter requirements on transparency of information in the code of the National Association of Funeral Directors will also contribute to the increasing competition to which I have referred.

I will say more about the role of information in encouraging consumer choice, which is not straightforward in relation to funerals. As a general policy, the Government strongly hold the view that one of the keys to increased competition, and therefore to lower prices and more efficient services, is a well-informed consumer. That does not mean simply the provision of more information. Consumers need clear information, presented in a way that is easy to analyse and to compare—and at the right time.

Many people do not consider shopping around for a funeral. Some are too distressed, while others regard it as inappropriate, or even disrespectful, to do so. Instead, they want the funeral director to take the arrangements off their hands. Often, they do not think to ask the sort of questions that they would consider natural when contracting any other kind of service.

One might argue that that gives the funeral director an opportunity to take advantage of the consumer. Equally, the director may be faced with the problem of deciding the extent to which he should bother the bereaved with details——

It being Seven o'clock, proceedings on the motion lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 13(8) (Arrangement of public business).

Orders of the Day

Coal Mining (Subsidence) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

PURCHASE ETC. OF PROPERTY AFFECTED BY BLIGHT

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may, after consultation with the Corporation, make regulations with respect to the action to be taken by the Corporation for alleviating cases of hardship suffered as a result of property being blighted by subsidence damage or the possibility of such damage.

(2) The action which may be required by the regulations is—

(a) the purchase of any blighted property at a price equivalent to its unblighted value ; or

(b) the payment of an amount equivalent to the difference between the value of any such property and its unblighted value.

(3) Regulations under this section may make provision as to—

(a) the making of claims under the regulations and the descriptions of persons who may make them;

(b) the descriptions of property in respect of which such claims may be made and the circumstances in which such property is to be regarded as blighted for the purposes of the regulations;

(c) the circumstances in which action is or is not required to be taken (including the circumstances in which a person is to be regarded as suffering hardship);

(d) the determination of the value or unblighted value of any blighted property.

(4) In this section "unblighted value", in relation to any blighted property, means the value which it would have if it were not blighted.'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment *(a)* to the amendment in subsection (2), at end insert—

'(c) the right of owners who have received notices under Clause 44, subsections (4) and (6) to compel the Corporation to purchase blighted property.'.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is the first of a number of new clauses and amendments that have been tabled to meet Government commmitments made in Committee. New clause 1 deals with blight.

In order to prevent hardship, British Coal will consider buying houses damaged by subsidence, or in some cases houses that are in imminent danger of being so damaged. Over the past three years, British Coal has bought more than 80 houses, to avoid hardship being caused.

The 1984 report of the Waddilove committee considered British Coal's policy to be "wholly reasonable", and no evidence was presented in Committee to suggest that that conclusion no longer holds good. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that many hon. Members would prefer the arrangements to be placed on a statutory basis, and the new clause will enable the Secretary of State for Energy to make new regulations specifying actions to be taken by the corporation to alleviate hardship caused as a result of property being blighted by subsidence damage or the possibility of it.

In the avoidance of hardship section of the Brown Book, British Coal states that it will consider making payments to avoid hardship in a number of circumstances. The first is where the owner of a damaged house must sell if for a good reason—for example, because he has found work in another district—and the house cannot be sold at its former, undamaged value. The corporation will consider buying the house at its undamaged value or making up the difference between that and the sale price. In exceptional circumstances, the corporation will do the same if the house is not damaged, but there is a strong and imminent possibility that it will be damaged.

Those arrangements appear to work well and it is not the Government's intention to introduce regulations at this stage. If it becomes clear that those arrangements are not operating fairly, or do not go far enough in avoiding hardship, the Government will have the power to make regulations to improve matters.

I hope that new clause 1 meets with the approval of the House. I am aware that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has tabled an amendment, to which I shall respond if he has a chance to present his case.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I do not mean to be churlish when I say that, although I welcome the Minister's response to representations made from both sides of the Committee, new clause 1 falls short of our expectations. It is another example of Ministers seeking to introduce a "maybe" clause: an enabling measure that they might use, one day, to introduce regulations to alleviate the hardship suffered by householders whose homes are blighted.

A constant theme of debates in Committee was that a balance had to be struck between discretion and regulations of the kind proposed by the Minister and the belief of many of us that the Bill should establish rights. The Minister introduced the new clause in a downbeat way, when he could have said, "I am trying to break new ground." Instead, he told the House that the Government may introduce regulations at some time in the future that will take British Coal's present policies a bit further.

We pressed hard on Second Reading and in Committee for recognition of the blight caused by mining subsidence because we do not agree that British Coal should be in a position to be judge and jury in hardship cases and the only authority to exercise discretion. While no one wants to see the extensive acquisition of blighted properties, the fact that British Coal purchased only 80 homes over the past three years reveals the marginal way in which it exercises its discretionary power. It is disturbing to hear the Minister say that he thinks that British Coal is doing a good job in that respect.

I shall cite constituency cases that have come to my attention even since the Committee stage, which illustrates why new clause 1 should go further than it does. The Minister said that the Government have adopted the Brown Book's definition of hardship in relation to blight. In one case with which I am familiar, Mr. A found a purchaser for his property at an agreed price, but the announcement of subsidence in Edwardsville, in the vicinity of that property, caused the sale to be aborted.

Mr. A has spent 12 months trying to sell his property, even at a reduced price, as part of his divorce settlement, in order that his divorce proceedings may be finalised. Does the Minister consider that such a case constitutes a form of hardship and is one in which British Coal should exercise its discretionary purchasing powers? In fact, British Coal refused to do so.

The individual concerned is not a young man, but, whatever the age of the person concerned, if British Coal does not consider that case as one not involving hardship, what is its definition of hardship? The Minister gave as an example a person moving to find work in another district. That may soon be common in Edwardsville, in my constituency, because its deep navigation pit was closed on Good Friday, and a number of miners who worked there are thinking about going on the road to Selby Beach, to become mining gipsies once again.

There are a number of other examples of the sort that I have just given the Minister, where British Coal is exercising its discretion on hardship in a minimalist fashion.

The new clause talks of

"the circumstances in which action is or is not required to be taken (including the circumstances in which a person is to be regarded as suffering hardship)".

Will the Minister tell us whether the case that I mentioned —the purchase of a blighted property to resolve divorce proceedings—constitutes a case of hardship which therefore should be subject to the blight provisions?

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will my hon. Friend also point out to the Minister that the new clause could be interpreted by British Coal as applying only to physical damage to a property? What about area blight because of mining subsidence? In some cases people cannot buy a house or raise the mortgage to buy one, because of blight caused by subsidence damage.

Mr. Rowlands: I agree with my hon. Friend about blight—it is not merely related to physical damage to a property or the imminence of such damage. Properties in the vicinity of subsidence are automatically blighted and are therefore difficult to sell. That is why I tabled my amendment to the new clause, because it tries to tackle some of the problems that my hon. Friend mentions.

My amendment seeks to do one thing that the new clause does not do—to establish a right for people whose property is blighted. What sort of right should we establish? I have reached what I thought was a reasonable compromise between the discretionary provision provided by the Minister and my belief that we should establish the principle of a right for householders to serve a blight notice. My compromise seeks to resolve the matters that my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) mentioned.

My amendment seeks to tie blight provisions to the serving of notices under clause 44(4). I suggested it initially in Committee. I have mulled the matter over and believe that the case for such action is now even stronger. I do not go as far as to suggest that people have a right to serve blight notices on British Coal once any notice under clause 44 is served, although I think that there is a case for that. By nature, I am a moderate man, so my compromise amendment does not even go so far as to suggest that.

Once a notice is served under clause 44(1), there will be blight. As soon as an estate agent or a surveyor hears that there has been pushed through a door a notice stating that the property may one day be affected by subsidence, the property is blighted, but, as a moderate, I accept that we should not go as far as to enable people to exercise such a right in that situation. However, after people have received a notice under clause 44(4), people should have such a right. That subsection states that British Coal can serve a blight notice 12 months after the first notice and again 12 months after that if need be. It can continue to serve notices warning householders that there is a danger of subsidence to their property.

While the initial notice under clause 44 should perhaps not trigger off blight provisions, if British Coal reaffirms the threat of danger or the warning of damage to a property because of subsidence, as a notice under clause 44(4) would do, the householder should have a right to serve a blight notice.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): My hon. Friend served on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill and has great knowledge of the measure. Unfortunately, I was not privileged to be chosen to serve. Does he think that British Coal could use blight to force prices down it were compelled to purchase a property? Back in the 1950s and 1960s, councils bought houses for a pittance because they were in slum clearance areas. If British Coal were ruthless enough, it could put a blight notice on an area because it realised that it would have to pay, but it would make an offer at a rock-bottom price and the householder might not wish to sell. If my hon. Friend is not careful, his provision could work in two ways.

7.15 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I believe that planning and compensation legislation has changed considerably since the time of the example quoted by my hon. Friend. Whereas that was a danger once, I do not think that it is now. Indeed, even in the Minister's new clause, the discretionary power is for payment of an equivalent to the unblighted value of a property. We sorted out the matter in planning and compensation law some time ago. British Coal would not be able to get away with what my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) suggests, and I do not think that it is an objection to my amendment.

Two things should happen to the new clause. First, we should strengthen it, to establish a right rather than a discretionary power. The new clause allows British Coal to carry on as it has done before and that is not good enough, therefore we should establish a right. I offer a compromise version of that right by suggesting that if a notice is served time after time under clause 44 warning householders of the possibility of damage, even though it has not occurred, householders should have the right to expect British Coal to purchase the property if they want to move for a variety of good reasons. It should be a right and not a discretionary power as the new clause suggests.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): New clause 1 is rather like clause 41—the arbitration clause. It gives the Minister and his successor the power at some later stage to introduce mandatory regulations. It is what some of my more meticulous friends might call the rule of the threat of law, and it is designed to concentrate the minds of institutions such as British Coal and to remind them that if they do not play ball with their voluntary codes, the Government will use the power that Parliament has given to it through measures like this.

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

I welcome the new clause but, like the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), I think that it would be helpful if the Minister could spell out certain matters so that no one in British Coal can be in any doubt about precisely the range of possibilities that we wish to encompass within it.

Clearly, two kinds of blight are associated with coal mining subsidence. The first is very much of a temporary nature and is when a property is subject to subsidence, everyone in the area or on the estate suddenly goes into a panic, the price of the property falls through the floor but later the situation stabilises and after a few months property prices return to normal. The second type is more long-term and is the one with which we are all most concerned tonight, when there is a long-standing history of subsidence which is not constantly manifest at a high profile, but comes to the surface at irregular intervals. People who bought properties a few years previously when there was no general concern about subsidence in the area, suddenly find out about it and the price of their property depreciates.

Mr. Meale: Surely when there is subsidence and the prices of properties in an area are blighted, it does not right itself. We must establish protection for people within the law because those property values are not going up. In coal mining areas where subsidence has occurred, the properties are the lowest priced pro rata for their region of any properties in Britain. They are seriously affected. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is trying to get a right for home owners rather than a might.

The most disturbing facts about the new clause are that it not only provides for regulations "after consultation" with British Coal but that, in its introductory line, it only uses the word "may" rather than providing for a right.

Mr. Howarth: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but he and I would be naive if we were to assume that the word "consultation" in respect of negotiations that a Minister of the Crown might wish to have with an organisation such as British Coal implied the relationship that he suggests. If the Minister were to return to the House and seek approval for such regulations, it would be because the voluntary arrangements with British Coal had failed. In British Coal's case, it is far more likely that consultations would be more of a damage limitation exercise rather than a question of setting the terms. I suspect that the Minister would set the terms. Neither my hon. Friend the Minister nor his successor would address an issue such as this without their attention having been drawn to the great concerns expressed by the House at this time. Therefore, the regulations will be fairly stringent.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney referred to a few cases where both he and I believe that it would be sensible for British Coal to agree to purchase a property. The Minister said that the owner would have to want to sell for good reason, and he referred, as an example, to someone who lost his job and also to a house that was in imminent danger of being damaged by subsidence. There have been a few cases in my constituency of people being unable to raise cash for business ventures because the value of their property has fallen; they have therefore been unable to raise cash from a lender. The traditional way in the United Kingdom of setting up a business or expanding it is, rightly or wrongly, to use one's residence as collateral. If the value of somebody's house falls, that person is unable to raise funds to expand the business or to start up in business. I hope that the Minister will spell out to British Coal that that is another case that it ought to bear in mind.

People may also want to move house because, due to their family having expanded, their existing house is too small. The fact that those cases have been spelt out on the Floor of the House might help British Coal to understand the range of cases that Parliament is considering and that it believes British Coal ought to take into account when assessing entitlement to blight compensation.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Bill aims to protect people who are likely to be affected either by subsidence or by the threat of subsidence. The amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is the absolute minimum that we require; had I drafted it, I should have included the words "any order under clause 44." If the coal board issues a notice that shows that it may damage somebody's property, that is blight. Blight relates not only to subsidence but also to the threat of subsidence.

The Bill provides that, if somebody's house, through no fault of that person, is to be undermined by British Coal, for its own good reasons, that person's future is under the control of others. British Coal has the discretion to buy the house, or to remedy the defect, or to make a payment in lieu. British Coal also has the right to decide whether somebody has good reason to want to sell his or her property. Apart from the value of somebody's house being undermined, that person is also on probation to British Coal. Nobody will object to the new clause, if that is the best thing on offer, but all that the Minister says is that he will take a reserve discretion.

We must consider that from the point of view of somone whose house is affected. Many of these people are elderly and do not know where to turn for help. This is a complicated Bill, a point to which we shall return when we consider new clause 2 which would establish advice centres. People may suddenly have a notice pushed throught their door saying that their house may be affected. That is blight. The news spreads immediately and affects the whole area. Then they find that British Coal will have power over their lives: it can do one of three things and can then decide whether people have good reason for leaving houses that it intends to blight. The Minister says, "If it all goes wrong, we might introduce regulations which might do this or that." What use is that to people who are under pressure?

Members of Parliament have cases put to them every day. That happened to me only a few days ago. What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to write to the Minister, who will then tell us that he is waiting for British Coal to act? If one writes again to the Minister, he will reply, "Until British Coal has acted, I can't decide whether to lay a regulation." People will not know what to do. Therefore, my hon. Friend's amendment is eminently reasonable, as is evidenced by the fact that it has received limited support from Conservative Members who represent people who have been affected. That inclines me to the view that in the other place this wrong should be put right. If British Coal wanted to damage somebody's house, that person would then have the right to say to it, "If you

want to damage my house, you must buy it." A proper balance of rights and responsibilities should be enshrined in the Bill.

I hope that the Minister will take seriously this exceptionally modest amendment. It makes sense to anyone who has any experience, either personally or through representations, of the problems created by mining subsidence.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I support the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). We have to ascertain what is meant by blight. That is difficult. If, however, British Coal's evidence to the Select Committee on Energy on coal mining subsidence is anything to go by, it will never agree to new clause 1. On previous occasions I have drawn the attention of the House to a startling example—the small village of Darrington, which contains the highest-priced houses in my constituency. They cost about £150,000 which, in my area, is a very high price. The Prince of Wales colliery at Pontefract is taking coal from under that village.

In recent weeks Yorkshire Television has highlighted that problem, and also the fact that the ancestors of the president of the National Union of Mineworkers are buried in Darrington church. British Coal will have to carry out major restoration work if that church is to be saved. It has already purchased a few badly damaged properties in the village.

I have dealt with the case of a purchase from a man who has a job in Lancashire. He was a miner who was made redundant. Houses in the village which are not damaged are blighted because they cannot be sold at the market value that would have applied prior to mining subsidence. Who will decide which property will be damaged and which will not? There is not much consolation for a person whose house has not been damaged but which still loses its market value.

7.30 pm

If new clause 1 means what it says and covers all subsidence and all blight, the village of Darrington is blighted. One can imagine what will happen. The people of the village have a right to protection, but new clause 1 will not provide it. It contains too many mays and mights. Will it ever mean anything? I do not want to be churlish about the new clause because any improvement on previous regulations is welcome. I am not saying that there has not been an honest endeavour to assist, but without my hon. Friend's amendment new clause 1 will not solve the problem. I hope that the Minister and his colleagues will take note of the amendment and will acknowledge that, without it, new clause 1 means nothing.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) mentioned Darrington, but he did not deal specifically with the church there. It may assist all hon. Members to hear what will happen to the church, which is to have its stained glass windows removed and the floor removed to a depth of about 7 ft so that it can withstand the mining operations underneath it. If my hon. Friend were to refer to what will happen to the church, it would give some idea of what would happen to the £150,000 houses in the village.

Mr. Lofthouse: I thought that I had mentioned the church, which is to have extensive repairs. It will be a major exercise, and I do not think that it is yet known whether it can be saved. It is a mediaeval church and a listed building, and the coal board has great problems with it. One can imagine the type of problems caused by the nature of such a church and the fact that the property around it is also blighted. Professional people and others coming into the area are keen to live there, but there is evidence that the price of houses has recently taken a dive. It is a major problem, and I repeat that new clause 1 will not solve it without the amendment, which will go some way to identifying blight.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): When I saw the new clause on the amendment paper, I was pleased that the Government had recognised the problems of blight for areas suffering from coal mining subsidence. On Second Reading and in Committee, I and my hon. Friends gave many examples of properties that had suffered blight and of communities where the sale of property virtually ceases because of subsidence damage in the area. Therefore, I was more than surprised to hear the Minister say that he felt that British Coal, in its Brown Book, was dealing adequately with the question of hardship and was doing a good job. I hope that I am not misquoting him in saying that. If what he said were so, we would not have argued in Committee for an explanation of exactly what blight meant with regard to coal mining subsidence.

I and my hon. Friends hope that new clause 1 is a recognition of the fact that subsidence blights not only the damaged property but neighbouring property. That idea was mentioned in Committee and the Minister went away to consider it. The amendment deals with blight where a notice of intent to mine has been laid and withdrawn and then laid again.

Although I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), it is difficult to say where blight begins and ends. If a notice to mine is withdrawn and then laid again in a year's time, I have some doubt whether there should be an obligation on British Coal to buy back such properties. I say that in light of the fact that houses can be undermined by coal mining and yet not suffer damage. Whether a property suffers damage depends on what sort of mining engineering goes on underground. Blight might not affect the properties being undermined. Second Reading and in Committee, we consistently sought to ensure that, when it was plain that blight extended further than the damaged property, there would be an obligation on British Coal to buy back that property if it caused hardship. The Minister said that it was not the intention —again I hope that I am not misquoting him—to regulate at this stage.

I support new clause 1, It deals with property being blighted by subsidence damage of by the possibility of such damage—something that British Coal has not recognised previously. I ask the Minister to consider the issue more closely and to decide whether we need regulations to deal with property which is patently undamaged but which is nevertheless blighted and cannot be sold because it is affected by what happens across the road or to the house next door which has been the subject of compensation. The Minister should consider introducing regulations as speedily as possible so that British Coal cannot dodge the

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

issue but should consider whether houses are blighted and agree that owners should be fully compensated for damage.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In Committee the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) always introduced his amendments in a constructive and thoughtful manner, and I did not dismiss them out of hand. The same is true today.

I understand the difficulties that can be caused by blight. The effect of the amendment is to define a blighted property as one that has received a section 44 reminder notice. However, the purpose of the new clause is to avoid hardship arising from blight, so there is a difference of approach. During the past two years or more, my Department has not received details of any case in which British Coal has refused action under its Brown Book provisions in the case of hardship. I cannot comment on individual cases this evening, although if the hon. Gentleman cares to write to me about the case he mentioned, I shall endeavour to have it reconsidered.

The main problem with the amendment is that it ties blight to the issuing of a section 44 notice even in cases where the householder involved has no intention of moving and regardless of whether hardship is involved. That is why the Waddilove committee, when investigating that point, concluded that a balance should be struck between the interests of home owners and the interests of British Coal. If the amendment were accepted, British Coal would be obliged either to buy or to make up the difference in value of any such property regardless of whether the person concerned needed to move.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister is trying to knock down a case that we never made. We are trying to establish the house owner's right. The house owner would exercise that right only if he felt the need to do so. British Coal would not be compelled to purchase every property that had received a reminder notice under clause 44(4). However, the amendment would establish the right of a home owner who keeps on receiving such notices to serve a blight notice on British Coal. That is a reasonable proposition. The home owner would not do that lightly or frivolously. He would do so only because he felt the compulsion to leave his home because of the continued blighting of the property caused by continually receiving reminder notices of a continual risk of damage to the property.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman has expanded slightly on the amendment. What he has said does not conflict with my initial description of it. The amendment would enable all owners in receipt of such a notice to compel the corporation to purchase blighted property regardless of whether the property owner or householder wanted to move or whether he was experiencing hardship.

Mr. Benn: An entirely new concept of blight has emerged from the Minister's speech—a blight on civil rights. If one owns a house and wants to sell it, one sells it. If the house is about to be undermined and one wants to sell it, one comes under a hardship test applied by somebody else. That is a blight on a person's civil or economic right to sell his property. That is offensive.

Some people whose houses are undermined might rather live in the village and get the damage put right. Why, if they want to leave for any reason—it is up to them to decide—should the fact that the property is being undermined remove their civil or economic right to have a fair price under the Bill? I hope that the Minister will consider the point when the Bill goes to another place, because the case becomes stronger the more I hear it opposed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am addressing myself specifically to the case made not only by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, but by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse). Incidentally, I know something about the village that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford mentioned, because I visited a pit in Yorkshire last week at which that problem was raised with me.

The new clause enables the Secretary of State to make regulations to cover the position described by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford. There is a difference between blight and the more permanent damage to a property that may occur as a direct result of undermining. The essential point about the serving of a notice under clause 44 is that the mining may or may not proceed. The hon. Member for Merthy Tydfil and Rhymney will know that in some cases the notices are withdrawn.

Under the Bill, the notices will have to be regularly reviewed, at least annually. If mining proceeds, damage may or may not occur to properties. If damage occurs, the properties must be restored to their undamaged state and to the satisfaction of the householder, in accordance with other provisions in the Bill. If the property is undamaged, the blight is removed in due course because the threat of undermining is not permanent.

By its nature, a coal face is planned and progresses—or does not progress—and then, in the fullness of time, the blight is removed. Blight is not permanent, and the diminution in value of the houses which may or may not occur is likewise not permanent. That is the distinction between the blight provisions in the Bill and others that deal with permanent damage which may occur to properties.

7.45 pm

Mr. Rowlands: In the elongated process that the Minister is describing, what is permanent is that the householder will not be able to sell his property during the whole period. I chose to tie the blight provision to clause 44(4) and not to the more expansive provisions of clause 44(1) because I realised that clause 44(3) included a provision to lift the notices. Under clause 44(4), British Coal will serve notices twelvemonth after twelvemonth. Is the Minister saying that during the whole process of uncertainty about whether damage will occur, a poor householder will have to wait and that only on the ground of hardship will he be able to serve a blight notice or get British Coal to purchase his property?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: During the period of blight between the serving of a clause 44 notice and the eventual resolution of the issue, either by mining having taken place or by notice being served that it will not take place, if a

householder needs to move for a variety of reasons—and we can all instance examples—British Coal will purchase the house concerned or make up the difference between the blighted and unblighted values.

Mr. Lofthouse: Surely the Minister must appreciate this point. A person may be interested in purchasing a house in, for example, Darrington. If he is told that the owner has had two orders under clause 44 saying that there may be mining subsidence and if he then sees an identical house for sale further up the street which has not had a notice served on it, which property will he buy at true market value? He will buy the property that has not received the notice and the owner of the house that has received the notice will either not be able to sell it or will have to sell it at a far lower price.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If the householder can show, as he clearly could in the example given, that his house is less valuable, the provisions of the new clause come into play. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), the new clause enables the Secretary of State to make regulations to cover the more detailed eventualities. Hardship is a difficult concept to include in statute. There may be cases that are difficult to predict, so it is better to deal with them in regulations. At present, the practice of British Coal in purchasing properties does not extend to businesses, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood pointed out. If it was thought right to extend the provision to businesses, especially to small businesses which were used as an example, that would be done by regulation under the new clause.

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): We seem to have debated the new clause in relation to the definition of blight. There seems to be a contradiction between the Minister's definition and the need under the amendment for a regulation to have been submitted already. Would the Minister willingly purchase at market price a property that was either affected or likely to be affected by subsidence? He and anybody with sense would not purchase a property at the full market price if there is a likelihood of subsidence or if subsidence is already taking place. There must be an obligation on the perpetrator of any current or expected damage to compensate the owner by either making up the market price or purchasing the property.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, in the case that he quoted the owner could not sell the property for 12 months. I suggest that if a property will not move in a 12-month period, it is blighted and will not achieve the market price. No sane person in a mining community would buy a property that was listed to have mining operations under it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no difference between us on the definition of blight. It is obviously the case that a property which has received a notice that it may be mined under in the near future will usually be more difficult to sell than one that has not had such a notice. There is no dispute about that. However, as part of the Bill, we are considering whether and in what circumstances the British Coal Corporation should be obliged to purchase that property.

Mining blight is almost always a temporary phenomenon because in due course the mining either does or does not take place. If damage has occurred to the property, it is repaired and the property is restored to the satisfaction of the householder. So the matter is dealt with. We are left with the existing practice of British Coal to purchase properties, such as that instanced by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford, which are affected by subsidence damage if failure to do so would cause hardship because for good reasons the owner of the property has to sell it during the months or years of the notice. The owner may have to move away to retire, to find a job elsewhere, or due to ill health which may necessitate moving to a smaller property. In such cases British Coal will either buy the property or make up the difference. That is the practice at present. The new clause provides for that practice to be put into statute.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Do I understand that the Minister has finished?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) wish to press his amendment?

Mr. Rowlands: We must not take a negative decision in this House on the matter dealt with in the amendment because I hope that the common sense and logic expressed by me and so many of my hon. Friends about the need for provisions of a nature similar to that in the amendment will fall on sounder ears in another place. I hope that that will be so, and I shall therefore not press my amendment.

New Clause 3

COMPENSATION FOR CONSEQUENTIAL LOSSES OF SMALL FIRMS

'.—(1) Where at any time any property—

(a) which is used wholly or partly for the purposes of a small firm; and

(b) as respects which one or more notices have been or should have been given by the Corporation under section 44(1) below,

is affected by subsidence damage, this section shall apply as respects the period beginning with that time and ending with the discharge by the Corporation of their remedial obligation with respect to the damage.

(2) For each year or part of a year—

(a) which falls within that period; and

(b) in which any consequential loss resulting from the damage is suffered by the firm,

the Corporation shall be under an obligation to make to the firm a payment of such amount as would have been payable to the firm by way of damages in respect of that loss if the damage had been attributable to the negligence of the Corporation; and in determining the amount (if any) of such a payment regard shall be had to the rules of law relating to remoteness and the mitigation of losses.

(3) The Corporation shall not be liable to make a payment under this section unless, as soon as reasonably practicable after the first time—

(a) when the firm suffers any consequential loss resulting from the damage; or

(b) if later, when the firm has such knowledge as is mentioned in subsection (4) (read with subsection (5)) of section 3 above,

the firm gives notice of the loss to the Corporation.

(4) Where a notice is given under subsection (3) above, the Corporation may, by notice given to any person who is entitled to give a damage notice in respect of the subsidence

damage, elect to treat the notice under that subsection as if it were also a damage notice given by that person in respect of that damage.

(5) The Corporation shall not be liable to make a payment under this section except on a claim made by the firm within the period of twelve months beginning with the end of the year or part of a year to which the payment relates.

(6) A payment under this section shall carry interest at the applicable rate (if any) from the end of the period mentioned in subsection (5) above until payment.

(7) In this section—

"associated employer" shall be construed in accordance with section 153(4) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978;

"consequential loss" does not include—

(a) any loss for which provision is made by section 27(2) or (2A) above; or

(b) any loss resulting from subsidence damage as respects which the Corporation's remedial obligation is excluded by section 31(3) or 32(4) or (7) below;

"employee" has the meaning given by section 153(1) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978;

"small firm" means any person who, at the time when the property is affected by subsidence damage, is carrying on a business and satisfies the requirements of subsection (8) below;

"year" means a calendar year.

(8) A person satisfies the requirement of this subsection at any time if, at that time, the number of employees employed by him, added to the number of employees employed by any associated employer of his, does not exceed 20.

(9) The Secretary of State may by order substitute for the number of employees specified in subsection (8) above (whether as originally enacted or as previously amended under this subsection) such other number of employees as he thinks fit.'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 28, 13 to 17, 30, 31 and 35.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When we debated clause 29 in Committee, it was pointed out that treating subsidence damage to movable property as though it had arisen from British Coal's negligence would allow claims to be made for consequential loss. As a result, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out at the time, the Bill as considered by the Standing Committee was inconsistent in that it allowed claims for consequential loss when these arose from subsidence damage to movable property, but not when they arose from subsidence to buildings. I therefore undertook to reconsider the issue of consequential loss.

I remind the House that the Waddilove committee, which considered the matter, did not recommend that statutory provision should be made in respect of consequential loss arising from subsidence damage, except in specific instances such as crop loss payments to farmers and expenses incurred by householders who had to move home. It was not, therefore, the Government's intention to legislate to allow claims for consequential loss generally. However, it had escaped our attention that, in the case of movable property, such claims would be allowed.

Although the general idea of consequential loss is well known, it is nevertheless a concept that lacks precise definition. Unlike the case of damage to property, consequential loss depends on such factors as the nature of the business affected, the state of its order book, the availability of spare capacity, the duration of the damage, and scope for mitigation. It is hard for any business to assess its liabilities for consequential loss which it may cause in other businesses, given the uncertainties. That is offset for most businesses by the knowledge that a liability for consequential loss will arise only if they are negligent. But it would be much more difficult for British Coal to assess its liability for consequential loss arising from mining subsidence because subsidence is not negligence but part of its normal, day-to-day, lawful business operations.

A business can operate without being negligent; but British Coal cannot realistically operate without causing mining subsidence. Accordingly, there would be a serious risk that substantial quantities of otherwise economically extractable coal reserves might be sterilised simply on account of the uncertain scale of liability that might arise from claims for consequential loss. This consideration alone would point towards proceeding cautiously.

Another important point, however, is that British Coal is not acting negligently in carrying out mining operations. It is lawfully entitled to do so, in the public interest, in order to exploit a major energy resource. Where such mining damages property, the law requires the corporation to take remedial action and bear the expense. That is what the Bill is about. That is the case even if, for example, a developer erects a new commercial building in a mining area over mineable reserves of coal. He has in so doing created a new liability for British Coal—the liability to repair any subsidence damage to this new building arising from the mining of coal that it already owns. In a sense, one could describe this as a consequential loss for British Coal arising from the developer's activities—although in this situation the corporation has no entitlement to compensation for the increased cost of recovering those coal reserves or even for their sterilisation, if that is the consequence of the development.

There are some fundamental issues here, involving a conflict between the legitimate interests of business operations on the surface and the legitimate business operations under the surface of the same land by British Coal.

The House may have to return to this issue in future legislation, but for the moment I recognise that consequential loss experienced by business may give rise to hardship, and in such circumstances compensation would be appropriate.

Mr. Meale: Will the Minister clarify one point? I fully appreciate what is proposed in the new clause. I realise that the Minister is helping the business community, but what about the large businesses in the communities called local authorities? Will consequential loss by them be covered? Such costs ultimately fall on the ratepayers. Is the provision only for small businesses?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall come to the types of business that would be covered by consequential loss, but I confirm to the hon. Gentleman something which he already knows. There is no provision in statute for consequential loss, and certainly local authorities are not covered.

British Coal aims to deal sympathetically with such hardship cases. To give an easy example, if a corner shop loses trade while subsidence damage is being repaired, the sole proprietor could well experience hardship. On the

other hand, if a supermarket which operates in a mining area but is part of a regional or national chain loses trade in similar circumstances, the proprietors of such a geographically diverse business are unlikely to experience hardship.

8 pm

Hardship in this context would be difficult to define in legislative terms. As a proxy, we have prepared a new clause which allows compensation to be paid to small firms which experience consequential loss as a result of damage to their business premises. Amendments to clause 29 treat similarly consequential loss arising from damage to movable property.

Because consequential loss is likely to increase with time, the clause would require the small firm to notify British Coal as soon as reasonably practicable after the loss is first experienced so that the corporation can suggest any mitigating action and the precise circumstances of the loss can be understood by the two parties to the claim to minimise the risk of subsequent disputes.

Clearly, all reasonable steps to mitigate the extent of consequential loss should be taken as quickly as possible, and subsection (2) refers explicitly to the common law rules that apply. Notification of individual property owners under the provisions of clause 44 will alert the firm to the possibility of subsidence damage and therefore will assist in planning mitigating action. The serving of such individual notices on business premises will also remind British Coal of the possibility of consequential loss arising from mining operations. In all the circumstances, we think it right to restrict claims for consequential loss to properties for which such notices have been or should have been given.

The definition of "small firm" is important. We have borrowed it from employment legislation and have set a ceiling of 20 employees, although we propose to vary that number by order and provide for that in the Bill.

New clause 3 and the amendments to clause 29 establish a clear basis on which small firms, those most likely to experience hardship, could claim compensation for consequential loss arising from damage to business premises or movable property used by such businesses. It represents a sensible advance on present law. The wider questions connected with consequential loss will need to be looked at in connection with future legislation.

Mr. Barron: I intend to be brief. We welcome new clause 3, which arises directly from amendments to clause 29 that we tabled in Committee. It deals with the question of compensation for consequential loss to movable property, but not fixed property. We gave as an example a dairy farmer.

New clause 3 is a brave attempt to strike a balance. It addresses the question of how far coal mining is prejudiced by any losses that may be suffered on the surface—not in terms of property, which is easily definable, but in circumstances of consequential loss or of contracts that may be held by anybody working above any areas that are being mined. We are pleased that the Government have taken our arguments on board.

The Minister said that the Government had borrowed the definition of small firms, which was firms of not more than 20 people. We hope that they will be flexible and prepared to vary the number by order to include bigger firms. We look forward to seeing how the proposed new clause operates and whether it brings better, more effective justice to people and businesses, however small, that are affected by mining activities.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 2

Advice Centres

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall, after consultation with the Corporation, ensure that the Corporation shall establish advice centres within three months of the commencement of the provisions of this Act.

(2) The advice centres shall offer, free of charge, advice to all claimants in need of legal or technical advice on any matter relating to coal subsidence.

(3) The advice centres shall issue guidelines on the making of claims under regulations made under the provisions of this Act.

(4) All reasonable expenses of the advice centres will be met by the Secretary of State.

(5) The Corporation shall submit to the Secretary of State an annual report on the working of the advice centres to be established under the provision of this section.'.—*[Mr. Barron.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Barron: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

On Second Reading on 4 February we had a thorough debate on advice centres. In Committee we tabled a comprehensive new clause about advice, but unfortunately neither the Minister nor Tory Members supported it. We were sorry about that, because even the Government's White Paper on subsidence half-recommended that there should be advice centres or, at least, one advice centre. Many people have been involved in other organisations, such as the Consortium of Authorities Liaising on Subsidence, and have supported advice centres.

Despite the improvements to the position of claimants that will result from the Bill, particularly when tonight's amendments are included, there needs to be a shift in favour of the claimant at an early stage. From past practice, it is clear that it is not good enough to rely on British Coal to tell a claimant of his or her rights. People need advice before they become claimants.

After the issue of notices about the likelihood of mining beneath a property, people will naturally want to take advice on what should happen next. Their neighbours will also have been notified that British Coal may in the near future need to undermine their property. It is not enough to ask people to go to a solicitor or an agent who must be paid from the claimants' pockets. Only successful claimants can have their expenses reimbursed. Many people may wish to seek advice when they receive the initial notice, whether or not they later become claimants. The Bill does not respond to their need.

As I said on Second Reading and as we have said consistently over the years when we have debated these issues at different conferences, particularly in the midlands coalfield, and when we have issued press releases, free, impartial expert advice is essential. The only way to achieve that is through an advice centre. We have won the debates on these issues, but lost the votes.

I do not expect us to press the issue to a vote again tonight. The other place may wish to consider what the Department of Energy, the Select Committee on Energy and other bodies have said about what happens in the initial stages of possible coal mining subsidence damage

[Mr. Barron]

and how an individual protects his interests against the vested interests of British Coal. Thank goodness British Coal must now notify the individual that the property may be undermined, but it still has a vested interest in not paying compensation for damages or expenses arising from claims, whether or not they are successful.

There is still an imbalance. Has the Minister considered further the arguments that we put in Committee? I hope that they will be put in another place if we are not successful tonight in getting the Minister's commitment to consider the issue again.

We had a long debate in Committee about the location of a "national" advice centre. Conservative Members asked why it should be in one particular place. The obvious place was, and still is, in the north Nottinghamshire coalfield in view of the number of subsidence cases there, but that is not the only area for which the centre would operate. Many agents in that area would make a good living from coal mining subsidence. Some of them have become millionaires in a few years because of the circumstances in that area. Many people in my constituency and elsewhere correspond with those agents because they are expert at winning justice from British Coal when a person's property has been damaged by coal mining subsidence.

That is not a geographical argument. We should have a national base so that people would know who to contact or would be referred to it by a local advice service that may not give advice on coal mining damage. People could write to the centre and receive expert advice without having to go to an agent or a similar organisation and put money up front. If they never had a successful claim, they would have to pay that money out of their own purse even though they had been notified of the likelihood of damage to their property by the British Coal Corporation.

I ask the Minister to reconsider this matter, if he has not done so already, so that people can obtain advice without having to confront the British Coal Corporation, with all the money it has to fight its corner.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottinghamshire, South): The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is right. We had an extensive debate on this matter in Committee. Like all those who lose the vote, the Opposition always imagine that they won the argument. They did not win the argument, nor did they win the vote. As has been pointed out, they were only asking for one national advice centre. We had the impression that it should preferably be in Mansfield, although I acknowledge that the report of the Committee proceedings refers only to Nottinghamshire. We shall not fall out about that.

At that time we were talking about a team of qualified heaven-knows-who's. It is a great shame that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) is not here today, as he defended the poverty-stricken barristers who were offering their services at a fraction of the cost of all the other experts who had been trotted out.

In Committee, I said that the clause had a superficial attraction, and it is true that there is a superficial attraction to the clause before us today. However, I still do not agree with it, and I will not support it. I did not approve then and I do not approve now of yet another centre to add to the multiplicity of centres. I am quite certain that with careful thought and discussion between the Department of Energy and British Coal, given the relevant clauses in the Bill, the problem can be solved sensibly, cost-effectively and with the interests of my constituents as much as anyone else's well covered.

Organisations such as the citizens advice bureaux, the advice centres of district councils and various solid fuel showrooms can all provide information. When the CABs were mentioned in Committee, the hon. Member for Rother Valley commented that the CAB funding in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) had promptly been withdrawn by the local authority. That decision is a comment on the priorities of Labour authorities. It is sad that a CAB should have its funding withdrawn. There are less important matters that a local council could discontinue if there was a choice between that and funding an important organisation such as the CAB.

8.15 pm

In Committee the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) made a valid point. He said:

"The scale of the problem is great"—

to give him his due, he gave credit to the Bill—

"as is the scale of the change to legislation proposed in the Bill."

I agree totally with the hon. Gentleman. He went on to say:

"it is unthinkable that the changes to legislation being discussed in the Committee could be implemented without an independent source of advice to property owners and householders."

I agree that the advice must be independent. That is why I view with some puzzlement the wording of the original clause and of the new clause, which does not specify independence of advice. That is a problem, and it is why I do not like the new clause. I should prefer that British Coal made a funding contribution to centres not run by British Coal, or to a local authority so that the advice would be independent. The new clause will not deliver that.

I am anxious that my constituents get good advice. I do my best and my city council does its best. On this issue, I am at one with the hon. Member for Mansfield. I hope that I am not getting the hon. Member into difficulties merely because there is cross-party agreement on some of these matters. The hon. Gentleman said in Committee;

"The most worrying aspect of the problem is that in Nottinghamshire large numbers of claimants have used coal mining subsidence agents. Existing legislation has shoved people in that general direction".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 14 March 1991; c. 263-64.]

The hon. Gentleman is right, but Opposition Members would have to agree that we are now in a totally different ball park. The Bill does away with many of the problems that have bedevilled all hon. Members in recent years. The Bill deals with those problems sufficiently.

Opposition Members, whether they like to admit it or not, accepted our criticisms of their one national advice centre. We mentioned that many hon. Members faced these problems and they accepted that there was no point in having one centre, convenient though it might be, in Mansfield. Lo and behold, the Opposition have come up today with a new clause which proposes a number of centres but does not specify how many. I can imagine them making a meal of this if, heaven forbid, they were ever in government.

However, they have changed one thing from the old clause—they have realised that by the time they have logged up any number of highly qualified engineers all sitting around twiddling their thumbs waiting for someone to seek their advice, it would be an unfair imposition on British Coal. So what did they do? They changed subsection (4) so that the cost is now to be met by the Secretary of State. That is a switch from British Coal having to pick up the bill. I have a feeling that they are trying to create another local authority bottomless pit. That is what it is all about. It would be a bottomless pit of funding for centres in mining areas.

Every member of the Committee knew that this was a good Bill. It is not any worse without the clause—if I thought that it was, I would vote with the Opposition. There is enough in the Bill to satisfy my constituents and I am more than happy to accept the view taken by the Government in Committee—I presume that they will take the same view today—not to accept the new clause.

Mr. Benn: The issue is not whether this is a good Bill but whether the people who need to take advantage of its provisions know their rights. Without disrespect to the Minister—I have occupied a post in his Department—I noticed the enormous care with which he read the briefing provided by his officials. He could not even look up because he had to get it absolutely right. Many Ministers are in that position, but they have legal advice behind them. The people who suddenly receive notice that British Coal may undermine their house or village panic because they do not know their rights.

It is no criticism of the Bill that it is so complicated. Indeed, good Bills sometimes have to be complicated to remedy what is wrong with the old legislation. Nobody doubts that the Bill improves the old legislation. Paragraph 4 of schedule 7 happened to catch my eye as I was listening to the previous speech. It states:

"any unreasonable withholding of consent to the execution of preventive works under section 4(1)(a) of the 1957 Act shall have effect as an unreasonable withholding of consent to the execution of such works under paragraph (a) of subsection (2)".

What hope have pensioners who have lived in the same house all their lives of making sense of such language? They have no hope at all. To remedy that problem, one must not only understand the law but ensure that those who need the law's protection know their rights. They can go to a solicitor or an agent, and some people do so. In my consultations with British Coal in Chesterfield, I was informed that the agents sometimes make the process take longer because of the complexity of the correspondence. Sometimes people resist going to an agent because they think that he will make more than they will out of the operation.

People need advise, and to make fun of whether there should be one advice centre or many is absurd. Advice is needed in the areas where people's properties will be undermined when that undermining occurs. That varies from coalfield to coalfield and from seam to seam. It is absurd to say that it will mean a bottomless pit of expenditure, when all we ask is that people should be able to take avantage of the rights that the Government are giving them under the Bill. I cannot imagine anyone whose house or business is threatened by British Coal's mining operations wanting to waste money. Such people want to find out their rights, take advantage of the Bill's provisions, have the matter put right and put it behind them if they can. What possible motive could they have for wasting time on such a matter?

The Bill is so precisely drafted that, once it is enacted, the rights of claim will have to be granted. If people who make claims are not eligible, they will be dismissed. The Bill does not represent an endless right to time-wasting consultations. This issue contrasts sharply with all the lectures on consumer rights and the right to choose. Surely the basic right to choose is to know one's rights when they are threatened by a public authority which, as the Minister said, is legally engaged in excavating for coal reserves which, unhappily, happen to be under one's house or village.

The amendment is modest. Any hon. Member who has had, as I have, anxious constituents coming to see them, or who has visited areas where subsidence has occurred, will have seen the desperation on people's faces when they discover that the homes that they have bought are subsiding, with splits in the walls and gaps in the roof or the road, or the disconnection of mains supplies. Invershall special school for mentally handicapped children in Chesterfield, which I have just opened and which has just raised money for new facilities, has discovered that one of the seams of the Markham colliery would threaten that school.

It is no good speaking as though we were a convention of lawyers examining the matter. We are all lay persons discussing the drafting of the legislation, but we can speak confidently about how the Bill will be seen by those who need its provisions. We are representatives, not legal experts. I hope that the Minister will recognise that the amount of money involved would not only be trifling but might save British Coal and others from time-wasting negotiations with agents and solicitors who do not have the interests that the promoters of the new clause or British Coal might have. British Coal also wants to dispose of such matters quickly. It does not want them to drag on for months or even years with people using the services of agents. It wants a quick settlement.

The Bill gives a clear statement of British Coal's obligations and I have no doubt that it will wish to discharge them quickly and effectively. People need advice so that they can claim immediately. By the expeditious discharge of claimants' duties and rights, we can save public money. I hope that the Minister and the officials listening so attentively to the debate will reflect again. The new clause will be a minor addition which, if carried, will make the Bill real to the millions of people whom it intends to help and will not handicap the discharge of its provisions.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): It gives me great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), as I referred in my maiden speech to his contributions as Member for Bristol, South-East. I now refer to a number of locations that he will readily identify because they are in and around Bristol.

In Committee, I criticised the fact that the amendment referred to first one centre. I do not believe that an advice centre would be warranted for the Bristol, north Somerset and south Gloucestershire area. I use the word "area" not only because I refer to my constituency but because I refer to the right hon. Gentleman's former constituency and that of the Minister. It is also your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The area has, on different occasions,

[Mr. Robert Hayward]

been mined for coal and some houses have been affected. I am sure that advice centres are not necessary and that people in my area would refer to centres based in south Wales—in Newport or Gwent, for instance. The vast majority of my constituents would not go to advice centres but would seek advice on subsidence, as they currently do, from other sources that are readily to hand.

As Committee members heard ad nauseam, I am currently dealing with cases in Kingswood and Hanham, on which I and other people are providing advice. That is how, even under the amended legislation, that advice would be provided. The Bill makes substantial improvements to existing legislation, particularly as a result of the amendments on arbitration which the Government accepted and which protect those pursuing subsidence problems.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) says that the arbitration scheme will provide protection. Yes it will, but it will not provide advice. The arbiter will be required to adjudicate only on a dispute between the claimant and British Coal; he will not be able to give advice to the claimant or to British Coal.

Mr. Hayward: I accept that point, but I was saying that, in terms of strengthening the Bill, the arbitration right is the pinnacle of an overall pyramid of support given to individuals in those circumstances. I also asked in Committee—and I do not believe that the matter has been dealt with—why we should have free advice centres in this sector when we do not have them in relation to the Housing Defects Act 1984 or the right-to-buy legislation and other areas affecting large numbers of people. Advice centres are available in one form or another—why should they not cover this legislation as well as other legislation?

8.30 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Might it not be that people may require advice on the procedures leading to the very arbitration that the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) says is worth while? Might they not want advice on whether to seek to make use of the arbitration procedure and some of the cases that they should put to arbitration?

Mr. Hayward: Yes, they could. However, as I said in Committee, since I have been a Member of Parliament—eight years—in the subsidence cases with which I have dealt under what is, compared with the Bill before us, totally inadequate legislation, advice has always been available to my constituents. If one follows the argument in terms of the legislation and the provision of advice centres, why should we not provide advice centres for every other piece of legislation that we pass in the House? We would have a myriad advice centres down every high street, replacing the current myriad building society outlets in every high street. We received clarification from the Minister in response to our debate on the subject in Committee. He said that he accepted the points that had been made and agreed with those of us who said that it was not necessary to have advice centres, but he made it clear that British Coal intended to provide a series of leaflets and videos available to people to whom individuals would naturally turn.

For those reasons, along with those already enumerated by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), I believe that it is not necessary to accept the new clause.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am surprised about two issues. The first relates to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). I believe that he would think differently if he had had the opportunity, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) and I have had, to investigate in some depth the problems of subsidence and its administration in the Nottinghamshire district. In 1985 or 1986, members of the Select Committee on Energy and I went to Nottinghamshire, to Mansfield, to investigate the issues. We found that agents there were operating in a professional way—some of them were ex-Coal Board employees and some of them finished up in gaol. At that time, British Coal's total budget for subsidence, as shown in the annual report, was about £215 million. Some £200 million of that had been spent in Nottingham.

Last year, when my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central and I went to Nottingham, we had a chance to question the agents. Two of the agents, former Coal Board employees, did not leave British Coal on retirement or redundancy terms when they were in their middle fifties or sixties to take up consultancy posts, which seems to be the habit of some British Coal management these days. They left British Coal when they were young men. I asked them why. One of them said that he liked tennis and wanted more time to watch it. The other one was a bit more honest and said that he wanted to set up his own business because he saw that there was potential for it. He was right, because he and the other agents—I am not referring to the ones in gaol—finished up riding about in Rolls-Royces. There must have been a reasonable rake-off from the £200 million of the Coal Board's budget.

If any hon. Members should support the new clause, it should be those from Nottingham. Some of the people whose properties were, unfortunately, damaged had to rely on the agents and hope that they would receive the correct advice. However, the agents did not do too badly out of it. If the new clause were accepted, it would go a long way to cutting out many of the problems. If ever there was a need for advice centres anywhere, it is in Nottingham.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Let us be clear on one point. Nobody is seeking to justify some of the outrageous activities that went on among agents under the old legislation. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) should look at the new clause, which my hon. Friends and I believe is unnecessary in the light of the Bill before us. It is in the context of the Bill that we now say that formal advice centres are not needed. We are not saying that advice is not necessary, but there are plenty of ways of providing it. However, we should set the matter in the context of the Bill, which protects our constituents.

Mr. Lofthouse: I would not for one moment suggest that the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) would support the jiggery-pokery that went on in the early 1980s. The hon. Gentleman says that he does not feel that advice centres are necessary under the Bill. Perhaps the Department does not feel that they are necessary, but that was not always the case.

The report of the Select Committee on Energy, which the House ordered to be printed on 17 July 1990 and which deals with mining subsidence, states, in paragraph 22—and I am certain that my hon. Friend the Minister for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) well remembers this:

"In its discussion paper of 1990 on dispute procedures, the Department of Energy raised the possibility of a Subsidence Advice Centre, staffed by chartered surveyors and solicitors with experience of subsidence damage, which would aim to provide advice to those who were dissatisfied with the way in which British Coal had dealt with their case.'"

Many other witnesses before the Committee supported the Department's views and, arising out of that evidence, paragraph 24 of the Committee's report states:

"Nevertheless, we support the Department of Energy's suggestion of an independent Subsidence Advice Centre on an experimental basis."

My second surprise resulted from the fact that the Bill did not contain that provision when the Department had been suggesting it. If that is the case, what is the argument of the Minister and his colleagues against the new clause?

Some of the agents are still operating in Nottingham—fortunately, my district and those around it do not have that problem. The only way to put an end to that practice is through the new clause. I hope that the Minister and his colleagues will give serious consideration to it. The Select Committee believes that the new clause is necessary, and if anyone had had the privilege, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central and I had, of listening to the witnesses and researching the matter in depth, I am sure that he would agree that there was a need for the new clause and advice centres.

Mr. Meale: I have been greatly saddened to hear some of the comments of Conservative Members. I had thought that we were all at one on the need to clear up this problem once and for all with this Bill. I was particularly surprised by what the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) said. He knows about the despair that subsidence has caused and is continuing to cause people in his area, and he should not have made light of it; that was beneath the belt. Thousands of properties in his constituency continue to be damaged by this problem and that damage is getting worse all the time.

All we are proposing is an advice centre. The new clause does not stipulate whether it should be a national centre or whether there should be one in every coalfield area or in every district council area that includes mines. We want only a place where people can get advice—although the hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) said that a centre was not needed in his constituency. Perhaps he thinks that a citizens advice bureau is the answer, but a centre such as the one that we propose would still be useful because on cases in his constituency CABs could refer to such a centre, wherever it might be. That is the whole purpose of setting one up.

The centre is not to be a centre of excellence for lawyers, solicitors, architects and surveyors; it is to be a place to which people can go for proper advice. I have the highest regard for CABs and local authorities, but people should not go to them for advice on this matter because they are not experts on it. To refer cases to such bodies would be to repeat what has already gone wrong: self-proclaimed experts have set themselves up to give advice.

People should be given advice free of charge. This Bill provides the opportunity of giving them that advice for as little as £50, plus VAT, which is now running at 17·5 per cent. If a person is badly advised on making a claim, he may be involved in further expenses when pushing his claim to a successful conclusion. Cases which are not won or which go to arbitration may also involve additional costs, which shows that people need good advice from a centre of this sort.

8.45 pm

People ask where the money is to come from and whether the Secretary of State can afford it. Of course he can. The sum of £300 million has already been added to the price of coal that is produced in this country for the sole purpose of paying for subsidence damage claims. If the money had been set aside in a separate account accumulating interest, as it should have been, it would have provided hundreds of millions more pounds, thereby avoiding these difficulties. In some cases, the money has been used to close mines. If it can be used for that, it can certainly be used for the purpose that we propose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) rightly mentioned coal mining agents. Unless we set up an advice centre to give advice to people suffering from the horrendous difficulties of subsidence, the problem with agents will continue. Nothing in the Bill would curb the activities of these agents—quite the reverse. We must take this opportunity to set up a centre that will give people good advice on the most important matter in their lives—their homes. If we do not, we shall push them further in the direction of the so-called experts, some of whom know little more than how to read a slide rule.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman thought that I was treating the new clause in a lighthearted way, but I shall not withdraw the compliments that I paid him on what he said.

If a person pays a fee to a solicitor, he at least has some protection in law. That should give the hon. Gentleman pause for thought about his demands for free advice. What happens to the claimant if that free advice is found to be inadequate?

Mr. Meale: My constituency is full of solicitors who have advised thousands of people with their claims. It has cost those people on average more than £1,000 per household, and most of their claims have been turned down. Many solicitors have used the legal aid system, up to a maximum £1,500 or £2,000, depending on the case, to advise people wrongly. The result is that the legal aid system has been stripped of the money—a bad system.

This is why we need an advice centre. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) pointed out, it would be cost-effective. British Coal should not be involved in legal disputes all the time. This Bill will allow agents the same freedom that they have enjoyed before. It is no good the hon. Member for Nottingham, South saying, to use his unfortunate terminology, that we would be dropping local authority money down a huge pit. British Coal's job is to dig and sell coal, not to fight legal cases.

Some years ago, when British Coal had a different attitude to this problem, its estates department in Nottinghamshire employed about six people, with four secretaries. Today it employs more than 50 advisers, architects and surveyors, and many more outside consultants, with a whole department of secretarial support. And the cost of all that is being added to the cost of digging coal in the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

[Mr. Meale]

People should not be dragged by their ears by unscrupulous agents who would like clients to make claims because they know that ultimately they will recover their own costs. Frequently, agents whose cases have hit hurdles have returned to constituents asking for another £500 so as to put together several cases and return to the courts to fight one test case. That is all nonsense——

Mr. Hayward: By how many people would the new clause reduce the number of people working on this matter in the estates department; and how many people would be employed in the advice centres to which the hon. Gentleman refers?

Mr. Meale: First, if the right approach had been adopted, there might not have been any need for the Bill. Secondly, I think that the new clause would lead to a considerable reduction of problems in the coalfield. The issue is whether my constituents and those of other hon. Members are being correctly advised on whether they have a valid claim that should be pursued in the courts. The purpose of the proposed legislation is to provide a system of arbitration that will reduce the number of claims that otherwise would be decided by the courts. An advice centre would enable potential claimants to receive proper advice and thereby ensure that they were not dragged down paths leading to litigation to the benefit of surveyors, agents and, in many instances, solicitors. The Bill could produce a beano for solicitors and surveyors, and we must be careful to ensure that that is not the result of its being placed on the statute book.

Many people do not know what is going on. It is all very well for Conservative Members to say that it will be easy under the proposed legislation for people clearly to understand what they should do. It has been said that they will have only to pop along to their local authority and pick up a leaflet that will tell them exactly how to proceed. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield said, that is nonsense. When most ordinary people read our legislation, they consider it to be gobbledegook; they cannot understand it. The same can be said of the forms that they are asked to complete, whether they are handed them by local authority officials or by the staff of CABs.

People need advice and they should not be led into spending significant sums to obtain advice from solicitors or agents. We are legislating to overcome a problem that has had a considerable effect on people's lives in coal-mining areas. We must ensure that a system is put in place that enables them to receive honest and decent advice that will assist them in pursuing their rights. I am not saying that the Government should be prepared to hurl loads of money into a bottomless pit. Money is available, and in any event we are talking about a pittance when it is set against the global sum involved under the present system. We should not agree to the enactment of legislation without providing a system for people to obtain the advice that they deserve.

Mr. Illsley: I shall not detain the House long in supporting the new clause. I reiterate the argument of my right hon. and hon. Friends that there is clearly a need for an advice centre. We are introducing new legislation, but the average man in the street's understanding of it will be no greater than his knowledge of the legislation that preceded it. Under the old legislation, he had to seek advice before pursuing a claim. His position will be the same under the proposed legislation, for he will still have to seek advice. He will have to contend with time limits and other requirements.

Members who represent mining areas deal with case after case of mining subsidence in which people are in dispute with British Coal. Many of those people do not understand how to make a claim. It became clear that most of the members of the Committee that considered the Bill were unsure of the time-limit provisions. It is hoped, however, that the Bill will settle many of the complications. It is obvious that many of our constituents need clear and independent advice. At present, they have the options of an estate agent, a surveyor or a solicitor. These people are professionals and they charge professional fees. In other words, they are costly to the claimant or to British Coal.

It is unfortunate that not all the professionals have relevant qualifications. The average solicitor who practises in the high street will have no knowledge of mining subsidence. He will have even less knowledge of mining engineering. If claimants seek advice from some of the professionals, they will receive bad advice. Many solicitors will merely employ others and thereby add to the costs. Many advisers are unqualified. For want of a better term, they are cowboys. They saw a niche in the market, they filled it and they made a decent living.

Many advisers have a clear interest in prolonging claims so that they can make as much money as possible out of them. In Committee I referred to a constituent who negotiated himself the greater part of a claim with British Coal. However, he also employed an estate agent. My constituent became frustrated in the course of pursuing his claim and accordingly arrived at a settlement with British Coal. He received X thousands of pounds in the sale of the property. When the agent was informed that his services were no longer required because the claim had been settled, the agent said that he would settle his fee on the basis of the settlement that he could have arrived at with British Coal and not on the actual settlement. If that is not a waste of public money and an example of money being thrown into a bottomless pit, I do not know what is.

As I have said, ordinary people have little experience of reading legislation and understanding it. Many of them have difficulties in completing forms and submitting claims to British Coal. Many people cannot afford independently to obtain advice from estate agents and surveyors.

The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) said that people in his constituency would not need advice on subsidence. He explained that mining in the area that he represents was discontinued a long time ago. The hon. Gentleman should know that I have dealt with and assisted old miners in the St. Paul's area of Bristol who have sought compensation. He might be surprised when he learns of the extent of the need for advice in north Somerset and the St. Paul's district of Bristol.

The hon. Member for Kingswood referred to the growth of housing advice centres. We already have housing advice centres. Advice on right-to-buy legislation will usually be obtained from a local authority that is dealing with the sale of property, so that that need for advice is filled. Solicitors who undertake conveyancing and have a specific knowledge of it can also deal with right-to-buy legislation. However, the average conveyancing solicitor will have no knowledge of mining subsidence.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) talked about solid fuel showrooms. They are funded by British Coal, and any advice they offer can hardly be regarded as independent or relevant. They exist only to sell solid fuel.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Watch it. The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) has at least 10 O-levels. He has an 11th perhaps in subsidence, but goodness knows how.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Those who support the new clause say that they wish to ensure that people will be advised on how to go about making a claim. That is all very well, but the real work begins after that stage. That is why we are not enthusiastic about the clause. Technical advice will not be required initially. Subsequently, a surveyor will be needed to establish the size of the claim. The new clause will not redress half the grievances to which the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) have referred. Opposition Members are entirely missing the point in speaking in support of the clause.

Mr. Illsley: As I think someone said, if I have 10 O-levels, what am I doing in this place? Subsection (2) provides:

"The advice centres shall offer, free of charge, advice to all claimants in need of legal or technical advice on any matter relating to coal subsidence."

The clause is not restricted to the making of a claim. New clause 2 covers legal and technical advice.

I was referring to the Select Committee report from which my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) quoted. I shall quote two lines to which he did not refer:

"Such a Centre would not attempt mediation but would give expert advice to claimants on their rights and advise them on their best course of action . . . The Department stressed the need for the Centre to be 'quite independent of British Coal'."

Time and again we have seen statements that any advice centre should be independent. The Select Committee went on to recommend that advice centres should be set up.

The advice centre could have available all the information on mining subsidence such as mining plans and records. In Standing Committee we debated the idea of a register. Perhaps the advice centres could build up such a register. There has been substantial debate on where the advice centre should be located. As South Yorkshire already has the South Yorkshire mining advisory service, which is funded by the local authorities, there is no reason why that should not become a national mining advisory centre for the rest of the country.

9 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I was interested in the hon. Gentleman's latter comment. Can he tell the House what the advisory centre in South Yorkshire does? Does it take claims from claimants and process them through to completion, or does it just advise people to get a solicitor or a surveyor to take up the case?

Mr. Illsley: It does not advise them to get a solicitor to take up the case. It provides advice. That was a simplistic response to a simplistic question, "What does an advice centre do?" The advice centre gives advice to local authorities or to anyone else who needs advice about the geology and mining in the area.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has not answered my question properly. Does it take claims right through to completion? New clause 2 tells us that that is what the advice centre does.

Mr. Illsley: I do not think that the advice centre takes claims through to completion. New clause 2 states:

"The advice centres shall issue guidelines on the making of claims"

and shall offer legal and technical advice.

It does not say that an advice centre will take a claim from an individual and pursue it with British Coal, although there is no reason why the advice centre for which we are asking should not do that if it were given that responsibility.

Mr. Meale: An organisation called COALS—the Consortium of Authorities Liaising on Subsidence—has just produced a report which shows that 33,500 people in the area have properties which may have been damaged by subsidence. In Standing Committee, the Minister said that thousands of claims which were disallowed because of the six-year rule for mining having ceased under those properties could now be reviewed. That is a legal and technical point. Many people in the area in which COALS operates need advice on that. Such advice is not freely available or necessarily understood by solicitors in the area. It takes an expert who understands the legislation to give such advice.

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend makes his own point. I conclude by repeating that we need an advice centre. We have one in South Yorkshire, and we do not have the same problems that exist in north Nottinghamshire where agents have been taking money fraudulently. That goes some way towards showing that the advice centre in South Yorkshire has removed that problem and that South Yorkshire is better equipped than north Nottinghamshire to deal with such claims.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): One of the main objections from Conservative Members to an advice centre seems to be the objection to the free provision of advice, instead of advice purchased from solicitors and others who are assumed to be expert, in that legal action could be taken if that advice turned out to be wrong. I do not agree. A great deal of advice that is freely available is not immune from legal action and is often found to be of considerable value. In the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), there is a citizens advice bureau, an unemployed workers' centre and a law centre that all provide advice and, if pressed, might have to deal with some aspects of coal mining subsidence. However, this is not within these bodies' areas of expertise.

There are also plenty of solicitors and many agents who take up coal mining cases. At my surgeries in Chesterfield, which is at the centre of a wide area, people are much less likely to complain about the citizens advice bureaux or the centres for unemployed workers, or the law centres, than about solicitors. They wonder whether they should complain against agents, or against agents together with the corporation, acting under some kind of sweetheart agreement that must be broken through. This new clause would make provision for invaluable advice.

Hon. Members asked where the advice centres would be located. We were told that advice might not be available in the Bristol area if a centre was established in Wales. Presumably the constituents of my hon. Friend the member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) would be provided for,

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

as there are massive subsidence problems in their area. That does not seem to me to be any argument against this proposal. So far as the people of Bristol are concerned, presumably the problem of the lack of immediate discussions as the basis of advice could be overcome.

Many people fill in forms stating in detail the problems that they experience. Such people receive information and advice on the basis of the details provided, and sometimes outworkers are available to deal with specific problems. In many areas, detailed forms are submitted with a view to obtaining various types of information, and securing various types of expertise. Approaches are made in this way to the local government ombudsman and the local land registry. Why should not an advice centre operate on the same basis? A physical presence is not the only possibility.

I shall conclude by repeating a point that I made in an earlier intervention: that advice centres would have a valuable role to play in connection with the arbitration procedure for which this legislation provides. The creation of an arbitration procedure is an important advance, but we need to know more about when it will be triggered. People pushing for its use need expert advice. They need to know whether they are likely to benefit by going down that road, rather than by accepting some other procedure.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I want to tell the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) that we already have advice centres, but they are not nearly good enough. I refer to the surgeries that Members of Parliament hold on Saturday mornings. Members are not qualified as surveyors, architects and solicitors. They must call for expert advice. For years, I have had a bellyful of dealing at my Saturday surgeries with mining subsidence problems. They hold everything else up. An elderly lady may have a problem that she thinks is as high as a mountain, but, for me, dealing with it may involve merely a telephone call. But mining subsidence problems get in the way even of those cases. We are seriously considering asking the Government to tell the corporation in no uncertain terms that there must be provision for proper advice surgeries.

There has been mention, especially by Opposition Members, of the crooks. I know plenty of them. I am not talking only about solicitors or agents, but about board officials, too. They have gone down the line—and good luck to them. That is where they should be, for what they have done to our constituents.

When someone goes to his Member of Parliament's surgery with a subsidence problem, it is because the agent has given his advice, and the board has said, "We reject this claim out of hand." The constituent therefore tells his Member of Parliament, "You are my last resort." What do I do? I send the case to the Under-Secretary of State—and he sends it back to the board. It is a vicious circle.

I am a bit disappointed because, in Committee, one Conservative Member supported the idea of advice centres, but he has been burned off and is not present in the Chamber today. However, after the next general election he will probably be able to find a job as a legal adviser at one of the centres that will be set up if the Government do not. He can be assured of a job when he loses his seat at the next election because he knows all the problems, and spoke about them in Committee. He went along with us then, but other Conservative Members have let the side down. They let down the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) in Committee—and again today, because they stopped him supporting us this afternoon.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) comes into the Chamber from time to time, in the same way that he attended the Committee from time to time. It galled me when I read in a Derbyshire paper that the hon. Member for Amber Valley was going to do it all. He said to himself, "I shall get on the Committee for a start, and then I'll show them." He did not show them, because he did not damn well attend the Committee. He was hardly ever there. When he was there, all he did was to snipe at the Opposition's proposals for changing or adding to the Bill.

Mr. Andy Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: Just a minute—I am on my feet. The hon. Gentleman will ask a question if I say he can, because Mr. Deputy Speaker gave me the Floor.

Constituents come to my surgery who are totally illiterate. They cannot help that—they were born like it. *[Laughter.]* What a lot they are, on the Conservative Benches. I am talking about a serious problem and all that Conservative Members can do is laugh—a serious problem about someone who might be illiterate and who owns a property that has been damaged by coal mining, and who needs advice. Conservative Members think that is a big joke. That is the Tories, through and through.

Mr. Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: No, I will not give way now. The hon. Gentleman has flipping well upset me, so he can sit down.

Mr. Stewart: I would not want to upset the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman will not be able to do so after the next general election, because I shall have retired. Nor will he be able to get a job in one of the advice centres that we will set up after we have won the next general election.

The important point is that constituents who have that problem need proper advice. For years, they have been kicked from pillar to post, and all the fiddling has been going on.

Mr. Stewart: We agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman may agree, but he does not understand the seriousness of the situation. He wants to talk to my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield and he needs to talk to me. We have had real problems in my constituencies. It has been a nightmare. I have had a bellyful. I have had enough and I do not want any more.

We want a Bill that will sort the problem out so that it does not go on for ever and a day. The advice centre is one of the steps that should be taken to deal with this problem.

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: He ain't half pressurising me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I might as well give him one tick.

9.15 pm

Mr. Stewart: I thank the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) for outlining what is a fact—my constituency is half a mile down the road from the hon.

Gentleman's and, like him, I have hundreds of people coming to ask me for advice. At the moment, if there were advice centres—disregarding this improved Bill—what could they achieve? What could they advise our constituents? Very little, because there has been no way to resolve disputes unless one went to the Lands Tribunal, and we both know how expensive that was. Under the new Bill we shall have arbitration.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman is talking a load of rubbish, just as he did in Committee. We have not got the Bill yet and we do not know how it will work.

Mr. Stewart: We soon will have.

Mr. Haynes: I am on my feet. Shut him up, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Stewart: Answer the question.

Mr. Haynes: Well, I ask you. I am trying to answer the question and he is yawping at me from his seat. I thought that you would have told him about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall have to tell him. I want the hon. Gentleman to be quiet and to listen.

The Bill is not law yet.

Mr. Stewart: It will be soon.

Mr. Haynes: Yes, but it will be kicked around a bit down yonder, and it will be changed down yonder, I can assure the hon. Gentleman about that. They have already set themselves up down there and they know what has been going on here and in Committee. So they will do their job. The Bill is not law and when it becomes law we do not know how it will work out. We are guessing in the dark.

We know what experiences we have had in the past —right up to the present time—and it is a serious situation. We are trying to put that problem right and so we need proper advice to individuals in our constituencies —all constituencies where there is mining subsidence.

People can be fobbed off by anyone. They have been fobbed off in the past by the board because it did not want to pay out any money for compensation and repairs. It has been a rough ride and I am looking forward to the problem being sorted out once and for ever.

Wherever the advice centre might be—I could not care less, as long as it does the job that we want it to do on behalf of the constituents who have this problem—it is only one step towards sorting out the problem.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have enjoyed my contribution to the debate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We had a similar debate in Standing Committee, although I do not think that we had quite the intervention from the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes)——

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was a contribution to this Bill, not an intervention. I did not intervene on any hon. Member—I got up to make a contribution to the Bill in the hope that the Minister was listening and would take on board what I and my colleagues suggested.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It was an intervention in the debate, but not in someone else's speech. However, there were plenty of other occasions in Committee when the hon. Gentleman told us about his constituents. This evening we learned that some people are born illiterate. That was a new aspect.

The hon. Member for Ashfield mentioned a serious issue—many people find it difficult to understand legislation, however well drafted. The call for advice centres misses the point. We should not assist people to negotiate a complex chain of events; instead we should simplify the legislative process. A claimant would not then need to read and digest an Act to make a successful claim, any more than a pensioner needs to understand the Finance Acts to make a successful claim for his pension.

I agree that the legislation that we inherited is entirely inconsistent and complex. We are dealing with two separate Acts of Parliament. It is a matter of regret that the 1975 Act was not used as an opportunity to clear up some of the ambiguities and inconsistencies between that legislation and the 1957 Act. We are consolidating the legislation and simplifying the process.

When one considers the chain of events for a householder making a claim, one sees how much easier things will be if the Bill is passed. The householder will be notified individually that his property may be damaged by subsidence. At the same time he will receive a copy of my Department's leaflet tellling him how to go about making a claim. If subsequently he notices damage to his property, he will know that it may have been caused by subsidence because he has been notified, and he will therefore make a claim to British Coal.

Unlike the present position, with two separate Acts of Parliament and two separate claims which can be made, in future there will be only one Act and only one claim form. In response, British Coal will have to say whether it accepts the claim and, if so, what remedial action it proposes to take. If there is a dispute due to rejection of the claim, or a dispute about the nature of the remedial action, the householder can refer the matter to arbitration. British Coal will send all claimants the details of the new scheme so that householders will be aware that this option is open to them and that it will cost only £50, which will be repayable in the event of a successful claim.

If the householder decides that he has a dispute with British Coal, all that he needs to do is to submit the form to the institute, outlining the nature of the dispute. That does not have to be in technical language; specialist advice will not be needed. The arbitrator may call for specialist and technical advice and may visit the property in question, or he may sit with one or two independent technical assessors. He may even commission an independent examination of the subject matter of the dispute. British Coal, not the householder, will bear the costs involved. At no point in the process will the claimant necessarily need any technical or specialist advice.

Mr. Meale: Does the Minister not agree that when a constituent seeks advice he does so about the single most important matter in his life—his home, which represents an enormous financial outlay, and on which his whole future depends? If, therefore, a householder believes that his house has suffered damage, he or she will obtain advice to supplement the application for compensation. That will cost money. Unless advice centres are established, householders may be pushed down the same path as they now go down, with solicitors who do not know the circumstances of the case handling the matter, with surveyors trying to get money out of householders and

[Mr. Meale]

pushing them towards making a claim, and with agents who are in it only for the money. The purpose of advice centres is to avoid those pitfalls.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am still not clear what the role of the advice centres would be. It does not seem to me sensible to spend money on technically trained people advising claimants that they should fill in a claim form, or to pay for lawyers to advise people that their dispute should be referred to the Institute of Arbitrators scheme. The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) referred to agents and to the fact that in the past they enriched themselves by feeding off the cash compensation that was paid out. I have heard about that problem. Compensation was not tied to the necessary repairs to a property, but that system has now ended and it is not reproduced in the Bill, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Clause 36 also provides that, if a householder needed to employ specialist advisors such as structural engineers, any expenses reasonably incurred could be reimbursed to the claimant. I emphasise that only expenses that have been reasonably incurred can be reimbursed, so unnecessary fees and expenses claimed by an agent would not be reimbursable.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I think that it would be helpful if the Minister were to set the issue in its proper context because most of the Opposition's criticism today has been as though we were dealing with the old set-up. Under the old system, the claimant had to prove that the damage to his home was the result of subsidence and the Coal Board could simply say that it was not. Now the boot is on the other foot. That is a fundamental difference. British Coal must prove that the damage is not caused by subsidence. The burden is not on the poor claimant, which caused most of the problem. It has all been changed, and if the system is accepted that is surely a better context for the debate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend emphasises eloquently the point that I was trying to make earlier. We know that at present we have an unsatisfactory system. There are ambiguities and gaps in the legislation and there are inconsistencies between the two Acts, so it is hardly surprising that people are confused. The thrust of the Bill is to improve, to clarify and to simplify so as to obviate the need for specialist and technical advice.

Mr. Meale: The problem with the reply that the Minister gave to his hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) is that the law is such that all the thousands of people are still represented by agents. Perhaps I can help the Minister. To get us out of this hole, in which agents are handling thousands of cases, could the Minister say that local authorities in coal-mining areas could set up agencies to act on behalf of the thousands of residents and thus deal with the problem at one stroke?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Those thousands of agents may find that their expenses are not reimbursable under the provisions of clause 36. However, in answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, yes, of course, if local authorities feel the need to provide additional services, not only are they free to do so, but British Coal has assured me that it will provide assistance and information to them. Under clause 45, the corporation is obliged to inform local authorities of its mining plans. British Coal has also confirmed to me that it will make available to local authorities and to others their new internal manual of procedure, which is sometimes called one of the Brown Books and which will be prepared in the light of the new legislation. That document has not been available before.

British Coal has also offered to make available such things as its new internal training video, which may be of interest to local authority staff and it has offered to provide additional information and literature on an ad hoc basis. Against the background of increased information and simplified procedure, I see little justification for the significant expense of advice centres along the lines envisaged in the new clause.

I must also observe that the provision in the new clause that the advice centres should be funded by the Government is wholly inappropriate. In line with the "polluter pays" principle, it would be for the industry to meet any such additional costs, if they were justified. In this case, the costs are not justified and I invite the House to reject the new clause.

9.30 pm

Mr. Barron: It may have been necessary to change the wording of the provision so that a proposal that was rejected in Committee could be debated at a later stage. I understand that the Minister has had some problems about advice centres, especially as his predecessor, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), left him with a Department of Energy that felt that we should have advice centres to deal with coal mining subsidence.

Conservative Members have shifted ground in their argument in Committee and here tonight about whether to have one or more advice centres. The House has to decide whether we should have advice centres. One view is that people do not need advice. Those who hold that view have a lot of faith in British Coal and how the new system will work. The system has yet to be put in place and cannot be put in place until the Bill has been debated in the other place.

There may be some adherence to the protection of the entrepreneurs who have set up business in north Nottinghamshire and in Derbyshire to deal with mining subsidence. If people could go to a comprehensive advice centre and could receive advice that dealt with more than the nuts and bolts of the Bill, the entrepreneurs would lose trade.

I do not want to anticipate a later debate, but I must point out to the Minister that later amendments refer to the omission of people's right to go to the Lands Tribunal. In Committee, we were howled down by Conservative Members because we tabled amendments to remove the tribunal from such cases on the basis of its costliness and ineffectiveness in dealing with problems. We were told by Conservative Members that people should have a fundamental right to go to the Lands Tribunal if they felt that it was necessary, notwithstanding the provisions of the Bill. If that is the case, people could go to an advice centre without their incomes being preyed on when they were seeking advice.

People may go further than the comprehensive arbitration under the Bill. They may want to get advice in relation to further legal matters, but the advice about

which Conservative Members spoke in Committee may not be available. I hope that, although the Minister does not want to consider our proposal now, the other place will consider it. People should be able to get advice to ensure that, when they pursue a claim against British Coal, they have sound advice which is not expensive and which puts them on the right road towards getting compensation for damage.

In view of our debate, and because I hope that the other place will consider our proposal, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 8

DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS IN LIEU

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 7, line 8, at end insert—

'(7A) Subject to subsection (7B) below, the Corporation are to be regarded as acting unreasonably in refusing any request falling within subsection (7)(a) above which is received before they have begun to execute remedial works.

(7B) Subsection (7A) above does not apply where—

(a) the Corporation have acceded to another such request made by another person;

(b) the execution of remedial works by a person other than the Corporation would significantly impede the discharge of their remedial obligation in respect of one or more neighbouring properties; or

(c) where the damage has rendered the property structurally unsound, the execution of such works by the person by whom the request was made or, as the case may be, by the person specified in the request would be unlikely to restore the structural integrity of the property,

and (in any case) as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving the request the Corporation give notice to that effect to the person by whom the request was made.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 2 and 11.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It has always been the Government's view that a claimant should have the right to use his own contractor except in certain special circumstances. Our original approach was that British Coal should be able to elect to make a payment in lieu to enable a claimant to use his own contractor. Clause 8 also stipulated that British Coal should not unreasonably refuse a request to make such an election.

It was the view of many hon. Members in Committee that such an approach might allow too much discretion to British Coal. So I readily agreed to reconsider the matter to ensure that the claimant's position was safeguarded beyond doubt. Therefore, I have tabled a new subsection which, I hope, will meet the point. Its effect is to limit British Coal's right to refuse a claimant permission to use his own contractor to three specified circumstances.

The first circumstance is the obvious one of where British Coal receives two requests for the same property. The second circumstance is where the execution of remedial works by a person other than the corporation would significantly impede the discharge of the corporation's remedial obligations. An obvious example is a block of flats that has been damaged. It would not be sensible to allow each part of that block of flats to be repaired by a separate contractor. That could create the absurd position that one side of a party wall was being tackled by one contractor and the other side was being repaired by another.

The third circumstance is where the contractor does not have the necessary expertise to repair seriously damaged property. For example, if a property is affected by fissuring —of which I saw one example in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart)—it may require highly specialised repair work. It would not be in anyone's interest to allow the work to be done by a company that was less than competent. Of course, if British Coal declined permission for one contractor, it might be possible to find another, but this is an important example of where the right of the claimant should be fettered.

The other amendment in this group is what parliamentary counsel call a chiming amendment. It ensures consistency of phraseology throughout the Bill. With those explanations, I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Barron: Once again, I thank the Government for responding to the arguments made in Committee and amending the clause to change the presumption in favour of the claimant's choice. I can see that our arguments have borne fruit.

Opposition Members believe that people should be able to opt to carry out repairs themselves or select a contractor to do the work, unless there is specific and good reason for British Coal to do the work itself. The Minister gave the example of a block of flats. That is common sense. There might be other cases in which British Coal would have to show specific and good reason why the claimant should not do the work. I am sure the Minister has been advised on the matter.

The intention of our amendments in Committee and the Government's amendments tonight—which we are pleased to support—is to stop people being forced to wait for repairs to be done to their property and consequently to live in damaged property for longer than necessary. On that basis, we gladly support the Government amendments.

Mr. Meale: I appreciate the Minister's argument about a block of flats, but what about a street of houses? Would the use of contractors be restricted in the same way for work on a portion of a street of houses?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It may be more efficient in some cases to use a single contractor for a whole terrace, but that would not fit into the definition in the amendment. We have dealt only with cases where it would be absurdly wasteful, difficult or impractical to use various private sector contractors.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 2, in page 7, line 10, leave out 'to make an election for the purposes of this section' and insert 'falling within subsection (7) above which is'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 16

STOP NOTICES WHERE FURTHER DAMAGE IS LIKELY

Amendment made: No. 3, in page 11, line 42, leave out '("the original damage")'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I beg to move, amendment No. 4, in page 12, line 14, at end insert—

'(2A) It shall be the duty of the Corporation to specify in such a notice such works (if any) as are required in order to

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

render the damaged property reasonably fit to be used for the purposes for which it was used immediately before the damage became evident, not being—

(a) emergency works; or

(b) works the execution of which is not reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 5, 10 and 12.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Perhaps I should briefly give the background to this important, substantive amendment. Waddilove and many others recognised that stop notices were sensible and necessary, but he also said that, while a stop notice is in force, interim repairs should be carried out to a high standard. The amendment is designed to achieve that.

Amendment No. 4 will ensure that, where a stop notice is in force, works must be undertaken to ensure that the property is "reasonably fit" to be used for the purpose for which it was used immediately before the damage became apparent. The wording comes form the Coal-mining (Subsidence) Act 1957. The standard is not as high as that which we apply to full repairs, which must now be done to the reasonable satisfaction of the claimant. As an interim measure pending final repairs, the amendment provides a sensible advance and should commend itself to the House.

Mr. Barron: We debated whether we should lay down certain criteria on the use of stop notices and I am pleased that the Department has taken the issue on board and produced these amendments.

Amendment No. 5 removes from clause 16 any reference to Lands Tribunal, about which there was also great debate in Committee. We are pleased that references to Land Tribunal will be removed from clause 16 by this group of amendments and from clause 17 by the next group of amendments. Therefore, British Coal cannot send to the Lands Tribunal rather than to the arbiter for the issue or revocation of a stop notice. We support the amendments because they will make the Bill more comprehensive than it was on Second Reading.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made, No. 5, in page 13, line 16, leave out subsection (8).—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 17

REVOCATION AND REVIEW OF STOP NOTICES

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 13, line 23, after 'if' insert '—(a)'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 7 to 9.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have already said that stop notices are necessary in certain eventualities. The Waddilove committee recommended their continuation and an annual review of stop notices. That has been incorporated in the Bill. Furthermore, if ground stability is expected for 18 months ahead, stop notices need to be revoked.

It was pointed out in Committee that there was no absolute time limit for revoking a stop notice; therefore it is in principle possible even with annual reviews that stop notices could continue in force for many years if continuing underground mining was possible. For that reason, I introduced these amendments to put an absolute three-year time limit on stop notices. Henceforth they will be allowed to continue beyond that period only if the claimant or any other person does not object.

It may be sensible for all concerned to delay final repairs beyond that, but everyone's consent is needed for any further delay. I believe that a three-year period strikes the right balance between the claimant, who does not want to wait too long for those final repairs, and the British Coal Corporation, which might otherwise incur unnecessary repeat expenditure on repairs to a property or a house which may be damaged again. With that explanation, I trust that the House will accept the amendment.

9.45 pm

Mr. Barron: I welcome the claimants' right to ask for a stop notice to be revoked after three years. In Committee we tabled an amendment to clauses 16 and 17 for the time limit to be six months less than that. We felt that it would not be right for the British Coal Corporation to keep issuing stop notices. Our timetable would have been two and a half years as opposed to three years. The Minister has clarified the criteria and the time scale.

We welcome the amendment and hope that such notices will not be used very often and problems will be sorted out much quicker than in the past. British Coal will know that the issuing of stop notices will not keep the devil away from the door—it will have to take action. British Coal would have a maximum of three years and then it would have to sort out the damage to a person's property.

Mr. Rowlands: In Committee I raised the issue that my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) had previously raised about the incredible stop notice that went on for years. I welcome the amendment proposed by the Minister.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 7, in page 13, line 26, at end insert

'or

(b) at any time after the end of the period of three years beginning with the relevant date, the claimant and any other person interested request the Corporation to revoke it.'.

No. 8, in page 13, line 47, at end insert—

'(3A) In subsection (1)(b) above "the relevant date", in relation to a stop notice, means—

(a) the date on which the stop notice was given; or

(b) where one or more previous stop notices had been given in respect of the whole or any part of the damage, the date on which that notice or, as the case may be, the first of those notices was given.

(3B) The Secretary of State may by order substitute for the period mentioned in subsection (1)(b) above (whether as originally enacted or as previously amended under this subsection) such other period as he thinks fit.'.

No. 9, in page 14, line 5, leave out subsection (5).—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 18

EFFECT OF FURTHER DAMAGE

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 15, line 4, after 'interested', insert—

'(ff) any stop notice given to any person with respect to the original damage shall have effect in relation to the combined damage as if there were specified in it

as excepted works such works (if any) as may be specified in a notice given to that person by the Corporation;'.

No. 11, in page 15, line 5, leave out

'reference to remedial works in section 8(8)'

and insert

'references to remedial works in section 8(7A) and (8)'.

No. 12, in page 15, line 12, at end insert—

'(4A) It shall be the duty of the Corporation to specify in a notice under subsection (3)(ff) above such works (if any) as are required in order to render the damaged property reasonably fit to be used for the purposes for which it was used immediately before the original damage became evident, not being—

(a) emergency works; or

(b) works the execution of which is not reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case.'.—[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]

Clause 27

CROP LOSS PAYMENTS

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 19, line 10, leave out

'taking by the Corporation of remedial action'

and insert

'discharge by the Corporation of their remedial obligation'.

No. 13, in page 19, line 14, after 'amount', insert '(if any)'.

No. 14, in page 19, line 17, leave out 'section' and insert 'subsection'.

No. 15, in page 19, line 27, at end insert—

'(2A) For each year or part of a year falling within the period mentioned in subsection (1) above, the Corporation shall be under an obligation to make to the occupier of the unit a payment of the amount (if any) given by the formula—

$$P = R - S$$

where—

P is the amount payable under this subsection;

R is any amount by which the occupier's yield from land used for pasture in that year or part of a year is less than it might reasonably have been expected to have been if the subsidence damage had not occurred;

S is any amount by which his expenses in respect of land used for pasture are less than they might reasonably have been expected to have been if the damage had not occurred.'.

No. 16, in page 19, line 33, leave out 'the Corporation had elected' and insert

'an election by the Corporation'.

No. 17, in page 19, line 36, at end insert

'and there shall be disregarded for the purposes of subsection (2A) above any use of land for pasture which was or would have been so used after such an election as is mentioned in paragraph (b) above.'.—[*Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.*]

Clause 28

PAYMENTS FOR TENANT FARMERS

Amendment made: No. 29, in page 20, line 26, leave out subsection (2).—[*Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.*]

Clause 29

COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE TO MOVEABLE PROPERTY

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 20, line 46, leave our from 'if' to end of line 47 and insert—

'(a) the damage to the moveable property had been attributable to the negligence of the Corporation; and

(b) subject to subsection (2) below, liability for any consequential loss resulting from the damage were excluded'.

No. 31, in page 21, line 1, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

'(2) Subsection (1)(b) above shall not apply to a claim made by a small firm where—

(a) the moveable property was used wholly or partly for the purposes of the firm; and

(b) the property affected by subsidence damage was property as respects which one or more notices had been or should have been given by the Corporation under section 44(1) below;

and in determining the amount (if any) of so much of a payment as is payable by virtue of this subsection regard shall be had to the rules of law relating to remoteness and the mitigation of losses.'.

No. 32, in page 21, line 6, leave out 'situated'.

No. 33, in page 21, line 8, after 'land', insert

'or, in Scotland, was on any land without lawful authority'.

No. 34, in page 21, line 15, leave out 'any damage to' and insert 'the damage to the'.

No.35, in page 21, line 23, at end insert

'"small firm" has the meaning which would be given by section *(Compensation for consequential losses of small firms)* (7) above if the reference to the time when the property is affected by subsidence damage were a reference to the time when damage is caused to the moveable property'.—[*Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.*]

Clause 30

COMPENSATION FOR DEATH OR DISABLEMENT

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 21, line 46, after 'as', insert 'would have been payable'.

No. 37, in page 22, line 10, leave out

'has the same meaning as in section 29 above'

and insert

'includes any act or omission which would, if the death or disablement had been caused by the negligence of the Corporation, have constituted fault for the purposes of the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act 1945'.—[*Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.*]

Clause 31

EXISTING BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES OR WORKS

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 23, line 15, leave out

'shall not be deemed to be'

and insert

'are not to be regarded as'.—[*Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.*]

Clause 36

REIMBURSEMENT OF SUCCESSFUL CLAIMANTS' EXPENSES

Mr. Barron: I beg to move amendment No. 27, in page 28, line 23, at end insert—

'(1A) The Corporation shall also pay any costs or expenses reasonably incurred by the householder served notices under Clause 44 subsections (4) and (6) below.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government amendment No. 19.

tAmendment No. 26, in page 28, line 31, at end insert—

'(2A) Subsection (2) above will apply to costs or expenses reasonably incurred by a local authority acting on behalf of claimants, or as landlords.'.

Government amendments Nos. 20 and 21.

Mr. Barron: In view of the absence of provision for advice centres, we ought to consider seriously amendment No. 27. Members of the Committee will remember our debate on amendment No. 27 and the expense of a pre-mining survey. People would have the right to money to have their property inspected prior to undermining after

[Mr. Barron]

a notice had been issued. It would be proper to help property owners with their expenses should they seek advice on what to do when successive notices are served on them by British Coal. They will probably turn to an expert for an opinion on the best course of action, and the costs incurred should be reimbursed.

In certain circumstances—if mining took place, the property was damaged and the claim was successful—the expenses would be reimbursed. Unfortunately, however, if mining is not the cause of damage, if claimants take expert advice because of successive notices and undermining does not take place or if there is insufficient damage to warrant a successful claim, the claimants would not be paid for any advice they took. An advice centre would have solved many of those problems.

Amendment No. 26 extends reimbursable costs to include local authorities should they act on behalf of a claimant or take action as property owners. It does not seem right to exclude expenses incurred by local authorities when they are successful claimants. Unlike housing associations, local authorities have been given much responsibility for public housing in the past five to ten years. Housing associations can claim expenses incurred for legal advice on subsidence damage to their properties.

Although local authorities may be successful in claiming damages against British Coal, they are not entitled to legal expenses. Most local authorities have a legal department, but they have a wide and varied agenda, and if they are involved in ensuring that claims against British Coal are successful, they cannot work on other matters. It seems unfair that local authorities should lose in this respect and not be able to claim their rightful legal expenses for successful claims against British Coal. I hope that the Minister will look seriously at amendment No. 26.

Amendment No. 27 deals with the fact that people will seek advice should successive notices be laid against their property. In the absence of an advice centre, they should be protected when they have incurred reasonable costs in protecting their property.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Amendment No. 26 refers to expenses incurred by local authorities as landlords. I assure the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that nothing in clause 36 prevents a local authority from recovering the costs that it has reasonably incurred in pursuing a claim as a landlord. The hon. Gentleman may wonder why we cannot make that explicit in the clause, just to be on the safe side. That could be counter-productive, because the clause is widely drafted to catch as many types as possible of reasonable costs incurred by many different individuals and organisations. Therefore, if one includes references to specific organisations such as local authorities, one narrows the focus of the clause and casts some doubt on the scope of the clause. That is not in the interests of claimants other than local authorities. Therefore, I invite the House to reject the amendment.

The amendment also refers to cost incurred by local authorities acting on behalf of claimants. That seems to be another attempt to require British Coal to fund advice centres. Therefore, for the reasons that I gave in an earlier debate, I am not convinced that that would be justified.

Amendment No. 27 is drafted in extremely wide terms and seems to cover every type of expenditure, from a record of the property's condition to major preventive works. I must stress that a clause 44 notice means that there is a risk but not a certainty of the building being affected by subsidence. Therefore, it would not be right or proper that all expenditure on all such building should automatically be reimbursable to the property owner or household.

Clause 36(5) as presently drafted provides that nothing in the clause is to be taken as prejudicing the powers of the Lands Tribunal in respect of any costs or expenses of the proceedings before that tribunal. The provision means that the Lands Tribunal can award costs without regard to clause 36, but, alternatively, clause 36 could still allow a claimant to attempt to recover from British Coal costs that the Lands Tribunal had not thought fit to award to him, which is wrong.

Therefore, amendment No. 21 does two things. First, it broadens the scope of subsection (5) so that not only does it apply to the Lands Tribunal but it brings arbitration procedures within its scope. That should commend itself to all hon. Members, who have been concerned to ensure that arbitration expenses are ranked in the same way as those incurred before the Lands Tribunal. Secondly, the amendment clarifies the relationship between the award of costs under a formal procedure and clause 36. Where any particular set of costs falls within the jurisdiction of a formal process, the outcome of that process is to be definitive as regards the recovery of those costs.

That rules out the possibility, which I mentioned earlier, of a claimant having a second go at recovering costs under clause 36 which were denied by the Lands Tribunal. The amendment does not prevent a successful claimant from recovering reasonable costs which an arbitrator would not have been able to award. For example, a claimant might have had to employ a structural engineer or surveyor. Those costs will be fully reimbursable.

Having given those explanations and expansions, I hope that the House will accept the amendments.

Mr. Meale: I merely wish some clarification on amendment No. 26. Has the Minister given way on the right of a local authority reasonably to reclaim money that it has spent in acting on behalf of a claimant? Secondly, as landlords—as the Minister knows—local authorities have thousands of houses, sometimes whole housing estates, which are submitted for claims to British Coal because of the damage throughout the estates. Would it be reasonable for the local authority to reclaim both amounts as the acting agent authority—first, as landlord and, secondly, acting on behalf of claimants resident in their district?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The only costs that will be reimbursable are those incurred by the local authority as landlord and owner of the buildings in question. For that purpose, the local authority is in exactly the same position as any other landlord or freeholder. As I explained, we did not think it right to place local authorities in a privileged position or draw specific attention in the clause to the rights of local authorities in that regard.

Mr. Meale: A short time ago, when debating another part of the Bill, the Minister suggested that there was nothing wrong with local authorities establishing themselves as agents representing the people of their areas. That would not prevent the setting up of advice centres;

indeed, it would help to get rid of the problem of coal mining subsidence agents. If local authorities do that work it is surely reasonable to consider reimbursing them for it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If local authorities provide the necessary expert advice, reasonably incurred expenditure would be treated in the same way as if the advice or expertise were provided by any other professional organisation. The provision does not extend to general reimbursement for advice. If it did, we should slip back into the idea of reimbursing the expenses of advice centres, a course that the House has already rejected.

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Business of the House

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Coal Mining (Subsidence) Bill and the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Coal Mining (Subsidence) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Meale *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I remind the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) that this is Report stage, not Committee stage, so he should not make a series of interventions.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I found the brief read by the Minister an unconvincing argument against amendment No. 27. As the Bill stands, a householder would not be able to claim expenses unless he or she were certain that damage to the property would subsequently take place. The only definition of a successful claimant is someone whose property has sustained damage. A long time will pass before anyone will know whether a property has been damaged. In that time, under clause 44 (4), householders will be served with notices about the continuing threat of damage to their property. But it could be two or three years before any damage is seen, and only then can one be a successful claimant. In the meantime it is reasonable for such a householder to seek legal advice or advice from a surveyor. At present, he or she would not know whether those expenses would be reimbursed under the clause.

If a householder is continually served with notices under clause 44 (4) and as a result seeks advice, we suggest that any such reasonable expenses should be covered even if the property proves not to have been damaged. Will the Minister tell us why he considers that unreasonable? Why should a householder being served notices warning that his property may be damaged not be allowed reasonable expenditure for seeking advice even if he is not ultimately a successful claimant?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney knows, and indeed has said, that a successful claimant will be reimbursed reasonable costs such as those incurred in making a pre-survey of the condition of the property. Unsuccessful claimants, however, will not be reimbursed. The hon. Gentleman is asking me automatically to underwrite all such expenditure which may be incurred by anyone served a clause 44 notice.

Mr. Rowlands: No, a clause 44 (4) notice.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The fact that someone may be served a notice is no guarantee that their property will be damaged. Notices can be withdrawn. Mining plans can change. Even if mining goes ahead, only between 30 per cent. and 70 per cent. of properties in the area will finally be damaged. If all such expenditure incurred in advance of damage were automatically to be reimbursed, we should be paying for a great deal of nugatory expenditure.

Mr. Rowlands: We are concerned specifically with subsection (4). A person will be served with a notice after 12 months, followed by a notice 12 months after that, and so on. If notices continue to drop into a householder's home, it is reasonable for him to take advice. If no damage is found to have been sustained, it is reasonable that the householder should be able to claim reasonable expenses.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is talking about repeated clause 44 notices, but my observations still apply. Damage to the property is still only a possibility. I accept that in some areas it will be a probability. There is, however, plenty of scope for the property to be undamaged and for any expenditure undertaken to be nugatory. The arrangements that we have put in place seek to strike a balance between the understandable desire of claimants to take precautions before mining occurs and the need to protect British Coal from unnecessary cost.

I understand that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfyl and Rhymney believes that we have tilted the balance slightly in the wrong direction. There matters were discussed in Committee and I must ask the House today to endorse the judgment that we reached.

Mr. Barron: We may wish to try to obtain satisfaction in another place. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 19 in page 28, line 24, leave out 'and (4)' and insert 'to (5)'.

No. 20, in line 39, leave out 'in relation'.

No. 21, in page 28, line 42, leave out subsection (5) and insert—

'(5) Subsection (2) above does not apply to any costs or expenses incurred in or in connection with any proceedings before any tribunal, court or other person if an order for their payment has been or could have been made by that tribunal, court or other person.'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 38

DISPUTES: GENERAL

Amendment made: No. 22, in page 29, line 18, after 'or', insert 'other'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 41

DETERMINATION OF DISPUTES BY ARBITRATION

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 30, line 17, after 'person', insert 'independent of the Corporation'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendment No. 25.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We accept the amendment of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that the arbitrator should be independent. It was always our intention that he should be. The Institute of Arbitrators takes suitable pride in its professional integrity and independence. To remove any doubt, I accept in full the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Barron: I thank the Minister. I have spent the past few weeks wondering how he would take away the words "independent of the corporation", he being somewhat doubtful of them in Committee.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The amendment underlines the independent nature of the arbitration that the Bill provides and which will be available when the scheme is approved. At what stage will there be access to the independent arbitrator? What will be the position of those who are currently undecided whether to go ahead under the present procedure, which is not the one approved by the Minister and which, as he mentioned in his opening remarks, involves the Institute of Arbitrators? There are those who will be undecided whether to go ahead with that procedure or to wait, as I would advise, for the amended procedure, which also includes placing the onus of proof on the coal board to show that the damage did not result from mining. There was considerable discussion on the matter in Committee where a great deal of valuable work was done. Can the Minister make it clear that nobody who is waiting for him to approve the scheme will find that they have passed a time limit merely by waiting until the scheme is fully in place before they pay their money and go ahead with arbitration?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I confirm to the hon. Gentleman that they need not wait, because the scheme has been running on a voluntary basis since the beginning of January this year. It was brought forward by British Coal after consultation with us; therefore, to all intents and purposes, the scheme is up and running. We shall be reviewing with British Coal the operation of the scheme later this year to see whether it is satisfactory and whether it can be extended in any way.

The Bill allows, if necessary, the Secretary of State to put into regulations the exact details. We intend to do that only if the scheme is unsatisfactory or if British Coal or its successors backtrack in any way from the scheme as outlined. However, I confirm that early indications are good and that British Coal has agreed to remove any doubt about people's rights to go to arbitration.

Some doubts have been expressed about the wording in the existing guidance leaflet and the notes attaching to the arbitration scheme. They will be altered and amended where necessary to make clear that people have the right to go to that arbitration scheme in appropriate cases.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful to the Minister. If someone were to take the Minister's advice and go ahead now using the existing scheme before the Bill is enacted, where would they stand in relation to the onus of proof?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: They would not be disadvantaged in any way. British Coal will carry over existing cases which are presently in train and treat them as though the new Bill were an Act of Parliament so that those claimants will not see the join.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Can my hon. Friend confirm that, when he says that people will have the right to arbitration, it will be a unilateral right under the existing scheme proposed by British Coal, and that British Coal will not have to give approval for that person to go to arbitration? That is an important point which we discussed in Committee.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I was able to give that assurance in Committee and I am happy to repeat it. If some case, due to its complexity or technical nature, is more appropriately dealt with by the Lands Tribunal that will be a decision for the arbitrator and not for British coal.

Mr. Meale *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it an intervention or a speech?

Mr. Meale: A short speech.

Mr. Speaker: This is a Report stage. Hon. Member should make their speeches and then the Minister should wind up and respond to them. It is not really a question and answer debate as is appropriate in Committee.

10.15 pm

Mr. Meale: I am grateful to the Minister for the various assurances he gave in Committee. I am also grateful to him for repeating and expanding on a few of them in his reply to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). Will he confirm in the context of the present debate the guarantee that he gave in Committee concerning cases that had been disqualified under the old six-year rule? Under the new arbitration procedure, will the people involved be able to have their cases reviewed?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can confirm that some difficult disputes have not been settled to the satisfaction of the claimants. It is appropriate that these should be dealt with under the new arbitration scheme, and British Coal has indicated that if they are brought forward, they may be settled in that way.

Mr. Haynes: Suppose an individual—it could be a person from any constituency—has a problem of this sort, and he goes through the procedure that the Minister is introducing. What will happen at the end of the period of six years? Is the Minister saying that the new rule is in operation now? Under the new system, the burden of proof will be on the corporation, whereas, previously, it was on the individual. Will the corporation now have a duty to prove beyond doubt that damage was not done by the mining industry? Has the new six-year rule now come into operation?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Bill clears up the present ambiguity—the conflict between the two existing Acts. It lays down very clearly how the six-year rule will operate. If there are disputes or difficulties about interpretation, or about matters of fact, they can be referred to arbitration. The solution will not be at the unilateral say-so of the British Coal corporation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 42

TIME LIMITS FOR CERTAIN DISPUTES

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 31, line 2, after 'or', insert 'other'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 43

INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

Amendment made: No. 25, in page 31, line 24, after 'person', insert 'independent of the Corporation'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Clause 44

NOTICES TO PROPERTY OWNERS ETC

Amendments made: No. 38, in page 33, leave out lines 6 to 8 and insert—

'(c) any information which is to accompany such notices.'.

No. 39, in page 33, line 15, leave out

'owners or occupiers of the land'

and insert

'person to whom the notice is to be given'.

No. 40, in page 33, line 17, leave out first 'any'.

No. 41, in page 33, line 20, leave out 'persons' and insert 'any person who is the owner or occupier of any part of the land or is'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Schedule 7

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Amendment made: No. 42, in page 54, line 12, at end insert—

'*Notices*

6A. Where any underground coal-mining operations proposed to be carried on after the commencement date can be regarded as a continuation of operations carried on before that date, nothing in section 44(1) (notices to property owners etc.) or section 45(1) of this Act (notices to local authorities) shall require the Corporation to give any notice with respect to those operations before the end of the period of one month beginning with that date.'.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

10.17 pm

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have reached the end of the Bill's proceedings in this House, and I want to thank the members of the Standing Committee that examined it at an earlier stage. I thank them in particular for the constructive and co-operative way in which they examined the issues. The Bill started as a very considerable step forward, and some of the decisions of the Standing Committee have improved it. In its original form, it was a consolidating measure, bringing together two Acts of Parliament, and making a number of improvements. It also formalised claimants' rights to use their own contractors in a way that has been repeated this evening; allowed the reimbursement of all the reasonable costs incurred by claimants in pursuing a successful claim; clarified the very difficult issue of time limits in a way that is now clear and unambiguous; provided for households to be individually notified about British Coal's mining plans; provided a statutory basis for the informal resolution of disputes through an arbitration scheme; and placed British Coal's code of practice on a statutory basis. The Bill also imposes a duty on British Coal to safeguard property that is vacated while undergoing repair.

In Committee and again this evening, the Bill has been further improved. On the question of stop notices, an interim standard of repair has been laid down, and a maximum duration for stop notices has been declared. On the difficult issue of blight, a new clause requires British Coal to purchase property blighted by subsidence damage or its imminent likelihood where hardship would otherwise be experienced. As to the use of an own-contractor in undertaking repairs, there is clarification of, and an emphasis on, a claimant's right to use his own contractor, except in specified circumstances.

The independence of the arbitrator has been affirmed, and the Bill now includes provision for small businesses to recover consequential losses.

On Second Reading, I said that it was my intention to make a good Bill better. I believe that I have done that, with the assistance of the Committee and of the House.

10.20 pm

Mr. Barron: On Second Reading, although we welcomed this well-overdue Bill, we identified serious weaknesses and omissions that we hoped to rectify during the legislation's progress through the House. In Committee, the Minister accepted many of the arguments that we put, and tonight the Government presented a substantial number of amendments that cover the issues raised by my hon. Friends in Committee.

We received an assurance from the Minister that British Coal will not be able to block a claimant's right to refer his case to arbitration. By removing that veto, the likelihood of referrals to the Lands Tribunal has been lessened. In view of the recent history of the Lands Tribunal in respect of subsidence claims, thousands of people will be breathing a sigh of relief that they will not have to travel that route in future.

We welcome that advance, together with the amendment relating to the independence of the arbitrator. Taken together, those changes go a long way to meeting our concerns about the scheme. The Bill has also been greatly improved by the clause dealing with blight and the amendment on consequential loss. Many small agricultural businesses that suffer consequential losses, in terms of future yield, will be pleased with that improvement and we hope to see that new provision operating to their advantage in the near future.

The rights of claimants to use their own contractors in carrying out repairs, and the introduction of criteria for stop notices and their revocation, have been strengthened. The latter issue was raised forcefully on Second Reading by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). His advocacy on behalf of his constituents has been most effective, not only in relation to the Bill, but during all his years as a Member of Parliament.

People in all areas affected by subsidence will welcome the Bill. It was thanks to the pressure consistently exerted by Labour, both locally and nationally, that the Bill saw the light of day. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) waves his hand at me. I have before me a letter that he wrote to the then Secretary of State for Energy, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) on 2 May 1989, in which he referred to the absence of any action in respect of subsidence damage, and said how awful it was that people had to pursue their claims through the Lands Tribunal, and risked substantial costs being awarded against them. He added:

[Mr. Barron]

"To make matters worse, we have now had the Opposition spokesman for mining, Mr. Kevin Barron, in the Sherwood and Mansfield constituencies, claiming that they will put matters to rights when returned to power".

That is absolutely right. They may be jumping in on our legislative programme today.

The hon. Member for Sherwood smiles. He will smile, because I also have here a letter from one of his hon. Friends who spoke on Second Reading. Unfortunately, he was not with us today. He also wrote to the right hon. Member for Hertsmere on 27 April 1989—[HON. MEMBERS: "Who was it?"] I think that it was the hon. member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock). He wrote to the then Secretary of State for Energy, saying that he was enclosing

"a copy of an article which appeared last week in the Mansfield local newspaper".

At the end of the letter he said:

"I can only say that I fully endorse what Kevin Barron says and hope that you will treat the issue more seriously."

I am pleased that the issue has been treated more seriously, after the years that Labour has been arguing here and elsewhere that the matter should be put to rights.

The Bill leaves the House as a superior Bill to the one first introduced and that is substantially due to the improvements that we promoted in Committee. I hope that it will not be too long before the people whose lives have been so affected by coal mining subsidence will see the benefits of this legislation when it has left the other place.

10.25 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart: Having campaigned with other hon. Members for the need for new legislation to deal with the effects of subsidence due to coal mining, I believe that the Third Reading of such a Bill closes a chapter and heralds a new beginning for communities living in coal field areas.

The present methods adopted by British Coal as a result of the 1957 and 1975 legislation will soon pass into the history books. Also it is worth recording there for posterity my thanks, and that of my constituents, to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for coal for bringing the Bill before Parliament and seeing it through its Committee stage, and shortly on to the statute book. Further appreciation should go to COALS and the united industry working party for their extensive work in the past three years.

The new legislation will end the long delays, endless disputes and sheer misery that claimants endured under the present procedures. They will no longer be at the mercy of British Coal. Indeed, for the first time claimants will be in the game with the same number of players as British Coal, which previously acted as referee and moved the goal posts when it was opportune to do so.

Once enacted, the legislation will be comprehensive, righting the injustices of the past. My enthusiasm for the new measure is shared by my constituents. Our acclaim for the Bill is because, from the beginning to the end, it encompasses every aspect of the consequences of mining. To start with, anyone whose property may be affected by mining must be informed by British Coal in advance of underground workings. Claimants will be clear that they have six years to initiate a claim after the appearance of damage, not after the ceasing of mine workings. Claimants will be able to agree the use of their own contractors. Costs incurred in pursuing a dispute will be reimbursed if the claim is successful. The Government agree that consequential loss should be compensated. British Coal must purchase, or compensate for, property affected by blight. Last, but not least—and most important—is the right of claimants to unfettered arbitration.

The end result of the Bill will be a fair settlement of claims at nil or minimal cost to successful claimants. It will ensure fair practice and fair play. This legislation goes that extra yard, providing fairness, respectability, honesty and understanding for all involved with coal mining subsidence, while recognising the major role of the coal industry in our national and local economies.

10.28 pm

Mr. Beith: It is a pity that the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) felt it necessary to compliment himself so extensively because, judging with the much greater impartiality of someone who did not serve in Committee, I was going to say that it was a good Bill to start with and was significantly improved by the efforts of Opposition Members in Committee, of whom I was not one.

The effort that a number of hon. Members put into the Bill was well justified and shows on the face of the Bill. Many of our constituents will be in a better position to raise difficult issues that are the source of great anxiety to them, now that a better procedure is in place, and now that there is a better basis for proof, and what I hope will prove to be a proper arbitration system, which, if it does not emerge via negotiation, can be brought into being through the provisions of the Bill.

I am glad that the Bill was introduced. In principle, it was a good Bill from the start and it has been significantly improved by the efforts of those hon. Members who have devoted a considerable amount of time to it.

10.29 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth: As you know, Mr. Speaker, better than most, the public perception of the House is that it engages in a succession of gladiatorial contests, with printable insults hurled throughout our debates. We have dispelled part of that public perception this evening.

Although a great number of hon. Members are not here, all those who are here have participated in the campaign over many years to right the injustice caused to our constituents by coal mining subsidence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) suggested, tonight marks almost the end of the battle—but not quite.

This is an excellent Bill which represents the culmination of years of debate, the distilled wisdom of the Waddilove committee and that of a number of hon. Members in all parts of the House. It was a little churlish of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) to respond as he did. I pay tribute to his hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), who I know has campaigned vigorously, but especially I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood, who throughout has adopted a thoroughly principled stance, as befits a Member of Parliament for his constituency.

The Bill will provide a clearer and fairer framework for the hopefully speedier settlement of an injustice that causes enormous distress and heartache. My hon. Friend the

Minister and his predecessors, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), whose Parliamentary Private Secretary I was, worked hard to arrive at a solution that will deal with the injustice without imposing intolerable burdens on the coal industry, which continues to serve the nation in a relentlessly more efficient manner. The fact that my hon. Friend the Minister has been prepared to listen to amendments, not just from the Opposition but from his hon. Friends, has been warmly welcomed.

In two key areas—arbitration and blight—the Government have decided to rely on reserve powers. It is right that the Bill should contain what earlier I called the rule of the threat of law. I hope that British Coal will now demonstrate a commitment to making its voluntary codes of practice on arbitration and blight work. The corporation is still somewhat wobbly and will certainly have to change its stance if the public are to be sufficiently reassured.

In my constituency last October I finally secured British Coal's agreement to accept liability for some properties with a history of subsidence, but that acceptance needs to be followed up by speedy and sympathetic action. As employment in the industry continues to contract, so British Coal will increasingly require to win the good will of the areas in which it wishes to work. If it fails to implement the voluntary agreements, in the spirit and to the letter, there will be pressure to activate the statutory regulations that we have provided for in the Bill. I trust that that will be unnecessary, but the ball is firmly in British Coal's court.

10.32 pm

Mr. Lofthouse: I, too, very much welcome the Bill. It was a good Bill when it was introduced and it has been improved in Committee. However, there is still a major fault that could easily be rectified, and I hope that the Minister will take it on board. I greatly welcome clause 32(3), which, in line 46, provides that

"the Corporation may make such proposals as to the materials for and the method of construction of the property as appear to them to be desirable for minimising damage in the event of subsidence."

I have always believed that if British Coal, the local authorities and the private developers had jointly considered providing rafts under properties where British Coal knew that it was going to mine, they would have saved themselves millions of pounds. Other organisations would also have been saved millions of pounds.

Another worrying aspect is that, if a local mine is threatened with major expenditure due to subsidence, that mine's survival will also be endangered. We should consider prevention rather than compensation. Rather than refer merely to materials for construction, we should enable the Bill to confer on British Coal the right to agree with the builders or the local authorities that, if they expect subsidence, they will meet the costs of a raft. That would cost only £2,000 or £3,000 a dwelling but would save a great deal should subsidence occur. If the effect can be minimised when properties are erected, we should write that provision into the Bill.

10.35 pm

Mr. Hayward: The Bill is important not only to areas where mining still occurs but to areas such as those that the Minister and I represent, where coal mining ceased many years ago but which still suffer the problems of coal-mining subsidence.

The Bill provides clarity for people who never expected to suffer from the problem of subsidence because coal mining had stopped so many years ago. It does not provide the certainty that they will gain from a claim, but it provides clarity in the form of the procedures by which to pursue a claim for subsidence and what is defined as subsidence. It provides clarity and a shift in the burden of proof. The burden is now on the Coal Board rather than on the applicant, which is especially important.

Finally, because of an amendment moved by Conservative members of the Committee, the Bill now provides the right for all people to pursue arbitration without British Coal objecting. It is a paramount right for all individuals to be able to pursue a claim to the end, even if they are opposed by British Coal.

For those reasons, I believe that we have a Bill of which we can all be proud, and I hope that it will move to another place.

10.36 pm

Mr. Meale: To conclude this phase of the legislation, I should like to thank a number of hon. Members from all parties who have been involved in trying to introduce new legislation to sort out the horrific mess. I also pay tribute to the Minister and to his predecessor who started the whole process, ably and gallantly pursued by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who has done a magnificent job at every stage in Committee and in the House.

We must also remember others who have battled and given advice, such as ex-Members of Parliament, some of whom until recently have actively given advice to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and me. Unfortunately, one—Lord Taylor of Mansfield—is no longer around, but we must pay tribute to him because he was never slow in coming forward to give advice to my hon. Friend, to me and to others.

We should also pay tribute to the Consortium of Authorities Liaising on Subsidence—COALS—to the representative organisations of local authorities, to their officials and elected members from the all the authorities involved who have done a magnificent job in bringing the issue to the fore and in making progress towards a change on the statute book. I also pay tribute to organisations such as the united industries working party—which has been mentioned—which provided help.

However, I must say to the Minister—as he would expect me to—that in such cases one sometimes experiences a little cloud of disappointment. I am disappointed especially about the issue of information, which I believe should be made available to everyone if real justice is to be achieved. I should have liked advice centres and a register of damage to properties included in the Bill. I hope that the other place will agree on that.

The Bill has been a magnificent effort by everyone involved and especially those who are suffering damage to their homes throughout the coalfield areas. Their pressure,

[Mr. Meale]

persistence and search for justice will, I hope and believe, one day lead to a subsidence back to a better time for them.

10.38 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): A fair amount of pressure has been lifted from——

Mr. Hayward: Raising the flag.

Mr. Haynes: No, I am not raising the flag.

A fair amount of pressure concerned with mining subsidence has been lifted from the shoulders of hon. Members. The Bill is a step in the right direction. I want to pay the Minister a compliment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Take it steady."] In answer to my hon. Friends, I must say that the Minister has had a real education about mining. He has made it his business to get about the mining areas——

Mr. Barron: Down the pits.

Mr. Haynes: Yes. Who would have thought that the Minister would wear a mining helmet, knee pads and pit boots, and go into the pithead bath afterwards? Some of us did it for many years. We have real experience. We have also experienced the fact that the Minister has got to know about the industry and its problems. I hope that he will continue in that way until the next election when we shall be sitting on the Government Benches. We shall have a different Minister with responsibility for mining, but at the moment I am complimenting the present Minister for his work, especially on the Bill. He has listened to what we said in Committee and he has proved beyond all doubt that many of our points that were rejected in Committee are now accepted because they have been included today.

However, I am a little disappointed about the advice centres. I said a little earlier that it may happen that in the other place——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Where you are going.

Mr. Haynes: Shut up. The advice centres may be accepted in the other place.

I want to refer to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). I remember his predecessor, Dennis Concannon, all those years back when pressure was being put on the Government to do something about the problem. Before him was our noble Friend Lord Taylor, who passed on last week. I have been to the other place and listened to some of his contributions on the mining industry, especially about mining subsidence, and about how people suffered in his day. He left this place in 1966 to go down yonder. The problem has been going on for a long while. At long last, something has happened. [HON. MEMBERS: "A Tory Government."] We have a Bill. We have been working together in the interests of our constituents. It is all right for hon. Members to bawl from a sedentary position, trying to make a stupid political point. We have worked together in Committee to change the Bill and we have been successful.

I said earlier that the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) was denied an opportunity today. In Committee, he agreed with many of our points. The Government kept him out of the Chamber today because he was going to agree with us on the advice centres. I am convinced that when the Bill comes back from the other place, it will contain a clause on advice centres. I want to know from the Minister what he intends to do about it. I hope that he will leave it there. If he does not, after the next election, we shall put it in. We shall put some other things in, too. Our constituents have suffered long enough.

I come now to my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). He is an ex-miner, like one or two of us. He is not a farmer. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has got his way about his potato field. If it sinks in the middle he will get compensation. This Government have poured money in the farmers' pockets and here we go again. We are damned well agreeing with it again.

If a farmer suffers because of mining subsidence, he is entitled to compensation or to have things put right. There is no doubt about that. That is fair. The Bill has become fair but it needs to be a bit fairer. I come back again to my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley. He has a wonderful football team in his mining constituency. We play them twice a season. We kick them all over the pitch. The pitch goes up and down all over the place. It is a terrible pitch. I do not know whether the club has claimed for mining subsidence damage, but it ought to—it ought to make a claim and go to arbitration now that the Government are allowing people to do that.

There is no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley has used his mining experience at the Dispatch Box, but he has also had some good advice. He knows what I am talking about. The Minister has had all his advice free. My hon. Friend has had to pay for his, but he has had first-class advice. That is why he has been able to stand at the Dispatch Box on Report and Third Reading and to do a first-class job in Committee.

We have all done our bit in this Bill, including hon. Members who served on the Committee such as my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). I remember some of the speeches that he made. The Tory Members did not like them at all, but they were good speeches. I am looking at my watch, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we won many of the arguments and we shall go on to win more. The important thing is that to achieve what we have in this Bill, never mind that the Tories are in control here at Westminster. We have worked together and made the Bill the way it is—and given the opportunity, we shall change it again.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required for making grants to persons entitled to premiums under the Community suckler cow scheme; and

(b) any increase in the sums payable out of such money into the Forestry Fund which is attributable to any provision of that Act for the making of grants to the verderers of the New Forest.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.48 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I shall be brief, because I do not intend to prolong the debate. I should simply like the Minister to confirm a few minor points. Paragraph (a) of the motion refers to premiums under the Community suckler cow scheme. The Minister will confirm that that part of the Bill will come into operation immediately once the Bill is enacted. It provides a legal basis and regularises the position on such payments, which have existed since 1980.

Paragraph (b) refers to grants to the verderers. Such payments have existed since 1973 and are covered in clause 4 of the Bill, which will come into immediate operation once the measure has completed its parliamentary passage, as will clause 3. Will the Minister confirm that that sum has not exceeded £10,000 per annum since 1973? Can he predict how that will continue?

My last point is on the main part of the Bill and the restructuring and reorganisation of the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation. The question of the £10 million——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. That goes beyond the scope of the motion before the House.

Mr. Pike: This relates to the financial implications.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The motion relates to suckler cows and New Forest verderers.

Mr. Pike: I shall leave the matter there. We can cover it in Committee on Thursday.

10.50 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I wish to make one small point about the suckler cow premium scheme. Will my hon. Friend the Minister urge his counterparts in the European Community to concentrate the support for the beef industry on the suckler cow scheme? In that way we shall serve the best interests of the beef industry and encourage that part of it which produces the quality beef for which this country has long had a good reputation. The special beef premium scheme does not necessarily go towards the production of beef that is entirely satisfactory to the housewife and at the end of the day the beef industry must satisfy her.

We can produce absolutely top quality beef——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It may be my mistake, but I do not know what suckler cows have to do with beef production. Am I mistaken?

Mr. Gill: With all due respect, beef does come from the suckler cow herds.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind the fact that when we expend these moneys on suckler cows we are doing a worthwhile job for the British beef industry because it encourages the production of quality beef which can be used substantially to improve the market for the industry's product. I make the plea that future support through a premium is concentrated on that part of the industry rather than on other parts.

10.51 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): Perhaps I can be helpful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the whole House by saying that although some wonderful scientific and implant techniques are available these days, it is usually handy to have a cow first before producing beef cattle or calves.

I acknowledge what my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) said about the importance of the suckler cow premium system. In answer to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), we would expect the provisions on both the suckler cow scheme and the New Forest verderers' grants to come into operation as soon as the Bill is passed. I recollect that in no single year has more than £10,000 been granted.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required for making grants to persons entitled to premiums under the Community suckler cow scheme; and

(b) any increase in the sums payable out of such money into the Forestry Fund which is attributable to any provision of that Act for the making of grants to the verderers of the New Forest.

Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill [Ways and Means]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Agriculture and Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the charging of fees in respect of the supervision of grading of livestock carcases pursuant to any Community obligation and the payment of such fees into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.52 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the Minister confirm that this makes preparation for payments that will commence from 1 January 1992?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I am happy to confirm that.

Question put and agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motion made, and Question put forwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Dangerous Vessels (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 28th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

EDUCATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Education Reform Act 1988 (Application of Section 122 to Institutions in Wales) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 4th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

CUSTOMS CONTROLS ON BAGGAGE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8353/90 on abolition of controls and formalities on cabin and checked baggage on intra-Community flights and sea crossings; supports the Government's intention to ensure that Member States retain the right to carry out checks at the internal border to protect society against illegal importations of drugs and other prohibited goods, to control immigration and to counteract terrorism and other serious crime; and notes with concern the practical and infrastructural problems for airports that could be caused by the draft proposals.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Question agreed to.

Eye Test Charges

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Boswell.]

10.53 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Sadly, nothing illustrates the Government's real intention towards the national health service more than the disastrous decision in 1988 to abolish free eye tests. The Government simply ignored the warnings that abolition would have a serious effect on the health of large numbers of our nation. The then Secretary of State for Health refused to believe Labour Members when we told him that if he stopped paying for free eye tests, opticians would have to start charging.

Last week, in the debate on the national health service, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) reminded the House that the right hon. and learned Gentleman could not have been more wrong. In November 1988, the right hon. and learned Gentleman assured the House:

"the charge for the eye test will steadily disappear . . . that is my strong personal opinion."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1988; Vol 139, c. 927.]

He has certainly been proved wrong, because today every optician charges between £10 and £17 for an eye test. As a result of that charge, hundreds of thousands of people face an increased risk of going blind or developing other serious diseases as they are deterred from visiting the optician by the cost of the eye test.

It was not just the Labour party who warned the Government about the potential serious situation that has now developed. The main professional body also advised against abolishing the free test and stressed its worthiness. A survey conducted by the British College of Optometrists in 1986 showed that of the 2,194 referrals made as a result of the eye test, older people—who formed a large group of those questioned—were particularly at risk from cataracts, macula degeneration, glaucoma, diabetes and other serious medical conditions. The college concluded that such people would be at risk if the free test were abolished as the charge would deter them from seeking such a test. Despite the survey and other early warnings, the Government refused to exempt pensioners from the charges. Since 1986, various surveys have been conducted which confirm the Labour party's fears that there would be widespread resistance to charges, particularly from the elderly.

In June 1990, the Consumers Association conducted a survey on eye testing and its findings were published in *Which?* The survey covered 1,094 adults who represented the public. It discovered that two in five people would go for an eye test less often once the charges were introduced, that two in five of those exempt from those charges thought that they had to pay and that nearly half those over 40 who were exempt from the charges also thought that they had to pay. The latter evidence was particularly worrying, given the increased incidence of eye disease in that age group.

The Consumers Association findings took into account the 7 per cent. increase in the number of eye tests as people rushed to beat the charges. However, even comparing the number of eye tests conducted in the year to April 1989 with those conducted in the year to April 1988, it is clear

that tests were down by about one fifth—more than 2·5 million in England and Wales—which represented a great reduction.

The survey concluded that, given that about one eye test in 20 results is a referral for medical examinations for eye disease or other medical conditions, that drop in examinations may have led to 125,000 fewer referrals with consequent repercussions for the early detection of diseases and possible increased long-term burden on the national health service. Therefore, the rather mean and irresponsible decision to charge for eye testing has not just caused untold human misery and pain—it has also been an economic mistake. Someone with an advanced disease is likely to cost the NHS far more than someone whose disease is diagnosed early.

Recently, there has been more evidence that the decision was bad. On 12 April, the Association of Optometrists published the findings of a major MORI survey on eye testing, which showed that the number of eye examinations had plummeted by one fifth since 1988. The survey, in which the Economists Advisory Group sampled 252 practices of members of the association, said:

"In comparing survey data on each quarter in 1988, 1989 and 1990, the . . . study estimates that eye examinations during 1990 were 20·9 per cent. fewer, on a national basis, than during 1988."

It stated that, in particular, there were an estimated 3·6 million eye examinations in the first quarter of 1989, just before the Government abolished universal free eye examinations. It said that, in the second quarter of that year—after charges were introduced—the number of estimated eye examinations shrank to 2·4 million, down nearly 32 per cent. Subsequently during 1990, estimated eye examinations have averaged 2·5 million a quarter, almost 21 per cent. down on the 1988 quarterly average of 3·2 million. Those are alarming figures.

A second survey, conducted at the same time and by the same group and commissioned by the Association of Optometrists, showed that a majority of the public believed that eye examinations should be free to all. It is commendable that the public take such a good social attitude. The survey updated trend information spanning seven years and was carried out to establish public attitudes to eye examinations. It was conducted among more than 2,000 people aged 15-plus throughout Britain, and it concluded:

"The Government's decision, in April 1989, to abolish universal free eye examinations is not popular amongst the public. Nearly three-fifths (57 per cent.) of those interviewed said 'everyone should be able to have a free eye examination'. A quarter (26 per cent.) said free examinations should be available only to those groups currently eligible, namely children under 16, students aged 19 in full time education, those on income support or family credit"—

many of whom are currently entitled to free eye tests—

"those registered blind or partially sighted, those with glaucoma, those aged over 40 who have a close relative suffering from glaucoma, and those suffering from diabetes."

As might be expected, the public were socially aware and were concerned about the abolition of the free tests.

The British College of Optometrists, which carried out the work, said that in the two years since fees were imposed about 4 million fewer people had had their eyes tested. That represents a drop of about 8 per cent. per year. Any health Minister worth his salt would take those alarming figures seriously. Some 400,000 of those would have been referred for further medical attention and half of those referred would have been suffering from a major eye disease such as cataract or glaucoma. Thousands more would have shown early warning signs of illnesses such hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and, in extreme cases, brain tumours.

When I looked to my constituency for a local angle, I worked out that, based on those figures, 10,000 of my constituents in Halifax would have gone without tests, and perhaps 1,000 of them would have missed important medical detection. That statistic is unforgivable, alarming and unnecessary in view of the amount of money that the Government have saved.

Today, I received a letter from Age Concern, which argues forcefully for the annual free test to be reinstated for elderly people. It is important to hear the opinions of the various groups concerned with vulnerable sections of society. Age Concern states in the letter:

"Older people may need encouragement to visit the optician as they tend to 'make do' with spectacles which are ill-fitting or which no longer correct their vision effectively. Eye test fees impose an extra barrier to older people who need to seek help."

There are many myths about who can and cannot receive free tests. Age Concern makes the important point:

"The Government has repeatedly argued that it aims to target help on people most in need, and that people on income support, and some priority groups, continue to receive free eye tests. Although older people whose incomes are just above income support levels can receive help, they have to put in a claim. Many older people are reluctant to fill in what are often long and complicated forms, and around one fifth of older people do not claim benefits to which they are entitled."

We know that that is often the case with elderly people.

The letter continues:

"The recent increase in the state pension means that married couples under the age of 75 now receive 10p over the income support limit and are therefore no longer automatically eligible for free eye tests."

Age Concern is obviously concerned that that problem should be solved.

Local opticians in my constituency, and those of other Members—I am sure that the Minister has been lobbied over this—have called for free eye tests for all over 65. That confirms the point that I have made, and that has been made so forcefully by others, that people in that age group tend to have the most problems with their eyes. It is important to stress that that age group is not automatically excluded. As Age Concern stated, because of the recent increases in state pension, many of them will not be.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind makes a similar plea in a letter that it sent me when it knew that I had this Adjournment debate, and which I received today. It states that all pensioners should be exempt and that research overwhelmingly shows that that group of people are those most vulnerable to eye disease. It quotes Professor John Marshall of the Institute of Opthalmology, who estimates that about 78 per cent. of the 78 to 85 age group have major eye disease. That is an important point.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind also states —this may pre-empt something that the Minister may say in his defence—that it commissioned a survey last year, which I believe the Government have used to support their claims that the issue was not important. The survey showed that people had been deterred from eye tests, but it also showed that a high number of people claimed to have had eye tests. It stated that the figure was similar to that in the Government's survey. We know that the

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

Government conducted a survey. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston challenged it in a debate after the eye test charges were introduced.

The institute states:

"The Government have seized this information to support their argument. We believe the figure is a substantial overestimate. The Government itself accepted that its survey had produced some degree of overestimate. It is also worth comparing what the Government survey claimed to have happened on NHS tests with what actually happened.

2·05 million adults claimed to have had an NHS test in the first quarter of 1990, but the records show the Family Practitioner Committees only paid for 0·624 million tests. Although some of this discrepancy might be explained by confusion as to the difference between NHS and private tests, it casts doubt on the credibility of the Government's survey."

I believe that, too, and I hope that the Minister will seriously consider that forcefully made point.

In the light of the overwhelming evidence from all sources, it is time for the Government to admit that they made a serious mistake in abolishing free eye tests. Abolition is leading to serious diseases going undetected. The Government must accept that thousands are at risk because of the cost deterrent. They are not being given medical care when they need it, and that cannot be in their interests. That makes a cruel nonsense of the purpose of the NHS, and it represents a false economy that can only lead to human misery.

Some of these diseases are very painful, and human beings are suffering needlessly. Some may even suffer early death as a result of their condition not being detected early enough. I urge the Government immediately to restore the free eye tests. It they do not, we can only assume that the impression that we were given when the Government changed their Prime Minister—that we were to have a more caring Government—was only a mirage, and that they are following the tradition of the last Prime Minister and her Administration, in whose hands we could not trust the NHS.

I promise the Minister and anyone who may take note of this debate that we shall keep pressing for free eye tests, which any socially aware and civilised society should provide for its citizens. If the Government do not restore them, on the election of a Labour Government we shall soon restore them. They are vital diagnostic tests which provide an early warning system for serious diseases. I urge the Government not to wait for the next Labour Government and to show that they really do care.

11.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I agree with the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) that this is an important subject, and the House therefore has reason to be grateful to her for initiating this Adjournment debate, which allows us once again to test the arguments for the stance that the Opposition have adopted on the issue and the arguments that the Government deploy in defence of their position.

I wish to restate the policy that the Government have pursued and to set it in context. There is no disagreement between the Government and the hon. Member for Halifax, or between the Government and the optometry profession, about the importance of eye tests. The Government remain fully committed, as they have been throughout, to quality eye care and to ensuring that those who go to opticians receive a high-quality professional service. That is why, in July 1989, the Government tabled regulations that set out factors that should be taken into account, by law, when a patient has an eye test. The law requires that a patient have a refraction test to measure the degree of correction required for good eyesight, and that patients be given a full examination of their eyes. That requirement was put on the statute book by the Government because we are committed to the principle that a regular eye test is an important part of health care.

The hon. Lady is concerned principally not with high-quality eye care but with who pays in most instances for such tests. Experience proves that on average the cost of a test is £12 or £13, and the Government believe that, for the great majority, it is entirely reasonable that the individual citizen should pay that sum for himself or herself. I suggest that it is inconsistent to argue, as many do, that taxpayers, and citizens in general, would be prepared to pay another 1p in the rate of income tax if the proceeds were directed entirely to health care. If the rate of income tax were to be increased by 1p, something in excess of £50 a year would be the yield from a man on average earnings. Yet that same person is not prepared to pay £12 every two years for an eye test.

The Government accept that people are prepared to pay an additional charge to ensure high-quality health care. For those who are in a position to do so, the eye test is a perfect example of an opportunity for people to make a contribution to their health care, recognising as the Government do the importance of a fully qualified person conducting an eye test. That does not detract from the Government's commitment to ensure that there are free eye tests available to those who can establish a need, either on the ground that they are adults with low incomes, or are children or students aged under 19 years, or to those who on health grounds attach an especial importance to regular eye tests. That is why free tests continue to be provided for the blind and partially sighted, for those who suffer from diabetes and for those and their families with a history of glaucoma.

Those who benefit from free eye tests on the ground of low income and those who so benefit on health grounds constitute 40 per cent. of the population. I accept that by and large the public would like to have the opportunity to contribute more to expanding the resources that are available for health care, and the eye test system provides exactly that. It seems entirely consistent with the Government's commitment to improve the quality of health care that is available and to ensure that the maximum value is squeezed out of the budget that is available to the national health service.

It is sometimes suggested that the free facilities amount in some sense to a concession that has been drawn from the Government under protest, but our record gives the lie to that. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health devoted considerable effort in the early spring to promoting the importance of eye tests and the availability of free tests to those who will benefit from them. It is not a matter of 40 per cent. having an entitlement and the Government taking no further steps. We have undertaken a promotion campaign to ensure that those who are entitled to a free test have that fact brought to their attention.

The hon. Lady has said that an incoming Labour Government would restore the universal availability of free eye tests. That commitment, blithely given late on Monday night in the House, would cost such a

Government more than £100 million a year. The question that the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends must answer is whether an extra £100 million a year available for improving and expanding the resources of the national health service would be best used in the way she described or whether it would be better used to improve the quality and availability of health care elsewhere in the national health service. I find it hard to believe that the highest priority for a marginal £100 million in the national health service is the restoration of free eye tests.

The only evidence that the hon. Lady used to substantiate her case this evening—her speech was entirely consistent with speeches made by Opposition Members ever since the change was made—was a series of surveys on which I shall comment briefly. The hon. Lady suggested that I should not get involved in an argument about which survey we embrace, and she sought to argue that there was some doubt about the credibility of one of the surveys that one of my right hon. Friends relied on in the past. I am content with that. I shall take the surveys published on 12 April by the Association of Optometrists on which the hon. Lady placed the greatest weight.

There were two surveys. The first was carried out by MORI which, not surprisingly, concluded that given the choice between paying for eye tests and getting them free, the British people would prefer to have them free. The hon. Lady considered that to be socially aware. I disagree. If someone offered me the choice between having something free and paying for it, I would choose to have it free. That is simply to ignore the reality of the choice and the importance of priorities in the use of resources within the national health service.

The other survey published on 12 April by the Association of Optometrists was undertaken by the Economists Advisory Group which sought to demonstrate that the take-up of eye tests has been substantially cut since charges were introduced in April 1989. I believe that that survey is subject to severe shortcomings. First, only 56 per cent. of the optometrists to whom it was directed responded to the survey. That leaves me wondering what evidence the other 44 per cent. would have produced. Secondly, the statistics that were quoted compared the period immediately after charges were introduced for the first time with the period immediately before the change —the last period during which they were free. It is not surprising that there was a boom in demand for eye tests just before the charges were brought in, and that there was a slump just after they were introduced.

If the hon. Lady reads the press release, she will find one piece of evidence that was not highlighted in the text. In the last two quarters measured by that survey, there was a sharp increase in the take-up of eye tests. In the third quarter of 1990, eye tests were up by 9 per cent. on the equivalent period in the previous year and in the fourth quarter of 1990, take-up was up by 16 per cent. over the same period in the previous year.

I do not accept that the evidence is conclusive that the change in funding has led to a long-term decline in the demand for eye tests. I agree with the hon. Lady about the importance of eye tests and we shall certainly continue to stress that, but I do not accept that her conclusions can be based firmly on the statistical information at her disposal.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned at twenty-three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 23 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Monmouth, in the room of Sir John Stradling Thomas, KL—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

HOOK ISLAND (POOLE BAY) BILL

Read a Second time, and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL

[Lords]

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 25 April 1991.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Scientific Research

1. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set up an inquiry into the state of scientific research in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): No Sir. Britain has a science base of remarkable quality and the Government will continue to provide appropriate support for it.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is it not now time for a full-scale inquiry into the levels of funding available to scientific research and the rates of pay available to university teachers? Does the Minister share the concern that has been shown by others about the conclusions of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, which, for example, showed that this year the science and engineering research council has enjoyed—if that is the right word—a 3 per cent. increase over its budget of last year? Does he also agree that it is time that the Government came forward with reasonable and adequate resources to enable university employers to pay a more reasonable level in wage settlements than the 6 per cent. currently on offer?

Mr. Howarth: The Government have advisory bodies —the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology—that are well placed to advise us on scientific research and I see no need for a special inquiry. We are considering the report of the House of Lords Select Committee, and the Royal Society is conducting its own inquiry, so we need no further inquiry. As for resources, the Government have increased the science budget by 22 per cent. since they have been in office. That matches the expansion of gross domestic product. We shall continue to support British science, but the extent of that support depends on the progress of the economy.

Mr. Rhodes James: Is my hon. Friend aware that concern about that matter is not confined to one side of the House? The wise warnings of Sir Claus Moser last August should be taken seriously.

Mr. Howarth: As my hon. Friend represents Cambridge, he is particularly knowledgeable on, committed to, and concerned about those matters, but he will also be immensely proud of the outstandingly distinguished science work that takes place in Cambridge. I was disappointed because, after Sir Claus Moser made his speech at the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, I suggested that it might be helpful if we met to talk on the subject. However, he declined to take up my invitation.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that we need action, not another inquiry? We need wide-ranging action not only on resources, which have fallen far behind those of our industrial competitors, but on science education. There are many priority areas within science to which resources need to be switched, such as the realignment of defence research. It is clear that the Government are failing the nation.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the introduction of the national curriculum and the redefinition and improvement of science education for all our children. He has also overlooked the remarkable increase in the number of students undertaking science and engineering courses. As for action, the hon. Gentleman may have been a little disappointed by the Labour party's policy document that was issued last week. I found it remarkably vague and imprecise. His party seems to have adopted a policy of favouring particular sectors of science. It seems both foolish and wrong in principle to politicise decisions about scientific priorities. That document proposes the borrowing of unspecified sums to support the hon. Gentleman's purposes. It proposes to reduce defence spending, again on an unspecified scale. It is an extremely unimpressive prospectus.

Standardised Testing

2. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the introduction of standardised testing in schools.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): Seven-year-olds will be tested nationally in English, mathematics and science for the first time this summer. Tests in other subjects and for other age groups will be phased in over the coming years.

Mr. Amos: As many parents do not take seriously their responsibility in bringing up their young children, does my hon. Friend agree that standardised testing at the age of seven years will give schools the opportunity to monitor and identify pupils' achievements in relation to their ability? Does he accept that that will be of enormous value in channelling more assistance to those who are in need,

and that the tests are nothing to do with pass or fail? Instead, they relate to identifying needs and channelling help to where it is needed.

Mr. Eggar: I much agree with my hon. Friend. It is extremely important that the results of the assessments and tests should be passed on to parents in a readily understandable way through annual reports. We shall be publishing a leaflet to accompany the reports, which we hope will help parents understand the results of the reporting mechanism.

Mr. Rees: If one of the tests shows a particularly low grade for a seven-year-old child, who will be responsible, within the school, for testing further to ascertain whether there are special disabilities such as dyslexia? If there is such a problem, what power does the Secretary of State have to tell local authorities to provide remedial classes —it would be no use for parents to take that course—in such cases? I am extremely dissatisfied for personal reasons, but I am not making a political point. I think that we have forgotten that something may be wrong, and that not enough has been done for those who suffer from dyslexia.

Mr. Eggar: I understand and share the right hon. Gentleman's concern about dyslexia. In 1981, I initiated the first Adjournment debate on dyslexia. The results of national curriculum testing, especially in English, will enable teachers to identify children who are working towards level 1—in other words, those who have not attained that level. I would expect teachers and head teachers to get together to try to identify why a particular child had not achieved level 1 and then to formulate a system of help and assistance for that child. Outside help from the school, such as that from a child psychology support, may be needed.

Mr. Straw: Statementing?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) says, it might be appropriate to go towards statementing. Each individual child will have to be dealt with, however, as an individual, depending on the result of the tests.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that the majority of parents in my constituency are much in favour of tests at the age of seven years? Will he accept also that we all believe that bureaucracy should be kept to a minimum so that teachers can spend the maximum time with children rather than going through procedures that at present are rather tortuous?

Mr. Eggar: I agree that we must continue to work towards reducing bureaucracy. I intend, as a result of the national pilot of tests of seven-year-olds, to ascertain whether we can simplify the procedures.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister aware that, while teachers are showing a high level of professional dedication and commitment in administering the tests, there is great anxiety among teachers and, I think, parents about the amount of curriculum time that has to be devoted to the tests? For example, at a school that I visited yesterday in Peterborough, every half day between now and half term is being devoted to the administration of the tests and that is disrupting the teaching of children. As the Minister referred to this year's tests as a national pilot, may we take it that Ministers will examine carefully the experience of the standard assessment tasks to ascertain whether they can be slimmed down further so that they serve a purpose without over-burdening teachers or disrupting teaching?

Mr. Eggar: I have no hesitation in agreeing with the hon. Gentleman. We must examine carefully the results of the national tests to determine whether the right balance has been struck between manageability on the one hand and fairness to the child on the other. We shall examine that. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to give us his views, I shall be delighted to take them into account.

Truancy

3. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the current level of truancy and on the figure for each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): The proposals that we published last week will enable truancy levels to be measured, for the first time, on a standard national basis. They require schools to record attendance in a way which identifies unauthorised absence, and to publish their rates of unauthorised absence.

Mr. Holt: I thank my hon. Friend for that statement, which is overdue. Will he look again at the inflexibility of the school-leaving age and perhaps link truancy with training? Is he aware that in France, Germany and Italy, youngsters are allowed to leave school and embark on a proper training course or apprenticeship, so long as it is an integral part of education? Is he aware that that would reduce truancy because young hands and minds could get involved with something they know and understand? At the moment, some youngsters who are forced to stay on at school until 16-plus as a minimum, often become the truants who cause the vandalism and troubles in our society.

Mr. Fallon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about our proposals. We want to see a better and earlier vocational training in schools, which is why my right hon. and learned Friend decided in January to allow schools more flexibility over the curriculum from the age of 14 onwards.

Miss Lestor: I thank the Minister for sending me a copy of his proposals, which I received yesterday. Is he aware that punitive methods and measures in relation to young truants will not necessarily be effective unless more work is done in looking at how youngsters who are truanting spend their time? I think that he will find, if he talks to his colleagues in the Department of Employment and studies the report on the illegal working of children, that large numbers of young truants are working illegally.

Mr. Fallon: I know of the hon. Lady's long-standing interest in the matter. If she has any evidence that children are being employed illegally, she should forward it to my Department or to the Department of Employment. I accept that it is not simply a question of punitive measures. We have, under the Children Act 1989, new instruments, such as education supervision orders, which come into

force later this year, and which I hope local education authorities will consider alongside the increased fines that are proposed in the Criminal Justice Bill.

Mrs. Gorman: Having taught in secondary schools for 10 years before coming to this place, I am aware that truancy is often linked to tedium. Will my hon. Friend accept that the curriculum is still far too academic as it concentrates on the passing of O-levels and does not contain sufficient in the way of practical subjects to interest children? I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) that we should consider allowing children to leave school a little younger so that they can obtain the experience of practical work that they desire.

Mr. Fallon: Hon. Members will agree that children should leave school fitted for the world of work. We want schools to have more flexibility so as to ensure better and earlier vocational training alongside more traditional academic achievements.

Bradford CTC

4. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount of grant paid in 1990 and 1991 to the most recent practicable date to the city technology college in Bradford.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Total grant aid to the Bradford CTC was £2·9 million in the 1989-90 financial year. For the 1990-91 financial year, the total grant was £4·7 million.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it outrageous that those sums were paid to an elitist private school which is needlessly duplicating the local authority provision, when the total amount of capital expenditure for the whole of the Bradford local education authority in the current year is about £9 million? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that there are expanding rolls in Bradford and that at least £30 million is needed to repair many of Bradford's crumbling schools, to provide permanent extensions and to replace the more than 500 temporary classrooms that are now in use? Are not the Government's priorities typified by J. K. Galbraith's phrase "private affluence and public squalor"?

Mr. Clarke: I have never heard such nonsense. Capital allocations to local government this year have been increased ahead of inflation. Bradford receives an allocation of £9·4 million for its schools and that sum has not been affected by the further sum that has gone into Bradford to invest in its splendid new city technology college. It is an essential part of effective inner city policy that the extra money provided should not just be spread over every deprived borough in the country, allowing each to carry on doing a little more of what was being done already, but should be invested. The Bradford CTC is a spectacular example of what can be done to provide opportunities for children of all abilities from deprived parts of Bradford, to raise expectations and to bring about new good practice in the education system of Bradford. The subscriptions of parents and the opportunities, which people are seeking, to teach and to be taught in Bradford show that this is a valuable new asset to the city for the education of people from deprived backgrounds that would not have come about without the CTCs.

Sir Marcus Fox: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Bradford CTC is proving extremely popular with teachers and pupils, that there are more than 1,000 applications for 12 teaching posts, and that this year, 660 students applied for 250 places? Is not that proof of the college's success, and is not that what the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) detests?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Far more parents want to send their children to city technology colleges than there are places for them. There are also far more children waiting to be taught in them than can be admitted, and the teaching posts are hugely popular and sought after. I know from meeting people who are already teaching in the CTCs of their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, new methods of delivering high technology education, and that is one of the more exciting aspects that I encounter in the course of my job. The opposition of the Labour party to CTCs is unbelievably mean minded and small minded. Its view appears to be that the education system of Bradford should not enjoy a valuable innovation of this kind until every other school can be exactly the same.

Nursery Education

5. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with local education authorities regarding the report on nursery education "Starting with Quality".

Mr. Eggar: "Starting with Quality" dealt with the educational experiences of the under-fives across various settings. It has been sent to all local education and social services authorities for them to consider how it might be acted on in their areas.

Mr. McKay: The Minister will have noticed that the report says in its introduction that one of its terms of reference was quality, but that quantity should also be considered. What measures has he taken to ensure that local government has enough finance to carry on expanding nursery provision so that there is a nursery place for the child of every parent who wants one?

Mr. Eggar: The answer is, a great deal. Over the past 10 years, the number of places available for nursery-age youngsters has increased by 150,000. This year alone we are providing local education authorities with £100 million more than what was spent last year on nursery education.

Mr. Evennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that universal provision of nursery education cannot be justified on grounds of cost, and that the present variety of provision for pre-school children is largely beneficial to the needs of children today?

Mr. Eggar: It is certainly difficult to understand how the priorities of educational spending could extend to cover universal nursery education as against some sort of assistance for young people under the age of five either in day care on in pre-school playgroups. The Labour party takes that view as well—at least the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), Opposition spokesman on public expenditure, shares that view. She made that very clear when she held my post about 12 years ago, when she could not find the resources either.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister recognise that if the Government were prepared to switch the money that they have so far earmarked for city technology colleges to nursery education, we could have another 20,000 places this year? When will the Government accept their responsibilities, listen to His Royal Highness and recognise that they are responsible for giving our children the best possible start in life?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Lady has not reached level 1 in maths. Even if the money were diverted from the CTC programme as her party advocates—it would amount to about £15 million a year at most—it would provide only 50 part-time nursery places for every local education authority in the country.

Mr. Walden: Is my hon. Friend aware that the introduction of sound and structured nursery education by a Conservative Government would be enormously popular with the women of this country who, I believe form an electoral majority? Is he also aware that royal assent for such a measure already exists in that the Prince of Wales recommended it in his speech yesterday? Will my hon. Friend talk——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Three questions are a bit much.

Mr. Walden: There are many things, Mr. Speaker, of which my hon. Friend should be aware.

Mr. Speaker: He may be made aware of two. Let us have the answer, please.

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for yet again making me aware of his views.

Further Education

6. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of local education authorities to discuss the funding of further education.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Funding issues are discussed in many of the meetings which I and my ministerial colleagues have with representatives of local education authorities.

Mr. Lofthouse: What proposals does the Secretary of State have for the expansion of post-16 education during the next two years? Surely he must agree that there should be some local democratic accountability in this crucial sector.

Mr. Clarke: We aim to continue the rapid expansion of education and training opportunities for 16 to 18-year-olds and my recent announcement about giving further education colleges and sixth-form colleges the same status that the polytechnics have used so successfully in higher education during the past two or three years was aimed at that. Extra resources are already going into that sector. The standard spending assessments for education authorities this year are up by 16 per cent. and inflation will be much lower than that in the forthcoming year. The hon. Gentleman's own excellent Wakefield district college had £2 million invested in it last year.

Mr. Waller: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the removal of polytechnics from local education authorities has been a great success, setting them free to develop and enabling many more students to attend a degree-type course? Does he further agree that to give higher and further education colleges the same kind of freedom would enable them to develop likewise and to be a similar success in future?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that giving independent status to polytechnics has proved to be an unmitigated success and they have made a major contribution to expanding the numbers in higher education during recent years. It is on that model that the principals of further education colleges and sixth-form colleges that I have met universally welcomed my proposals. They see the same opportunities for themselves providing a much broader range of opportunities for more young people both of an academic and vocational kind.

Mr. Fatchett: There will be widespread support for the Secretary of State's acknowledgement of the value of further education. Against that background, why are the Government cutting so substantially resources for youth training, much of which goes on in further education colleges, and why has virtually every Conservative local education authority cut its further education budgets? Why did the Secretary of State not pay one official visit to a further education college before he made his statement on 21 March about the future funding of such colleges?

Mr. Clarke: It is entirely for local authorities to decide how they use the increased resources that we make available to them, but it cannot be true that widespread cuts are being made in further education when the financial allocations to local authorities have increased by 16 per cent. compared with last year, in a year when inflation is likely to be 5 per cent.—a real growth of more than 10 per cent. If such cuts are being made, there is a substantial switch of resources by some strange local authorities into other things. Our policy is to give higher priority to further education. I do not think that the Opposition will oppose our policy. Further education is now getting more attention and encouragement than it has ever received in the past.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: In the light of the recent announcement that consideration is being given to ensuring that there is one separate funding body for all the post-school education system in Scotland, what discussions has the Secretary of State had with his Scottish counterpart, given that that most surely has implications for his Department as well as for Scottish local authorities?

Mr. Clarke: With respect, it does not. I always tell Scottish National party Members that Scotland has a totally devolved system of government and I have no responsibilities for education there apart from those for higher education. I made my announcements in England after discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The construction of funding councils for Scotland is a matter for him and he will take his decisions in the light of Scottish circumstances.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the polytechnics would get the scheme parity that they deserve if they were called universities?

Mr. Clarke: I am anxiously considering a number of matters relating to the present status of polytechnics and

universities. At this stage, I can say only that I will take my hon. Friend's opinion very much into account, as I always do.

Further Education Qualifications

7. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he is considering regarding the reform of qualifications for post 16-year-olds.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Employment are considering a number of proposals for improving qualifications for post 16-year-olds. We intend to publish a White Paper shortly, setting out our plans for education and training for the 16 to 19 age group.

Mr. Patchett: When will the Government sort out the jungle of post-16 qualifications and devise a system that meets the needs of the 1990s?

Mr. Eggar: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications has made significant progress, but there is still some ground to be made up. We hope to see considerable simplification of the existing vocational system over the next two years. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Mr. Hannam: In welcoming the progress that has been made, may I ask my hon. Friend to consider in particular the problems that confront disabled students, who often do not reach the necessary standards of levels by the age of 16 and who need special help and attention between the ages of 16 and 19?

Mr. Eggar: Certainly.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the Minister personally accept the argument that the present academic-vocational divide should be ended in favour of a single system? Does he agree that such a system should apply to those who leave school at 16 and that there should be guaranteed access to it by 17 and 18-year-olds, so that they may achieve nationally recognised qualifications, which may even lead them to a college or university education?

Mr. Eggar: We certainly need to dispel any idea of an academic-vocational divide, which is not helpful. We also need, as I believe the hon. Gentleman accepts, dramatically to increase the post-16, full-time staying-on rate. The hon. Gentleman's question raises a number of issues to which there are various answers, but I am broadly in agreement with him.

Reading Methods

9. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to reform the training of teachers in reading methods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: We have asked the——

Mr. Bill Michie: What about my question, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I shall call the hon. Gentleman next.

Mr. Fallon: We asked the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education to conduct an inquiry into how students are trained to teach reading, and to advise, before the end of the year, on whether any amendments are needed to the criteria used for course approval and whether further guidance should be given to institutions. My right hon. and learned Friend commissioned that inquiry in response to public concern and in the light of the professional advice received from Her Majesty's inspectorate and others. We see action on teacher training as one of the keys to the problem.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is appropriate that education questions should be on the Order Paper today, as it is Shakespeare's birthday? Does he agree also that the Prince of Wales was speaking for millions of parents when he voiced frustration at those educationists whose experiments in the teaching of reading have done so much to fail millions of pupils? Will he ensure that the inquiry that he has just announced is not subverted by those same educationists in his Department, local authorities and Her Majesty's inspectorate?

Mr. Fallon: I certainly agree with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Teachers must be taught how to teach reading, which are the most effective methods and, above all, that teaching skills cannot be acquired simply by children browsing through books—as some of the shadowy education experts appear to believe. That is one purpose of the inquiry.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Minister apologise to the people of this country for the Government's neglect of the teaching of reading in the past 12 years and for their abandonment, in 1988, of the national monitoring of reading standards? Does he accept that the Secretary of State and his predecessors have approved every teacher training course into which they are now launching an inquiry? Is not that a classic case of political buck-passing? Will the Minister and the Government accept responsibility where standards are inadequate and make way for a Labour Government who will put reading standards first?

Mr. Fallon: I was hoping that the hon. Gentleman was coming to the Dispatch Box to apologise for the incompetent performance of authorities such as the Inner London education authority, which ran schools like Culloden primary school in Tower Hamlets until April last year. This Government have introduced the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, have revised the criteria and have now asked it to conduct an urgent inquiry into the methods of teaching reading.

Mr. Soames: What conclusion does my hon. Friend draw, and what implications are there for the training of teachers, from the excellent articles that appeared in *The Mail on Sunday* recently about the failure of teachers properly to teach children at Culloden school to read?

Mr. Fallon: It was parents who first raised the alarm at Culloden school. However, rather than attacking the messenger, I should have hoped that the head teacher and governors of the school would concentrate on the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate and the finding that, in more than two thirds of the classes in that school, the standards of reading were poor.

Mr. Speaker: I apologise to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) for misreading my Order Paper.

Seven-year-olds (Testing)

8. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decisions he has made about the publication of the tests of seven-year-olds.

Mr. Eggar: I expect schools to publish their results this summer. They have certainly been encouraged to do so.

Mr. Michie: The Secretary of State must be aware of the concern about the publication of crude aggregate figures, which could lead to a false market in schools. Therefore, as I understand it, authorities such as Sheffield will not publish the results this year. Will the Secretary of State rethink the matter and allow local authorities the discretion to decide whether to publish?

Mr. Eggar: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that, at the moment, parents make judgments about schools on hearsay, on subjective values. Surely it is right that where there are objective assessments of how a school is doing, that information should be in the public domain to enable parents to choose between schools on a better-informed basis.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the publication and provision of tests for seven-year-olds does not necessarily mean that our children are being branded as failures in any way? Will he explain to Opposition Members and others who are providing a misleading impression of Government policy that this is a good policy, that it is right for our young people and that it should not be misrepresented in such a way?

Mr. Eggar: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend, who has much experience in this area. The purpose of the tests is to assess how children are doing and to identify weaknesses and strengths, so that weaknesses can be remedied and strengths further enhanced.

Ms. Gordon: Will the Minister explain the connection between the proposals to publish tests of seven-year-old children and the outrageous treatment of Culloden school, which will exacerbate children's problems and not help them? Is that an attempt to stampede parents, who know that the tests for seven-year-olds will be severely damaging to their children's self-image and self-confidence, into supporting them?

Mr. Eggar: I am extremely surprised at the attitude of the hon. Lady. HMI made an objective assessment of Culloden. I should have thought that it was in her constituents' interests to ensure that that school remedies the defects identified by HMI in a way that will benefit children and parents.

Grant-maintained Schools

10. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on progress made in establishing grant-maintained schools.

12. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have opted for grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A total of 147 schools have balloted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status. Of those, 127 schools have submitted applications and a further 20 applications are awaited. Of the 127 applications, 71 have been approved, 12 have been rejected and 44 have yet to reach me for decision.

Mr. Nicholson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that where applications for grant-maintained status have local merit they will be supported locally, even by Labour councillors in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition?

However, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that a recent decision by his Department has caused great difficulty for secondary schools in Taunton, in view of the imbalance between schools in the north and the south of the town? Will he or one of his ministerial colleagues meet me and representatives of the local education authority to discuss how we may sensibly proceed?

Mr. Clarke: On the first point, I agree that supporters of grant-maintained status are to be found among governors and head teachers of all political persuasions. With regard to the second point, I know of my hon. Friend's discontent at the recent decision affecting schools in Taunton. The reasons for that decision were given to him. Officials of my Department have met officials of Somerset county council and I had my first meeting with the chairman of the council's education committee yesterday. When I hear the results of the contacts about how we should go forward I shall certainly consider whether I or one of my ministerial colleagues should have the meeting for which my hon. Friend asks.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my right hon. and learned Friend note that, this very day, the parents of children at Waltham Toll Bar comprehensive school, in my constituency, are completing their ballot papers on the question whether they should seek grant-maintained status? As most grant-maintained schools are 30 per cent. over-subscribed, what advice does my right hon. and learned Friend give to those parents?

Mr. Clarke: Giving myself rapid legal advice, I must conclude that it would be most inadvisable to suggest how people should vote in the ballot, as an application would come to me for decision. However, I can confirm in general terms what my hon. Friend has said. The existing grant-maintained schools have been a huge success. The best advertisement for grant-maintained status comes from the teachers and parents. Anyone who visits any of these schools will find that it benefits enormously from the ability to control its own affairs.

Mr. Flannery: Why does not the Secretary of State occasionally talk about reality to the House of Commons? We expect it, but we do not get it. Only about 50 schools —he says 70, but people disagree—have applied for grant-maintained status. There are scores of thousands of schools in the country and virtually none—expressed as a percentage—have asked for grant-maintained status. Why does not the Secretary of State tell us the truth—that this policy is a complete failure?

Mr. Clarke: The number of schools balloted that are in favour of grant-maintained status has almost doubled during the five months that I have been in the Department. It is obvious that we are about to have a flood of applications. As for reality, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that there are not scores of thousands of schools in the

country; there are just a little over one score of thousands. I expect that, before very long, most of them will have grant-maintained status.

Mr. Straw: Is the Secretary of State aware that, in addition to *The Times* newspaper's description of the opting-out policy as "an evil", the Roman Catholic archbishop and bishops have described it as "un-Christian"? The Conservative education chairwoman of Bromley education committee, Mrs. Joan Bryant, has resigned in protest at precisely the kind of disruption to local education that has been identified by the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson). Given that the Conservatives' prediction at the previous election was that 50 per cent. of schools would have opted out by now, whereas less than half of 1 per cent. have done so, why does not the Secretary of State accept that this policy is both educationally and morally bankrupt?

Mr. Clarke: Pretty silly things are said in local campaigns when ballots are held on grant-maintained status. However, to describe that as evil, un-Christian and morally bankrupt is going a little over the top about a policy that is a huge success in schools that have attained grant-maintained status. The hon. Gentleman frequently advises me to visit more schools. I trust that my diary allows me to do so without cancellation. I advise him to visit a grant-maintained school and a city technology college, where he will see that his opinions are based on prejudice. He will encounter people who are achieving all the benefits of our very enlightened reforms.

School Places

11. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special arrangements he makes for ensuring that there is sufficient provision of primary and secondary school places in areas under the planning control of urban development corporations.

Mr. Fallon: It is for local authorities to make proposals to ensure that there are sufficient school places available, whether in urban development areas, or elsewhere. My right hon. and learned Friend always considers proposals for new schools on their merits and in the light of all the relevant information that is available.

Mr. Spearing: Is the Minister aware that a memorandum that I sent to his colleague shows that in the London borough of Newham, south of the A13, which is an area as big as Earl's Court to Waterloo and Chelsea to the middle of Hyde Park, there is an abundance of primary schools but no secondary schools? As the borough lies within the area of the London Docklands development corporation and as large numbers of people are likely to move there, is not it the Government's responsibility to ensure that there are both primary and secondary schools in the area so that the population of Newham is not prejudiced? Where else in the country do such conditions exist?

Mr. Fallon: The fact that there is a successful development corporation at work in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as there is in many other areas of the country, has nothing to do with school planning provision in that area. It is a matter for Newham and Newham alone. I note that this year Newham has been allocated £8·6 million for capital expenditure on schools, as against £5·6 million last year.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Prime Minister agree that under the proposed council tax the price of protecting the rich will be that the rest of us will have to pay more? Given that the Labour party proposes to protect the interests of retired people, does the Prime Minister believe that someone who lives alone but who has an income of £50,000 or £100,000 a year and owns two properties should or should not be entitled to an automatic 25 per cent. rebate on both properties, when a couple who are struggling just to make ends meet will get no relief at all? Is that what the Prime Minister means when he talks about developing a classless society?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will make a statement, setting out the details of our new proposals immediately after Question Time. Whether people live in a large, small or medium-sized property, they will have to pay less under Conservative local government than they do under Labour.

Mr. Hague: Will my right hon. Friend reflect today on the great respect that there is in my constituency for the way in which he kept his nerve during the local government review and was not pushed into making a premature announcement? Would not it have been wiser for his political opponents to give him the credit for that, particularly as their policies are the result of three years of hand-wringing and head-scratching before they decided to go back to where they started from?

The Prime Minister: To be fair to the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition did precisely what I did in terms of consulting and waiting before introducing proposals for his own tax. As he wrote in April 1990:

"We are currently consulting widely with people in local government about our proposals. Our proposals have been planned and tested. Our aim is to get the system right rather than to announce it prematurely."

That is what we did and we were both correct to do so.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister think that Mr. Peter Morgan of the Institute of Directors was right to say today that this awful recession

"is a failure of Government economic management"?

Is not it clear that, as a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister must bear a special personal burden of guilt?

The Prime Minister: If the difficulties that the economy faces are solely the result of domestic economic mismanagement, it is an oddity that there are recessions in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Finland and in many other countries.

Mr. Kinnock: Last week's figures from the Government showed unemployment soaring and output and productivity collapsing. Today's figures show that imports and exports are wildly out of balance again, with imports rising twice as fast as exports. When all that is the case, is it any wonder that the Institute of Directors, like everyone else, understands very well that this is a recession hand-made in Downing street by the right hon. Gentleman?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman cares to examine the trade figures more carefully, he will find that export volumes are up on last year and import volumes are down.

Mr. Kinnock: In so far as there is any improvement year on year in the import figures, would it have been any wonder, when the right hon. Gentleman has flattened the economy, that imports should have been falling? Instead of that, imports are rising twice as fast as exports. Why is not the Prime Minister man enough to accept his share of the blame?

The Prime Minister: What we are flattening is inflation and interest rates; both are falling.

Mr. Forman: Is not it clear to my right hon. Friend and to the House that interest rates and inflation will fall in the remainder of the year and that it will be possible for economic recovery to come as a consequence? Is not it equally clear that any Government who had a policy of increasing the rates of tax on incomes, without telling the British people exactly what those rates and what that coverage would be, would be both working against the interests of recovery and not levelling with the British public?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. As he knows, inflation has fallen by nearly 3 per cent. since October and will show a further dramatic fall again next month. That has paved the way for five interest rate cuts. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said this morning, the economic recovery will gather pace in the second half of the year.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Prime Minister concerned that after 12 years of Conservative Government, one third of our seven-year-olds are still being sold short on the learning of their mother tongue, English? How can he explain that?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has made clear on a number of occasions the importance that we attach to the basics in the curriculum—the most important of all being English. If the right hon. Gentleman is so concerned about such matters, perhaps he will offer us his clear and unequivocal support for testing so that we can determine precisely what is happening and improve it.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the cost of the new council tax comes to be analysed per household, all policies should be taken into account? If a policy included the scrapping of any capping on local authority spending or the re-creation of the Greater London council, one thing is clear: it would cost every London household an absolute fortune.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will know that the proposals of the Leader of the Opposition for local government would lead to a massive and costly disruption. The Labour party proposes two upheavals: first, a return to the rates, which would mean massive bills for many people in different parts of the country; and, secondly, ever-rising bills because Labour refuses to cap spendthrift councils.

Q2. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Secretary of State for Employment that there needs to be yet another job creation scheme to massage the figures before the next general election, or will he side with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who wants nothing to do with it?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would know, if he studied these matters, that we now have in place in this country the largest training programmes that we have ever had.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: The Prime Minister will be aware from his visit to my constituency last week how much my constituents appreciate the community charge reduction scheme. Many couples benefit to the tune of £500, while families of three benefit to the tune of £800. Does he understand the anger of my constituents at the Labour party's action last Wednesday in trying to scrap the community charge reduction scheme?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly understand that. I think that anybody would be extremely angry indeed not only at the Labour party's plans for that, but on examining the details of what it proposes to replace the community charge with.

Q3. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm today that, despite the desperate need to improve his electoral chances at the next election, he will not be extending his safe-haven policy to representatives of other small, distant minorities, such as the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)?

The Prime Minister: I am at the moment fully occupied with dealing with safe havens in Iraq.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the widespread calls for Britain to adopt an industrial strategy, has my right hon. Friend ever met anyone who would like to go back to the days when we last had an industrial strategy, when British Airways was rated by passengers below Aeroflot, when British Steel was the world's largest loss-maker and when British Leyland was the butt of international jokes?

The Prime Minister: Certainly, as my hon. Friend intimates, I have never met anyone sensible who wished to return to such a process. But, of course, Opposition Members have policies remarkably like that, with the return of quangos, enterprise banks and all the nastiness of the 1970s.

Q4. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Now that the Prime Minister and the Government have recognised the unfairness of the payment of 20 per cent. of the poll tax by the poorest people in the country, why does not he act now and abolish the 20 per cent. payment? Why is he planning to continue the misery and suffering of thousands of poorer families for a further two years?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would be better employed asking his own leader why he should wish to abandon the community charge reduction scheme.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is surprising to hear the Leader of the Opposition praying in his support the chairman of British Petroleum, who spoke against the Government today, bearing in mind the fact that much of the inflation has been caused by petrol companies putting up prices more than they should and paying themselves more than they should? What lead is that and what example is that for the Leader of the Opposition to give to the rest of the country?

The Prime Minister: The statement by the chairman of British Petroleum was certainly odd in that respect, although he did make the very wise statement that pay settlements are often too high, that the labour market remains riddled with imperfections and that while it remains so riddled it is prevented from working properly.

Q5. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martlew: The Prime Minister, when being interviewed last week by Brian Walden on television, said that some of the principles of the poll tax need to be enshrined. Does the Prime Minister still stick with that statement, or is he going to change his mind again?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has just invented a new definition of impatience. He need wait but a matter of minutes and he will know.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that no Government under his leadership will ever introduce a national minimum wage? Will he confirm that such a policy would destroy jobs and massively increase unemployment, as well as wipe out the system of apprenticeships?

The Prime Minister: I can most certainly confirm all those matters. The estimate of the Department of Employment officials is that a minimum wage would cost between 750,000 and 1 million jobs.

Q6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: As the original poll tax was the beloved flagship of the Prime Minister's predecessor, is it surprising that some of the more ardent supporters of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) believe that the Government are betraying the true faith of Thatcherism again today? Is not it understandable that the right hon. Lady is pretty cross about the record of the Government since she left office?

The Prime Minister: I have never seen the hon. Gentleman as someone who could adequately reflect the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

Mr. Sayeed: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that parts of the country such as Bristol would benefit from being unitary authorities and that the Government have no intention of following the Labour party lead and imposing regional authorities, which would mean just another tier of local government?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will also cover such matters in his statement shortly.

Q7. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Prime Minister recognise that he has a real problem in his Cabinet—a truant? What action is he prepared to take about the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who, during his period in the Department, has spent less than one working day in state schools?

The Prime Minister: When the hon. Lady sees the full range of proposals that my right hon. and learned Friend has prepared for education she, like everyone else, will be bound to applaud them.

Q8. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Currie: Does the Prime Minister agree that the most significant aspect of local government finance is how much is raised and what the money is spent on? Does my right hon. Friend have a view on the proposal of the leader of Derbyshire county council and of some Members of the House that there should be no controls on council spending? Does he agree that that would lead to huge increases in bills under such councils?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. There have to be controls over levels of local authority expenditure, for two reasons—first, to protect community charge payers and ratepayers and, secondly, in the interests of the wider economy.

Local Government Review (England)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about two consultation papers that the Government are publishing today—on the structure of local government in England, and on our proposal for a new council tax to replace the community charge.

The consultation paper on local government structure builds upon the announcement that I made on 21 March. As I made clear then, the Government intend no significant changes in the structure of local government in London or the metropolitan areas. In the remainder of England today, services are provided both by county councils and by district councils.

The Government believe that this structure of two tiers needs to be re-examined for the following reasons. First, unitary authorities are more clearly responsible for the delivery of services, and more clearly accountable for the bill local people are expected to pay. Secondly, two tiers may lead to excessive bureaucracy and duplication of effort. Thirdly, the Government are committed to developing the concept of enabling authorities. Councils will increasingly be able to take advantage of competition between those seeking to provide a service. It is therefore less important today to insist on councils of a particular size. Fourthly, the Government intend to increase the momentum of their existing policies to enable decision-making and responsibility to be more directly in the hands of the people. Fifthly, the present structures of local government do not win universal favour with local people, who have their own ideas about what sort of structure would best reflect local loyalties and communities.

We therefore propose to establish a body to draw up recommendations——

Hon. Members: A quango.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House and the country have been waiting for this statement. Let us hear it in silence.

Mr. Heseltine: We therefore propose to establish a body to draw up recommendations for improving the structure of local government area by area, taking account of local views and the costs and benefits of the change. The proposed local government commission would consult on its recommendations and submit them to the Secretary of State. Final decisions would rest with Parliament.

The Government do not intend that either county or district councils should be abolished wholesale. In some places, it may be best for existing authorities to be merged; in others, the best approach may be to create or re-create quite different authorities. In some areas, there may continue to be two tiers. In all cases, the Government will expect a proper regard for economy and effectiveness of service delivery to feature in any new arrangements. The consultation paper maps out how this process would work and invites views.

The second paper sets out the details of the council tax with which the Government intend to replace the community charge. Subject to consultations, that will be in 1993. The House will know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget announced a significant reduction in the amount of local tax revenue, to a level that the Government believed should be maintained in the longer term. In consequence, the new tax will need to raise less than either the rates during their last years or the community charge during its first. So average bills can be substantially lower than the last average rates bills or the average community charges paid last year.

The council tax will have a property and a personal element. Each household will receive a single bill on the assumption that it consists of two people. Households with only one adult will be entitled to a 25 per cent. personal discount. This means that 90 per cent. of all adults will be taken into account in household bills. It is therefore not the Government's intention to provide for supplements for households with more than two adults. There will be no need for a register of council tax payers.

As each household will receive only one bill, the tax will be easy to administer. The amount of council tax payable will vary according to the value of the property but will vary only within a limited range. Properties in England will each be allocated to one of seven bands. There will be no need for precise valuations of every house or flat, nor need there be regular general revaluations. People in the lowest property band of property will pay about two thirds of those in a property in the middle band in the area. Those in a highest band property will pay about two thirds more than those in the middle band in the area. This means that a household in a highest band property will pay about two and half times as much as those in the lowest band. We shall avoid the very high bills which discredited the rates.

Each year the Government will announce for each band the amount of council tax necessary for a council to provide a reasonable level of service. The grant mechanism will remain broadly unchanged. This year, a council that spent reasonably would have charged a household of two or more people in a top band property no more than £668, and such a household in a lowest band home no more than £267. This year, households with one adult would have paid no more than £501 in the top band and no more than £200 in the lowest band.

People on low incomes will receive rebates in addition to any discount to which they are entitled. there will be no minimum contribution to the council tax. The maximum rebate for those at the income support level will be 100 per cent. Students, student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainees will be automatically entitled to personal discounts.

The council tax payable will relate to how much the council spends. Where councils spend more, all households will have to pay more. The same percentage increase will apply to all household bills. Similarly, the benefit of low spending will be passed through to all council tax payers.

The Government will restrain increases in local authority spending through capping. The threat of capping has been effective this year and we shall ensure that we have the powers appropriate to the new tax.

We shall ensure that no one faces an unreasonable increase in their bill between one year and the next as we change to the new system by the use of appropriate transitional relief.

Following the conclusion of our consultations in mid-June it is the Government's intention to introduce legislation to give effect to their conclusions in the next Session of Parliament.

Copies of the consultation documents and examples of council tax bills are available in the Vote Office and are being sent to all local authorities and their associations today.

The council tax will be simple and cheap to collect. It will require less of single adults than larger households. It will not impose excessive demands on any household. It will make a clear connection between what councils spend and what people pay. It will be seen to be fair.

I commend these proposals to the House and the country.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): It still seems that the hardest word for the Government to say is "Sorry". Is it not remarkable that we have still not had a single word of apology from the Government for the billions of pounds that they have wasted, the chaos and confusion that they have inflicted, and the misery that they have caused to millions of people?

The Secretary of State's statement is, of course, an implicit admission that a disastrous mistake has been made. The pity of it is that the Government have not the guts to make a proper job of correcting that mistake. The party that brought us the head tax now offers us what it wants us to believe is a "stand on your head" tax. Whether it is heads or tails, the people remain the losers.

Some lessons have been learnt. On structure, the Government appear to be offering genuine consultation in contrast to the gimmickry that they offered on poll tax replacement. Provided that we are satisfied that there will be no political gerrymandering, that the appointments to the commission will be free from political bias and that no new attempts at undermining local government will be made, we intend to make a positive response to the Government's proposals on the subject.

Unfortunately, the lessons of the poll tax have not been learnt. The new proposals may have flown the poll tax nest, but they are still the product of a disreputable union between the poll tax and political panic—a sort of mongrel tax which inherits the worst features of both its parents. Is it not clear that the people will want to know whether the proposal will be as fast, as fair or as simple as the fair rates proposal which we have put forward and which every opinion poll shows to be at least twice as popular as any other proposal?

Is not today's announcement a guarantee that, with a Tory Government, the poll tax will stay until at least 1993 and until well beyond that date, according to the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors? Is not the Secretary of State telling us in other words not that the poll tax will go but that it will stay? Why did not the Government take up our offer of co-operation on a short Bill, the Poll Tax (Abolition) Bill, which would ensure—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a very busy day ahead of us.

Mr. Gould: Why did not the Government take up our offer of a Poll Tax (Abolition) Bill which would ensure that this year's poll tax bills will be the last? Why should people, for at least another two or three years, have to put up with all the unfairness and unworkability of the poll tax and with a local tax which, according to Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, is £140 per household higher than it need be?

Why has not the Prime Minister learned that the unfairness of the poll tax made it so hated? Why are the Government at it again, skewing their new proposals so that the richest are protected from paying their fair share? Do not they realise that every pound that the rich do not pay will be added to someone else's bill—the bills of precisely the same people who were so hard hit by the poll tax? Why does the remaining element of a head tax, which counts for much of the total bill, still bear no relation to the ability to pay? It is the discredited poll tax principle all over again.

Why should a single millionaire get 25 per cent. off his bill while families or pensioner couples struggling on a low income must pay the full whack? How will the number of people in a household be confirmed if not by reference to the electoral register? Will not that mean an invitation to many people to trade their vote for the sake of a 25 per cent. reduction in their bill? What will be done about the "John Major problem"—the person who registers at one address but lives at another, perhaps more highly valued, property?

Why have the Government opted for an untried and excessively complicated new scheme based, I assume, on capital values? Incidentally, will the Secretary of State confirm that we are talking about capital values? If not, what is he talking about? What reliance can be placed on the Government's figures which, as no new capital valuation has been carried out anywhere, are totally invented and therefore arbitrary and misleading? Do the figures come from the same computers that assured us, less than two years ago, that the poll tax would average only £176? Will not the seven bands—no doubt reflecting the seven strands of opinion in the Cabinet—mean endless appeals and a disincentive to home improvement?

Does the Secretary of State recall the scorn that was poured on a property tax based on capital values by virtually all his Cabinet colleagues? How many of them does he now expect to resign? Does he recollect his predecessor, now the Tory chairman, describing his proposal as "a rottweiler's breakfast"? Were his colleagues being honest then, or are they being honest now? Does he remember saying that the more the Government considered a single person discount,

"the more we became convinced that it helps significantly the better-off"?

Does he still hold that view, or is this another example of the celebrated Heseltine flip—or should it be flop? How long can he expect such flip-flopping to carry credibility?

How many of his colleagues does the Secretary of State expect to support the new tax in the Division Lobbies? How many of them will claim that this is the end of the poll tax and applaud it, and how many will condemn it on the same grounds? How many will claim, with equal vehemence—especially in Scotland—that the essentials of the poll tax have been retained? Which way does he expect the Prime Minister to jump on that issue—not so much the Heseltine flop as the John Major straddle?

Have not the Government, once again, failed to disentangle themselves from the poll tax? Are we not still paying the price of a Government who are too weak and too divided to summon enough nerve to kill it off? Even now, after 12 years and £14 billion, with a poll tax that costs the taxpayer £18 million per day, all we are offered is a consultation paper.

[Mr. Gould]

The consultation that will really matter will take place on 2 May and at the general election, when voters will express their determination to kill off this Tory tax once and for all by electing a Labour Government.

Mr. Heseltine: Yesterday, the deputy leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), said that the Labour Government would repeal our proposals. Today we have been told by the Opposition's Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), that they will adopt a constructive approach to them. If we have heard the constructive approach, I would rather have the old-fashioned opposition. When I listened to the hon. Gentleman suggest that the Government should apologise for our new proposals, when he speaks on behalf of a party that is committed to returning to the rates, which were described by the Leader of the Opposition as the "most unjust" of all taxes, I found it mind-blowing.

The hon. Gentleman suggests that the issue of capital values has been invented. In fact, it came from the valuation officers. They are the people who would be involved with any revaluation of any sort, whether under the hon. Gentleman's proposals or under ours. The hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* These valuations were provided to my Department by the valuation office of the Inland Revenue, and that is the only basis upon which any Government could carry out a proper assessment. I am asked by the hon. Gentleman whether they would be working to capital values in relation to the property element, and the answer is yes. That is a simple answer.

It was suggested by the hon. Gentleman that our system was complicated. If the House refers to the Labour party's document entitled "Fair Rates", it will discover that its method of valuing properties is based on building costs, repair costs, rental values and capital values. And then there are personal discounts. That is precisely a formula for complication.

When we consider the certainty of the proposals that we are putting to the House, the Opposition fail by that test. They are not offering us an alternative. Instead, they are offering us an alternative next year of a return to the rates. That will be followed by another upheaval by moving to another tax in the following year. They cannot give any indication whatsoever of what that tax will be. If anyone had any doubts about the wisdom of what the Government are doing, they will have none after listening to the hon. Gentleman.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House heard the Secretary of State for the Environment say that he has announced a consultation document, and I have no doubt that we shall have plenty of opportunity to discuss it between now and June—*[Interruption.]* Order. I must take into account the fact that there are two more statements to be made before we consider the Ports Bill, to which 18 groups of amendments have been tabled, which will be followed by consideration of a training levy order. I shall allow questions on this statement to continue until 4.30 pm. We shall then move on to the Welsh statement, and after that the Scottish statement.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): May I first congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement? Is he aware that the reaction from the Labour party demonstrates that its fox has been shot? Will he remember that one of the things that helped to ditch the community charge was the level at which that charge was introduced? Therefore, the public will welcome his assurance that the charges will be introduced at the level that he has set out to the House.

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. The House will understand that the figures that I have introduced are based upon this year's budgets, as adjusted for the different costs of collection, and percentage of collection, to bring us into line broadly with the sort of calculations that the Labour party has been parading. I believe our figures to be accurate and consistent with CIPFA, whereas the Labour party's figures are not. Indeed, they have been disowned significantly by CIPFA during the past few days.

We are determined that levels of expenditure are kept under control by tight capping regimes. Right hon. and hon. Members will want to view with suspicion any calculations of the Labour party, because the Labour party will remove any constraints on the expenditure and conditions of local government.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not clear that what the Secretary of State has produced is not son of poll tax but son of rates, preserving many of the faults of the rating system while not being based firmly on ability to pay, as a local income tax would have been? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a relatively low earning couple will find themselves paying the same as a four-earner family next door? Why has he tilted the system to ensure that the very rich pay very little more than those on low incomes? Will people be able to appeal if they believe that their property has been placed in the wrong band, and how many appeals does the right hon. Gentleman expect? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the poll tax will be with us until at least March 1993? What will next year's poll tax bills be like?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that when we brought about the substantial reductions in the headline charge and introduced the community charge reduction scheme, the Chancellor said that we intended to preserve the new balance broadly struck between what was raised locally and financed centrally. I do not expect there to be a significant number of appeals—although, of course, the procedures will provide for appeals—because we shall be talking about a banding system, and I do not think that many people will wish to query the bands in which they find themselves—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is as aware as I am that our system has been designed to constrain the level of charges at the upper end.

We must take into account the fact that in the present circumstances, where certain authorities in this country are quite uninterested in any concepts of fairness, the Government have a responsibility to be sure that no one is expected to pay a disproportionate charge as a result of high-spending authorities.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I thank my right hon. Friend warmly for confirming the Government's commitment to a system of financing local councils that people will recognise as being simple to administer, easy to

understand and fair in its application, in contrast to a Liberal policy that would cost at least 3p on everyone's income tax and a Labour policy the cost of which the Leader of the Opposition either does not know or dare not reveal.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Under the proposals of the Liberal party, across the country on average, for every £10,000 of taxable income, the taxed person would pay £330 towards the local services, and that would be extremely punitive at certain levels of income.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Since the element in the expenditure of local authorities which is paid for by central Government and the uniform business rate will remain the same, will not the new system mean that there will be vast variations in the council tax between one local authority area and another, the multiplier effect meaning, in effect, that if local government expenditure is increased by about 1 per cent., the rates bill—or whatever one might care to call it—will then go up by about 6 per cent.?

Mr. Heseltine: There will, of course, be variations, because it is the Government's intention that, where local authorities indulge in high spending, the consequences of the excess spending fall on the local council taxpayers. Equally, where local authorities spend reasonably, or underspend, the benefits will flow through to their local council taxpayers.

When right hon. and hon. Members have had an opportunity to examine the exemplifications, they will see that that principle is followed through and that in certain areas—for example, Wandsworth and Westminster—very low charges are possible as a result of the arrangements that we have made, whereas, on the other hand, in certain authorities, significantly higher charges flow from the decisions of the local authority.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I congratulate the Secretary of State warmly on retaining the keynote features of the community charge in the new council tax—fairness and accountability—and I am confident that the new tax will be widely honoured. Will he remind the public that, while he is accepting consultation with members of Her Majesty's Opposition, so far they have been able to offer the electorate only a pot of fool's gold?

Mr. Heseltine: I strongly support my hon. Friend's view. The incidence of people to homes in this country show that a very high proportion of people come within a local tax, assuming two persons per household. About 38 million out of 42 million will broadly come within the incidence of our proposals, and many of the people in the remaining category will have been left out as a result of the arrangements that we have announced.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the reaction of his hon. Friends today is similar to their reaction when the poll tax was introduced? It will be interesting to note the situation in a year from now.

A terraced house on the periphery of my constituency is worth, say £40,000. A similar property in the city centre is worth £130,000 or £140,000. Will both be in the same band?

Mr. Heseltine: They would not: they would be in bands some way apart to reflect those figures, because it is to be presumed that people living in a property worth £40,000 are likely to have a lower income than people living in a property worth £120,000.

Mr. Nigel Lawson (Blaby): While agreeing with my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Lawson.

Mr. Lawson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with my right hon. Friend that, if there is to be a local tax at all, it should be a property tax based on capital values—that is clearly the right answer—but is he aware of the widespread relief that there will be throughout the country both that the Government have had the courage and common sense to consign the poll tax to oblivion, and that they have come to a firm decision as to the nature of its replacement?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend, whose views on this matter are very close to my own.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The right hon. Gentleman said not a word about the special problems and needs of people with severe disabilities. Will he be restoring to them the benefits of the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 so that they will no longer be penalised if they require a larger house or an extra room?

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, I can confirm that.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the boundaries of the economic regions are reviewed, because they are the basis on which housing investment programme payments and transport supplementary grants are made initially, and they have never been set by the Boundary Commission for England or pursuant to any criterion laid down in any Act of Parliament—or even in a statutory instrument?

Mr. Heseltine: I am interested in what my hon. Friend has to say. When he looks at the exemplifications of our figures he will find that the concept of a national band works perfectly acceptably. I shall look into the matter of the boundaries of economic regions and write to my hon. Friend about it, although I do not think that it relates to this matter.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman and I thought that I heard him talk about structure and finance, but not a single word did he utter about the functions of local government or about how major functions such as the police and education will be funded. Will they be covered in the review?

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The consultation document lists the existing functions in the various tiers of local government and states that we are working on the assumption of those functions being as they now are, or of changes clearly envisaged in Government plans. I also referred in my statement to the idea of the enabling authority which has significant implications for function delivery; but it is for my various colleagues in the Government to announce any changes relating to their functions from time to time.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Apart from the welcome announcement that my right hon. Friend has made about the council tax, and in particular about its level, which will be most acceptable, will he say a little more about proposals for changes in local government structure, which will be widely welcomed? When does he think that changes in the area,s about which there is not a great deal of controversy will take place on the ground?

Mr. Heseltine: The Government are going to proceed area by area. I hope that the first of the new authorities will come into existence in April 1994. I very much welcome what my right hon. Friend has said. We shall be looking at the matter area by area, and we expect a disparate pattern to emerge in the light of local circumstances.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Given that the Secretary of State has said today that the poll tax is dead, but not until 1993, how will he answer those with suspicious minds who will say that this has more to do with the pre-election strategy of the Tory party than with serious policy? He introduced a Bill to reduce this year's poll tax bills by £140 and his colleagues brought in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, so why does not he bring in a Bill today to abolish the poll tax?

What is the right hon. Gentleman going to do about the fact that, by all estimates, 18 million people have not paid all last year's poll tax and many of them have not paid any of it? Why has he said nothing today about the court cases, the bailiffs and the prison sentences? If he thinks that the poll tax battle is over, he ain't seen nothing yet.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is a living example of why his party has thrived so long in opposition and will continue to do so. It is precisely that sort of attitude which reflects so clearly in the judgments that we have to make about the way in which Labour authorities behave. The hon. Gentleman asks about pre-election announcements. The Conservative party is quite keen on winning elections. I know that the Labour party does not expect to.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his new proposals contain a transitional relief scheme to help the introduction of the new system, discounts for single people living alone and a capping mechanism to stop the worst excesses of the loony left? Is he aware that none of those advantages figures in the Labour party's proposals, which shows that it still does not understand how to finance local government?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. We shall have discounts and exemptions to deal with those people whom I have listed. We are determined to intensify the capping regimes to bring down local expenditure and, therefore, local council taxes. We certainly will have a transitional relief scheme, but I am in something of a difficulty, when it comes to the Labour party's proposals, because its published documents say that it will have a transitional relief scheme, but its chief spokesman says that it will not.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Secretary of State accept that banding simplifies administration but it involves an element of rough justice because the amount to be paid depends on the property band in which one's home is placed? Will he therefore reconsider his suggestion that not many people would seek to appeal against the banding, particularly if there is to be no individual valuation of properties?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I think that, when hon. Members have had a chance to look, they will find that the difference between the bands means that people will be unlikely in large measure to seek to take advantage of an appeal procedure. But I do not wish to make an issue of that. The procedure will be there, and people will be fully entitled to make use of it.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his new proposals, on which he and the Government should be congratulated, will immediately produce a situation that will be broadly seen as fairer than the community charge and the rating system, and levels of payment which are broadly acceptable? Can he confirm that future house values will be based on current values rather than on rebuilding costs? If so, is he aware that that will ensure that older, traditionally built houses will not be clobbered merely because they have immense rebuilding costs?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. I agree that the tax will be seen as fair and acceptable. I can confirm that under our announcements there will be no reflection of the rebuilding costs in the valuations. The property element will be based on capital values. At the same time, it must be made clear that one of the complications of the Labour party's scheme, as I understand it—I confess to a certain rudimentary knowledge of that—is that it will have rebuilding and repair costs and property and rental values all in one package, if that can be believed.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that we will now see an end to the nonsense of Westminster and Wandsworth receiving massive bribes and handouts while Bassetlaw district council in my constituency never received one penny in rate support grant for 10 years and, morever, lost the high rates that it used to get from the pits and power stations? Will we now see an end to that unfair system, so that all councils have handouts that bear some relation to their needs?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman only has to look at the disposition of grants to inner-London authorities to realise that neighbouring Labour councils receive significantly more than Wandsworth. The result is that Wandsworth and Westminster, by prudent housekeeping——

Mr. Ashton: What does that have to do with it?

Mr. Heseltine: Because I was asked about the distribution of grant, as though that is something which is totally reflected within the level of charges—it is not. The hon. Gentleman will discover that it is not just grant distribution that influences charges but local authority spending decisions. That will be seen in exemplifications across the country. I confess that I do not have before me the figures for Bassetlaw, but I shall be surprised if the situation is as the hon. Gentleman suggests. Nevertheless, I will write to him.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his welcome

statement. For most people, the important thing will be the bottom line. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in rural areas such as Devon, the majority of households will pay less under his new scheme than they would under the old rating scheme, if it had been uprated from 1973 to 1993?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend, of course, is right in realising that the big switch made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his recent Budget brings about a result broadly on the lines that he suggests. Council taxpayers in Devon, for example will benefit significantly from the fact that their county council is within 0·1 per cent. of the level of reasonable spend.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Secretary of State acknowledge the very real problems confronting excellent city councils such as Leicester, which are struggling desperately to provide worthy services to their citizens under the weight of the chaos caused by the poll tax? Does he accept that that chaos will inevitably continue for at least two more years? What transitional relief does he propose, if any, to allow councils to do their job of serving their citizens in their areas?

Mr. Heseltine: Leicester would probably do better if it had kept down its community charge, and went on to keep its local tax down.

Mr. Janner: But there would be no services.

Mr. Heseltine: It is no use the hon. and learned Gentleman making that argument, because Conservative authorities all over the country are providing services that are more than adequate, at very much lower levels of cost.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be aware that my constituents are delighted at the opportunity that he is giving them to get rid of Humberside county council. As it has, in a sense, already been got rid of by a Boundary Commission report, should not that consideration be put at the top of the list to be drawn up by my right hon. Friend's new commission? My right hon. Friend will be aware also that my council is concerned about revenue support grant. Will he confirm that it is not set in ferroconcrete, and that he is prepared to consider further representations?

Mr. Heseltine: As to the grant distribution system, broadly speaking, we do not intend to change it—but we always listen carefully to representations about standard spending assessments. Switching SSAs in the direction of one authority invariably means that other authorities lose out, with consequent complaints. The Humberside issue has been proceeding along its own track and the Government have no intention of intervening to change the process that is at work.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of all right hon. and hon. Members, I ask for single questions, as that will be fairer.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The Secretary of State is contrite about the 20 per cent. minimum community charge, and says that it will go under his new council tax. Why has he failed to bring a measure before the House to abolish that charge from this year's poll tax, and from last year's and next year's poll tax? Unless he does so, people will continue to run up huge debts.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred to that aspect. The hon. Gentleman will be fully aware that the changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget, and by myself in later statements, are of significant help to people on lower incomes.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend will be well aware of the appalling record of the London borough of Lambeth, which never collected all its rates or community charge. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend's Department published figures showing that £30 million of Lambeth's community charge remains uncollected this year. Does my right hon. Friend believe that his new council tax will be collected by Lambeth, or is it a Labour council out of control?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has raised a most interesting question, because it so happened that my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) revealed the inadequacy of Lambeth's delivery in the matter of collecting its bills, and made it absolutely clear that it has nothing to do with the community charge. What it was about was the inadequate management of that authority. The fact of the matter is that Lambeth is owed £28·9 million in respect of rents, £28 million in domestic rates and £13·7 million in business rates. Anyone who wants to understand why Lambeth is responsible for charging people what is inevitably a high community charge, should have regard to its inability to collect the revenue to which it is entitled. Perhaps it is a chilling example of the concern that we have about Labour authorities that the Labour party has now been driven to the point where it has sacked the significant leaders of Lambeth council.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): When the Government introduced the poll tax, they told us that it was done to extend democracy and introduce accountability, that it would be based on fairness and that it would be easy to collect. It was introduced with a chorus of support from the Government Benches. Now they tell us, after a £14 billion mistake and waste of money, that they will introduce another tax that will be fair, accountable, democratic and simple. Why should the electorate believe in the judgment of the Government? They know that this is an election ploy for a Government who will be defeated.

Mr. Heseltine: I was extremely interested in the hon. Lady's references to extending democracy, as she speaks for a party that has sacked the Labour deputy of Wirral council, and Labour councillors in Liverpool and Lambeth. If that is not curtailing democracy, I do not know what is.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend accept thanks from my constituents who live in low-rated houses and, because many of them are single households, also thanks from those who will be relieved about the 25 per cent. reduction on single households? Will he also accept our grateful relief that he is capping Lancashire?

Mr. Speaker: One question please, Dame Elaine.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I missed one earlier.

Mr. Speaker: Bad luck, but only one question now please.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the county council——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the hon. Lady that this is hardly fair to her colleagues.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the county council be capped?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has drawn my attention today and earlier to the overspending practices of Lancashire county council, which must be of considerable concern to her and to many people who live in her constituency. I appreciate her comments about the help that we have brought to people who live in low-rated houses. Certainly, we have introduced a community charge reduction scheme which will be of considerable benefit this year and we very much welcome the opportunity to extend the principle that people should be personally involved in this process by introducing the 25 per cent. discount.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Does the Secretary of State agree that the public humiliation that the Government have suffered over poll tax is well deserved, in view of the fact that the Conservative party allowed common sense to be overridden by party political ideology? More important, many thousands of people in my constituency are having to pay 20 per cent. of the poll tax or more, although they are very poor and can ill afford to do so. In view of that, why does not he introduce legislation to stop it now, before we have another two years of asking people for money that they do not have?

Mr. Heseltine: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that we are now discussing arrangements for the new tax for 1993, and I should have thought that he would welcome the fact that we have removed the minimum contribution.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): My right hon. Friend deserves the widespread congratulations that he has received this afternoon and that he will undoubtedly get during the next few weeks. Can I ask him to be on his guard lest the country at large considers that it has broadly two property taxes with no difference? Will he underline the three threats to widows, spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and the fact that the valuation basis of the Labour party's proposals means there will have to be four separate values every year?

Mr. Heseltine: I very much welcome my hon. Friend's question and I hope that the Labour party will now take the trouble to spell out the implications of the figures involved in its new tax—not the one-year resting point on the old rates, but what it intends in the longer term.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Secretary of State, when deciding the terms of reference for the reconstruction of local government, including the financing of services, take into consideration the fact that the standard spending assessment has worked unfairly against some authorities? Will he consider whether there should be equalisation in the future?

On the tax itself——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Just that one question, please, in fairness to other Members.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member will read with interest what the consultative document says about parishes, and we shall undoubtedly hear his views, along with those of everybody else. I cannot add to what I said a few moments ago about standard spending assessments. We look at these matters constantly. In any system of distributing Government grants, SSAs have always given rise to controversy.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, according to our interpretation, the word "fair" implies the protection of people from the excesses of high-spending councils? In contrast, the Labour party, with its so-called fair rates, would go back to the bad old days of no protection, when councils could spend exactly what they liked, with no control whatsoever and no protection for single people.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the Labour party's proposals is that the party cannot give any details whatsoever about them. Even worse, the Opposition would incite local authorities to continue the upward spiral of expenditure, with devastating consequences for some of the least privileged people in our society.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Can the Secretary of State give the House an assurance that finance from national taxes will be made available in sufficient quantities to hold local taxation permanently at the new level he proposes?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful for the chance to repeat that, when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought about a new balance between local taxation and central taxation, he made it clear that the Government intended to maintain that balance.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am sure that the majority of the residents of the borough of Macclesfield will warmly welcome a majority of the proposals that have been announced by my right hon. Friend today. I say so as those people live in a borough whose authority underspent SSA by 11·3 per cent. My question is a direct one, and concerns the future structure of local government. Does my right hon. Friend think it fair that Cheshire county council, which produced a figure that only just prevented it from being capped, and which is controlled by Labour with support from the Liberal Democrats, should be allowed to allocate £100,000 of hard-pressed ratepayers' and community charge payers' money for the purpose of defending itself against what the people may wish to do in the future with regard to a unitary or all-purpose authority at district or borough level?

Mr. Heseltine: Obviously I cannot prejudge any decisions about the way in which unitary authorities might operate in Cheshire. However, the commission is unlikely to be influenced by public relations campaigns involving high expenditure. It will want to give people a much fairer chance against the big battalions and bureaucracy.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As the poll tax is now universally seen as one of the most expensive political

fiascos in British political history, as well as being divisive and unpopular, will the Secretary of State do something to help the poorest this year and next year by bringing forward his proposals to cancel the minimum charge, by cancelling the 20 per cent., and by introducing a more generous rebate system? Does he realise that there would be Opposition support for an arrangement to rush legislation through the House to give real help now to the poorest people?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that the minimum contribution by the poorest people carries with it an uprating of social security benefits to enable them to make payments broadly in line with the 20 per cent. We are talking today about the system that is to be introduced in 1993—not about arrangements for the years between now and then.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Given that my right hon. Friend is dealing with valuations in broad classifications, may I ask him whether he addressed the problem of the injustice of tax on home improvements, which was a feature of the old rating system, and would presumably be a feature of the Labour party's proposed system? Can I give my constituents an assurance that anyone who installs central heating or double glazing will not have to pay an extra tax, as under the old system?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We do not envisage that to improve or change one's home would cause a house to move from one band to another.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can I say to the Secretary of State that, just like the lettered number plate, this approach is very divisive and invites the worst form of coarse and vulgar consumerism? Can he imagine what will happen in two or three years' time when there are band A, band B and band G properties, with people wanting to indicate their social mobility by moving up bands? Does he not think that that is divisive?

Mr. Heseltine: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but it is fair to say that the Labour party's "Fair Rates" document also referred to a banding concept. We have not suddenly introduced a new concept. The hon. Gentleman grossly exaggerates the effects of adopting the simple system that we have proposed.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement will come as very good news to the many thousands of my constituents who live in small, old terraced properties, who formerly paid low rates and who were very badly hurt by the community charge?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. When people have considered and understand the exemptions, I believe that those who feel that in recent times they have paid more than they ought to pay will be reassured.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): The Secretary of State's powers of capping will affect local authority budgets, which are based on standard spending assessments. Last year, in the coming year and in years to come, they will be based on 1981 census data. Will he confirm that the standard spending assessments are to be retained under the new system, and that therefore all the charge-capping problems will remain? Authorities such as mine will therefore not receive adequate grant support to reflect their social and economic needs.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's authority has been capped. The standard spending assessment system will be part of any mechanism for distributing central Government grant. Whether it is called the grant-related expenditure assessment, the standard spending assessment or the needs element, it will be there and will always create controversy. Each local authority will want more. The problem is that it will not be prepared to recognise that that is the position of every local authority.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I give a warm welcome to my right hon. Friend's statement, but can he assure my constituents who, under the old rating system, suffered increases under a Labour-controlled council of up to 42 per cent. in one year, that that will be impossible under his proposals?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall look closely every year at the Government's proposals for capping arrangements. We intend to bear down on high-spending authorities. I hope that my hon. Friend will be content with a general answer today, since we have not yet begun to consider the rules that will apply next year.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Secretary of State will be aware that his statement will meet with the disapproval of the vast majority of the people of this country, since it does not address the problem that has been raised by a number of my hon. Friends: the fact that local authorities ought to receive what they require to meet their needs. Poverty, high unemployment and poor services in many of our cities will not be remedied by his statement. He will not con the people.

Mr. Heseltine: By and large, people have come to understand that Liverpool's problems were not created by the grant distribution mechanism. If that statement needs any reinforcement, the Opposition would not have needed to sack councillors standing in the name of the Labour party and to replace them with councillors who can do the job better.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the extreme suffering of the people of Ealing, including students, nurses and others, in 1987 when the then Labour council increased the rates by 65 per cent? Will my right hon. Friend's proposals lead to discounts for student nurses and apprentices? Will they pay something, or will they pay nothing?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the transfer of control of Ealing to a Conservative administration was like a great light coming over the horizon and I am grateful to have the opportunity to pay tribute to that. I can also confirm to my hon. Friend that, under the new arrangements, students, YT trainees, apprentices and student nurses will qualify for personal discounts.

Mr. Michael Carr (Ribble Valley): Although we welcome the right hon. Gentleman's consultation proposals on the structure of local government, can he give an assurance that any local authority structure that emerges will not ignore the special needs of rural areas?

Mr. Heseltine: That is a very interesting point, and it is one of the reasons why we have referred in the consultative document to the possibility of different patterns of authorities emerging. It is also one of the reasons why we have referred to the potential role of parishes.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend accept that his speech today—the content, the delivery and everything about it—in comparison with that of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), which was poor, lacking in content and did not hold the attention of the House, will be widely respected throughout the country, not least in Cleveland? My right hon. Friend may like to learn at this stage that the Labour leaders of Middlesbrough, of Stockton and of Hartlepool councils have joined the Conservative leader of Langbaurgh council in asking for the abolition of Cleveland county council, as did the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) on Radio Cleveland yesterday, when he also warned his party against regional government.

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his praise, although he qualified it towards the end of his remarks. He would not expect me to be drawn on the relative merits of yes or no to Cleveland, although I know what a formidable advocate he will be on one side of the argument.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I was going to ask the Secretary of State about the chip shop factor, which is when there is a chip shop on one side and a disco on the other. Without individual valuation, a person ends up paying just as much as the person who overlooks the local park. However, as I am confined to one question, may I ask him this? The question is simple. Taking the average amount that a two-person household would pay under Labour's scheme as £333 and using like with like, is it not a fact that, under the scheme announced this afternoon, the con tax would cost the same two-person household £400?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the hon. Gentleman really asked two questions. First, he raised the issue of a chip shop on one side of the road and something else on the other. There is an appeals procedure which is perfectly open to anyone who thinks that he has been adversely affected. Doubtless that will now be seen as an incitement to every chip shop owner in the country to march towards Whitehall to appeal against what we are doing. We will treat them as fairly as chip shop owners deserve.

To go back to the hon. Gentleman's arithmetic, the fact is that if one has a similar sum to collect, the same number of people and the same number of properties, the average under any scheme must be the same.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I remind hon. Members whom I have unfortunately been unable to call that, if they table questions tomorrow to the Department of the Environment, they will be answered in a fortnight's time.

Local Government Review (Wales)

4.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about local government finance in Wales, and in particular about the Government's proposals for the new council tax to replace the community charge.

I will be consulting widely in Wales on the basis of the paper that we have published today. As right hon. and hon. Members will see from the consultation document, the new council tax provides for a single bill for each household based on the value of the property, with a discount for single-person households. There are provisions for transitional relief, rebates for the most needy and discounts for student nurses, and so on, as well as for single occupiers, and there will be no register for adults. I believe that the system will be fair, equitable and simple to administer.

The House is already aware of the substantial benefits for Welsh community chargepayers which I have recently been able to announce. The generous local government finance settlement for 1991-92 enabled local authorities to set community charges some £130 less than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I was also able to make available a total of £62 million for the community charge reduction scheme. Finally, and most important, the Government have provided £300 million to reduce by £140 the community charges set by authorities throughout Wales. The upshot of all this is that the average community charge in Wales before the award of community charge benefit will not exceed £95.

The proposals announced today must be seen in that context. The new arrangements that we are proposing will provide for a fair and durable system of local taxation in Wales. I am placing in the Library exemplifications of the consequences of the new scheme. These are based on 1991-92 expenditure by Welsh local authorities and the current level of central Government support, to which I have already referred. The Government's intention is that the balance between central and local taxation established in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement should be broadly maintained in the longer term.

As I have said, I want to consult widely on the basis of the paper published today. There may be areas where Welsh circumstances are different from those elsewhere, and so the detailed arrangements for Wales may need to differ. I am asking local authorities and others to put to me their suggestions for the particular matters on which separate Welsh arrangements would be appropriate. I trust that Labour Members may now at last be willing to contribute to that debate and consultation, and I would also welcome further contributions from those who have already been willing to participate in the consultation process and have given me the benefit of their views.

I should just say a further word about local government structure and functions. I told the House on 21 March that I wished to consult further with local authority associations before taking matters forward. I met the associations on 11 April and am pleased to tell the House that we had a very positive and constructive exchange of views. I now propose to reflect on what was said to me and then, in the early summer, to publish a consultation paper

which, among other issues, will identify the facts which need to be borne in mind in considering any reorganisation.

Our review of local government finance functions and structure is making considerable progress. The Government intend to establish for Wales, as for Britain as a whole, a system of local government which can serve us well for many years to come. The consultation paper issued today is a major step forward in that process, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On structure, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that any commission in Wales must be able to generate cross-party support? Will he guarantee that the commission will not be packed with an anti-Labour membership? Will he now accept that Labour's policy principle in Wales of a single tier of most-purpose local authorities is already backed by the districts and counties of Wales?

Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that Labour's plans for changing the structure of local government were published several years ago, following extensive consultation? The right hon. Gentleman is riding on Labour's coat-tails here. He is engaged on a policy clothes-stealing exercise, is he not?

The right hon. Gentleman now gives weight to the consultative process, as he must. May I remind him that, in the 1980s, the consultations on the poll tax were nothing less than a sham—a bitter farce? When the representatives of the Welsh councils tell him that they want to return to the rates, with enhanced rebates, will he accept their advice?

Is it not true that, under the council tax, rich people in Wales will get special treatment from the Government? The banding exercise is not equitable. Will the Secretary of State admit that the hated poll tax will remain for a further two or even three years in Wales? That will be resented throughout Wales. Why does the Secretary of State not accept our offer of a Poll Tax (Abolition) Bill, which would speedily end a tax that is hated and rejected by all our people throughout the Principality?

Some houses in well-heeled areas of Wales are worth a quarter of a million pounds or more. The average price of a mid-Glamorgan house is but £31,600. Does the Secretary of State seriously recommend a tax under which the occupant of a mansion will pay only two and a half times the tax paid by someone in a humble home in the bottom band of the Government assessment? Are not the Government protecting the rich and the super-rich?

The Secretary of State, in his former office, played a special role in perfecting the poll tax. Now the central tenet of Government policy is to dump the poll tax. Has not the right hon. Gentleman repeatedly trumpeted the merits of that tax? Does he not carry special responsibility for the hardship, distress and anger that it has generated throughout Wales? Will he now apologise to the people of Wales for his special role in establishing the hated tax? He lacked credibility as he made his statement today.

Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman realise that, whatever panic-stricken stratagems he is prepared to adopt, the parliamentary skins of his colleagues will not be saved in Wales? The people of Wales will make their judgment on 2 May and in the general election that is soon to come.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) did not know which way to jump, and he finished by jumping in all directions at once. First, he said that we had stolen his proposals. Then he said that the new tax was still the poll tax. I was totally confused, as were most hon. Members.

The hon. Gentleman's first question did not relate to anything that I said or to anything in the consultation document. He must have thought that I had announced a commission today, but I did not do so. I know that some of his friends in local government would like to have an independent commission to tell us in Wales what to do, but I believe that we can decide that for ourselves. I am not minded to set up a commission, and that decision has the strong support of all the district councils.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman said that local authorities in Wales had agreed on their preferred form of local government. It is true that, when local authority representatives came to see me, they said that we should move towards single-tier local government, but when they were asked about the size and number of the single tiers, they did not agree among themselves. We must not let the hon. Gentleman pretend that the councils agree. The Government believe in facing up to the disagreements as well as to what is agreed, so that we can produce a solution that will last for many years.

I have read the Labour party's proposals for local government, and I asked a reasonably random selection of people in Wales whether they understood what the proposals meant. I did not find anyone who understood them. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside said that I had stolen the Labour party's clothes. The hon. Gentleman may be better dressed than I am, but his proposals have been covered in a cloak. I have simply snatched away the cloak so that people can see his proposals. He is right to recognise that some elements in our announcement today were in the Labour party's proposals, too, but they were subsquently denied.

Banding is one example. On 1 July, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) prepared a confidential discussion document advocating a tax based on five bands of property values. Today, it was educational to hear the hon. Member for Dagenham attacking a proposal based on seven bands, having already accepted the nature of our proposal.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside then said that the Government were merely returning to the rates. We are doing no such thing. The Labour party proposes to return to the rates, or rather, to something called a graduated rateable value. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Hon. Members cannot have read the document "Fair Rates". Rebuilding, maintenance and repair costs, and private rents, would be taken into account in calculating graduated rateable values. That would not happen immediately, however. First, it was suggested, we should return quickly to a register based on 1973 valuations. The spectacle that the Labour party offers, with its idea of a Poll Tax (Abolition) Bill, is that we should return immediately to the rates.

I remind the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside that, in Gwent, where a contest is looming for a parliamentary seat, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about rates. He was in Pontllanfraith—[HON. MEMBERS: "What?"]. I am merely using the pronunciation used by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). He described all rates —*[Interruption.]* Labour Members should listen to the

[Mr. Hunt]

words of their leader. They do not like what I am saying, but this is the system to which they propose to return. The right hon. Member for Islwyn referred to

"the most unjust of all taxes—local rates."

Yet that is what the Labour party now proposes.

Yes, the voters will make a choice on 2 May. They know that to vote Conservative will be to vote for councils that cost them less and give better services, whereas to vote Labour would mean voting for higher spending and higher bills.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat what I said on the previous statement. I shall ask for single questions——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): And short answers.

Mr. Speaker: —and I hope that the answers will be short, too. That would enable me to call all the hon. Members who have been rising. In any event we shall have to move on to the Scottish statement by 5.15 pm.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Can my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reconcile what is left of the view of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) with the football hooliganism of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who said that he would repeal the new tax before he even knew what it would be? The new tax is a huge improvement. Will my right hon. Friend tell us who will conduct the banding operation, and on what principles?

Mr. Hunt: We have been guided by the Inland Revenue valuation office in reaching the statistics in the exemplifications. We are now consulting on the way in which we shall deal with valuations, but in the consultation paper we rely on the Inland Revenue valuation office. We have included a provision, which we believe local authorities will welcome, to enable them to buy in local professional expertise and experience where they consider that to be necessary.

On the first point, I would ask the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) to consult not only the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) but the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Either they intend to repeal their proposals, or they will have positive consultations. As I have said, my door is always open. Why will not the hon. Gentleman follow the example of the Conservatives, Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats, and come in and consult properly?

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Does the Secretary of State agree that today he has announced the introduction of another property tax? Does he also agree that he said on 3 March 1990:

"How much more abominable than a tax on widows? But this is what the rating system is."?

Surely what the Secretary of State has announced is very similar to the rating system. Surely widows living alone in houses will be adversely affected. What about second homes? I gather that there will be a special dispensation for second homes, and that it will be far cheaper for second-home owners than for the people who live there permanently to live in Wales. What does the Secretary of State intend to do about that?

Mr. Hunt: On the question of second homes, I make it absolutely clear that I intend to consult. That is one element where, if people follow the lead that I wish to give, in Wales we may decide to introduce different provisions from those which will apply in England and elsewhere. The proposal in the consultation paper for England does not meet the special problem of second homes in Wales.

Secondly, it is precisely to meet the problems of single-parent families and widows that we are introducing a special discount for single-person households.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Does my right hon. Friend accept that no local authority tax will be popular and that the new tax replaces one which was uniquely unpopular because, uniquely, it asked every adult to pay? That was the underlying reason for the unpopularity of the community charge. In the new banding system, will the figures be absolute, based on valuation, or will a house be placed within a particular band between an upper and lower limit, without being identified by precise pricing? Does he also understand—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked three questions. That is enough, thank you.

Mr. Hunt: The value of the banding system—originally advocated, I concede, by the hon. Member for Dagenham —is that it removes the need to have properties individually valued. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) proposes not merely a return to the rates, with all their injustice, but revaluation within two years of every property in Wales. The banding proposal gives us an opportunity to move away from revaluations and to place properties within a band which everyone can see to be fair and equitable.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): May I ask the Secretary of State to remind the people of Wales that the poll tax will be maintained in 1991-92 and 1992-93? Even with transitional relief and the community charge reduction scheme, how much more will householders in my constituency have to pay for the perpetuation of the poll tax, even compared to his so-called fair system?

Mr. Hunt: Let me make it absolutely clear to the hon. Gentleman that I am willing to consult local authorities on the best and quickest way to move from the community charge to the new system. The first responses that I have had from them are that the date that I have announced is the earliest possible time at which the new system can be put in place. But the hon. Gentleman's constituents were paying £248 actual rates on average in Merthyr Tydfil. Under the same system and with the same proportion of local government expenditure raised locally, that would have risen to £291 this year. Under the proposals that I have announced today, in the hon. Gentleman's area the average bill per household in 1991-92 would be £112.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): In welcoming the burial of the poll tax, may I ask whether the Secretary of State is aware that thousands of people are in difficulties this year? Can he ensure that such people are given some help to overcome the debts that they have built up? I have one specific question for the Secretary of State. Will he address the question of water rates? The consultation paper refers to the domestic water charges in Scotland and the possibility of bringing them into the orbit of the new

structure. Does that mean that there could also be a rebate system in Wales to help the much-beleaguered Welsh water rate payers?

Mr. Hunt: Nothing in the consultation paper deals with the water rates. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, we have a generous rebate system under the community charge. As he knows, under that rebate system, those who have to meet the 20 per cent. payment are allowed far more in income support than the amount that they actually have to pay. That is reflected in the latest figures for Wales, which show that not 90 per cent.—the figure used by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside in his calculations—but 96 per cent. of the community charge has been collected and that 98 per cent. of what local authorites expected to receive has been collected.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): We all know that the reason we are discussing a new proposal to replace the poll tax is the result of the Ribble Valley by-election. I do not want to go on for long, but a great deal should be said and many questions should be put to the Secretary of State about his statement today. Does he accept that the best way of consulting—I have listened to him mention the word "consultation" 20 times since he began his statement—is probably the by-election that will take place in Monmouth? If a Labour Member of Parliament is elected there, will the Secretary of State scrap the proposal that he has offered us today?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has his own views on why the proposals have been made. I believe that they represent a fair and equitable way to proceed. On consultation, I ask again why the Labour party has decided to throw a cloak over its own proposals and refused even to discuss them with me. Plaid Cymru, the Liberal Democrats, my colleagues in the Conservative party and the local authority associations have come to consult me. The only people who were absent from the consultations were the shadow Secretary of State and his colleagues. I repeat that my door is open and I am willing to consider and consult with the hon. Gentleman, as and when he is ready at last to come in and see me.

The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) should study the figures for Ogwr. If he does so, he will see that our proposal is a good deal for not only the people of Ogwr but the people of Monmouth.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the Secretary of State realise that he has put on the most brazen performance today? He came to that Dispatch Box over the dead body of his sacred principle that everyone must pay. It is the most humiliating about-turn that I have ever seen from a Secretary of State for Wales. Does he accept that it is particularly worrying that he has said with pride that we are to have no commission to give independent advice in Wales? Instead, a man of past evangelical single-mindedness will impose a system by diktat.

Mr. Hunt: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman listened. If he had done so and if he had also listened to the voices of the district councils in Wales, including those being raised in his local council election campaigns, he would realise that all parties alike would like to see us resolve the matter within Wales. Why does the right hon. Gentleman want a commission? Who does the right hon. Gentleman think could sit on some great independent commission to tell us in Wales how to conduct our affairs? As far as I am concerned, we can do that in Wales with no help from a commission.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that thousands of university students live in my constituency. Can he clarify the position of four students sharing the same rented house?

Mr. Hunt: They will all be covered by the personal discount. Unless there are two adults in the household, the students will get the maximum personal discount. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the consultation paper, which sets out the position clearly.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Does the Secretary of State regret not consulting widely about the introduction of the poll tax? Who does he believe was more correct a year ago in the Ogwr borough council chamber—he referred to that council earlier—was it a leading Labour councillor, Dick Power, who said of the poll tax:

"This is ill thought out and a nightmare to administer"?

Or was it the leader of the Conservative group on Ogwr borough council, Councillor David Unwin, who said:

"Next year, when we are deciding the poll tax for 1991-92, we will be wondering what all the fuss was about."

What does the Secretary of State think the former Prime Minister would have thought of that?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is trying to do; does he want to go back and rehearse past battles? Ogwr will get a very good deal out of the proposals. Whereas the rates paid in Ogwr in 1989-90 were £332, the average bill per household in 1991-92 under the proposed system would be £108. I work very closely with David Unwin, and I look forward to his joining us in the House after the next general election.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Since the community charge was introduced after hon. Members spent a great deal of time in Standing Committee considering the legislation, and since not one amendment was accepted by the Government, will the Secretary of State now put forward in a consultation paper to the Cabinet the proposal that the work that we do in Standing Committee is reformed to ensure that the Government do not remain intransigent to every good amendment?

Mr. Hunt: What I will rehearse again to the House is the fact that, whenever we discuss local government finance, we all should reflect that the actual level of every local bill depends on the spending plans of every local authority. That is true under any system. The clear message for everyone in Wales on 2 May is that, if they have Conservative councils, they cost them less and they get better services.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): On banding, will the Secretary of State confirm that people in the most expensive houses will have to pay only two and a half times what people in ordinary houses will pay? There is a much greater disparity in house prices, with the largest houses being 10 times as valuable as smaller ones. Would not a linear relationship between liability and house values be fairer? Is not the purpose of banding to protect people in very large houses and to protect the rich?

Mr. Hunt: No. When the hon. Gentleman has an opportunity to look at the documents which I have placed

[Mr. Hunt]

in the Library, he will see that the vast majority of properties in Wales fall into the middle and lower bands; 5 per cent. of all properties in Wales fall into band G, which covers properties valued at over 200 per cent. of the average property. Those householders will pay two and a half times as much as those in lower bands. I believe that that is an adequate reflection of the fairness of the new system.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Does not the Secretary of State agree that the logical flaw in his proposals for the reorganisation of local government is the absence of any strategic authority for the whole of Wales? Will he stop dithering on the subject and agree to set up an elected assembly for Wales here and now?

Mr. Hunt: Despite the hon. Gentleman's attempt to move from the Prime Minister to myself the "dithering" appellation, which failed as much with the Prime Minister as it will with me, I am not persuaded by the case that has been put to me on an assembly. *[Interruption.]* Yes, I have said this before and I will say it again and again and again. I still await an adequate explanation of how the work of such an assembly could sensibly interact with that of the Secretary of State. There was a noticeable lack of interest in the idea shown by the local authority associations that I met recently. District councils were very fully represented and many speakers put forward the same view as one from west Wales, who said that he did not think that we should even begin to think about setting up an assembly until we had resolved the whole question of the structure of local government.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Secretary of State recall that I have written to him and asked him oral and written questions on the loony feature of the poll tax as it is administered in Newport? What will he say to the lady from Bassaleg and Rhiwderin who last night in *The Argus* asked why she should be paying £50 more in poll tax than people are paying a few yards away in Wentlooge? Is it not likely that the crazy system of the charge reduction scheme will be repeated in the new poll tax, which will be equally irrational, absurd and unjust?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the House when the shadow Secretary of State for Wales asked me a question, and also when questions were asked earlier by the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment. They both conceded that there was now an end to the poll tax. For the hon. Gentleman to continue to perpetuate this nonsense that the proposal is still the poll tax is an absurdity.

As to Newport, the hon. Gentleman will know that the community charge reduction scheme was based on the average rates paid in a community. That is the basis on which the calculation is made; it is very simple and easy to understand. In Newport, the average rates paid in 1989-90 were £381; in 1991-92 the average council tax per household will be £199. The people of Newport will be able to see how much they will benefit through the action taken by the Government both in resources and under the new system.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Secretary of State remember that many farmhouses in Wales, for historical reasons which no longer apply, are substantial buildings, much larger in proportion than the income of those who occupy them and work from them? Will he advise the Inland Revenue of that to ensure that, when the district valuer has to band farmhouses, farmers do not find their homes put in an unfairly high band?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I hope that hon. Members have understood that the proposal that I have brought forward looks at Wales as a country in itself. There is no transposition to Wales of values in England. We will adjudicate on our own values through the help of the Inland Revenue valuation office. That is clear.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Since the Secretary of State, more than any other member of the Cabinet, personally imposed the poll tax upon an unwilling Wales, since he personally presided over the squandering of over £100 million on administering the tax in Wales, and since, in trying to get out of the mess, he has plunged Welsh councils into financial and administrative chaos, how can he in all honesty remain in his job?

Mr. Hunt: It is quite disgraceful of the hon. Gentleman to say that his colleagues and my colleagues in local government have moved into administrative chaos. I have met the local authority associations many times. The one thing that I have said to them consistently and with great pride is that I believe that the way in which they dealt with the community charge system was an example to every other local authority in the United Kingdom. The way in which they have collected the community charge is an example to everybody else in the United Kingdom—viz. the fact that they have been able to collect 98 per cent. of what they calculated they would raise through the community charge system.

I take as much pleasure in abolishing the poll tax or community charge as I did in abolishing the unjust domestic rating system to which the hon. Gentleman's party plans to return Wales after the next election, if it were to come to office.

Local Government Review (Scotland)

5.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the application in Scotland of the Government's proposals for the new council tax.

The consultation paper that the Government are publishing today describes proposals for Great Britain as a whole, and the new council tax will operate in Scotland in the same way as has been described for England and for Wales. I set as objectives in my statement of 21 March the requirement that the new tax should be easy to administer, that it should spread the burden as widely as possible, and that it should enable councils to remain accountable to their electors. I also told the House that the tax would have elements based both on the value of each house and on the number of people living there. All these objectives are achieved in the new council tax.

As elsewhere, for the purposes of assessing the property element in the new council tax, domestic properties in Scotland will be divided into seven bands centred on the value of the average Scottish domestic property. Each household will get a single bill. The tax will assume a two-person household, with a 25 per cent. discount for single households and 50 per cent. discounts for unoccupied properties. About 3·5 million adults in Scotland would therefore be taken into account; that is about 90 per cent. of the total. The discount, rebate and transitional arrangements will also be the same as in England and Wales.

I assured the House, in my earlier statement, that the new tax would not suffer from the defects of the old domestic rating system: that disproportionate burdens would not be placed on a small minority of households and that there would not be the unreasonable fluctuations that we had following revaluations. Those objectives are also achieved by the proposals that we have published today.

I am today placing in the Vote Office estimates of likely tax levels for single and two-adult households in each local authority area in Scotland in each of the proposed seven property bands. The majority of Scottish households are in the lowest three bands, where the average bill for a two-person household is £380 or less, and £280 for a one-person household. The range of bills depends on local authority spending decisions, but at this year's spending levels, bills for two-adult households would range from £260 to £730 throughout Scotland—the average being £420. However, if local authorities spent at the level of grant-aided expenditure—the basis for grant distribution—the bills would be much lower.

Two proposals in the consultation paper are specific to Scotland. I undertook in my earlier statement to ensure that the now reduced burden that local taxpayers will face is not increased, once again, to unacceptable levels by local authorities' spending decisions. I therefore propose to bring my capping powers into line with the powers of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales in order to achieve this. I also propose, as a consequence of the ending of the community charge, to introduce new arrangements for the payment of water and sewerage charges in Scotland. The proposed new system is the subject of a separate consultation paper, which I am also publishing today.

As I said in my statement of 21 March, I retain the right to vary details of the new tax slightly in Scotland, to take account of distinctive Scottish circumstances and to ensure consistency with the rest of Great Britain. At present, I see no need to exercise that right, given the satisfactory formula that we have now achieved for the new tax.

The consultation paper confirms that there will be separate consultation about the structure of local government in Scotland. I intend to publish two consultation papers on this subject, the first of which will appear in a few weeks' time and will deal with the broad principles that should underlie a reform and a possible move to a new single-tier structure.

I am confident that the proposals that we are announcing today represent a major advance in the way in which we fund local government in Scotland. They have my strong support and I believe that they will be well received in Scotland. I look forward to wide consultation on them, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Seldom can a Minister have made a more embarrassing appearance at the Dispatch Box. The right hon. Gentleman has had to concede that, on the essentials, the Labour party has been right all along. He is here to bury the poll tax which he was once so determined to praise as a remarkable success story. The Secretary of State and the hon. Members for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) have been scathing in their denunciation of any form of property-based tax. Do they really believe that they carry credibility if they now argue the merits of exactly such a system? What explanation can the Secretary of State offer to hide the plain fact that the policy that he now advocates is demonstrably humbug and hyprocrisy? It is sad that, having accepted the general principle, Ministers have managed to get so wrong the practicalities dictated by logic and the Labour party.

I welcome the exemption from the present 20 per cent. rule for those on income support. It would be monstrous if those on subsistence incomes faced cuts to compensate for the increases allegedly to meet poll tax payments, as suggested in the consultation document. The consultation document also suggests that students, student nurses and those on youth training schemes will be entitled to personal discounts. At present, students pay 20 per cent. What will they pay under the new system? How many households in Scotland, and what percentage of the total households, will qualify for 100 per cent. rebates? Does not the Secretary of State recognise that Scotland expects the 20 per cent. rule to go now? If it will be wrong in 1993, when the new system will be introduced, it is wrong now.

A key objective of the Labour party has been to help people who were struggling to meet local tax bills. The 25 per cent. rebate system is a gesture that does not effectively target those in greatest need. How will applications for the 25 per cent. personal discount be checked? Will the Secretary of State guarantee that, whatever emerges from the muddled consultation document, the electoral register will not be involved? Otherwise, there will be a clear incentive for many people to opt out of the democratic process.

It is also clear that many of those who will benefit from that 25 per cent. discount are unlikely recipients of such help. Some will be well off, some young single people in employment and some single people living alone, but by no stretch of the imagination in financial difficulty. It is not a

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

targeted benefit but a clumsy device unrelated to the ability to pay. Help must be given, but surely it would be better to concentrate on a targeted scheme or an effective rebate system in which all the money available would be concentrated.

Why should I be offered a 25 per cent. reduction when so many of my constituents have been left in poverty? Is that a realistic and effective use of scarce resources? Can the Minister confirm that the cost of this 25 per cent. discount or rebate—perhaps he could give the figure—is not being met by central Government but will be paid for by higher contributions from other households?

Is it not the case that the system has been rigged to protect the better off living in top-range properties? Is not the key the Secretary of State for the Environment's threat that the amount payable will vary

"only within a limited range"?

Are not those weasel words—a dishonest way of saying that those in modest houses will subsidise those who live in top-range properties? Will those proposals apply in Scotland and, if so, can it be right that the most expensive property in Newtown Mearns or Morningside pays, at the most, only two and a half times the most battered council house in Easterhouse or Pilton?

Will not the seven-tier banding system be cumbersome and complex and seen by many as rough justice? The Secretary of State has unveiled figures for what average bills would have been if his scheme had been in place this year. Clearly, to do that he would have required a valuation base. Can he tell the House what that was, whether it was based on capital values and who supplied it?

There is a rumour, which I find it difficult to believe in terms of its ingratitude, that the assessors' departments of local authorities, which have been martyred by their attempts to make an unworkable poll tax work, will now lose responsibility for valuation under the new system, and that, in Scotland, it is to be handed over to the Inland Revenue. Why? Is that a tribute to the tremendous job done by the Inland Revenue in keeping the valuation base in England and Wales up to date in recent years?

Is it not totally unacceptable that the system cannot be in place before 1993 at the earliest? If the Secretary of State started with the present valuation roll now, with drive and initiative, he could end the misery of the poll tax within a much shorter time scale than he sets out. Is it not essential that he does so? If the poll tax limps on for two full years it will destroy confidence and leave local government with appalling problems of collection. Does he not see that the faults that he is building into this Tory tax will hit services and, in a blatant attempt to placate those at the opposite end of the income scale, those, who are often the most vulnerable, who rely on those services?

If the new system means moving to the English system of standard spending assessments and fierce cutting powers that leave the Secretary of State as a virtual dictator, it will be no service to local democracy. The Secretary of State boasted that he would have great powers of discretion over the Scottish system. Is it all to boil down to restrictions imported from the Department of the Environment, a power to vary the details slightly, and a promise that, in any event, the powers will not be used, at least in the immediate future?

Can the Secretary of State define the powers that he has achieved and the battles that he has won in Cabinet? His answer to that question should not greatly elongate his reply. He must know that his folly and that of his Government has cost Scotland dear. We have suffered years of chaos, extravagance and destructive waste. His blind loyalty to a system that he now concedes is fatally flawed has damaged local democracy and divided communities in bitterness.

After a decade, the Government are back where they started. Those who are responsible still enjoy office and power, but this shameful story of malice and indecision will not be forgotten. The errors and miscalculations behind today's insincere charade will not be forgiven.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked many questions and welcomed certain aspects of our proposals. He seems to be uncertain whether to welcome the scheme because he thinks that it is the same as rates, or to oppose it because he thinks that it is not. Let me assure him that the scheme is not the same as rates. The electorate will have a clear choice between our new council tax and Labour's "back to the rates" policy at the next election. If rates in Glasgow, and probably in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, had been retained, the average rate for a £75,000 house would be about £1,100. Our council tax would produce about £490.

The hon. Gentleman asked what students will pay. Students will be eligible for a discount. A student will be likely to pay the council tax only if he is a householder and owned a property. He will then be liable to pay for the property element.

The hon. Gentleman asked me who will qualify for rebates. The consultation paper indicates that those on income support—students, student nurses, apprentices and YT trainees—will qualify. We are, of course, consulting on the rebate scheme.

The checking of applications for discounts will be a matter for local authorities to decide on. I see no need for the electoral register to be involved in the process. The hon. Gentleman asked me whether discounts will be funded from within the local government system: yes, indeed they will. All our calculations take account of the likely number of discounts that will arise.

The hon. Gentleman referred to top-rate properties and suggested that our proposed banded arrangements will introduce protection for them. Yes, indeed they will. That will be one of the important differences between our proposals and the old domestic rating system. Under the old system, higher-valued property bore a grossly unfair proportion of the burden of local government expenditure.

I believe that it is right to have a system in which the range will vary no more than two and a half times between the top band and the bottom band, bearing in mind especially that the system will contribute about 11 per cent. of the total cost of local government spending in Scotland, the rest coming from business rates and a central Government through income tax, value added tax, and other such taxes.

Mr. Dewar: And VAT.

Mr. Lang: I said VAT.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested that the seven-tier banding system might be unwieldly and a form of rough justice. The very fact that there will be seven bands shows the range within which different types of property and

different values of property can be accommodated. It will lead to a smooth and progressive relationship with the liability of residents to pay within the bands. Valuation will be supervised by the Inland Revenue's valuation office. Private sector valuers will be used to achieve a valuation base and to locate individual properties within the bands. We are still considering the possible role of Scottish assessors in the system. If the hon. Gentleman chooses to consult us, we shall be interested to hear any suggestions that he has to offer.

We propose to introduce the new tax in 1993. I hope that the Opposition will give us as fair a wind as they can to ensure that we keep to that objective.

I have the power to vary any arrangement in Scotland so as to meet any difficulties that could arise for payers in Scotland as a result of the different nature of the Scottish domestic property base and the different levels of spending, and of central Government funding. I do not believe that it will be necessary to make use of that power because of the formula that we have achieved, but it remains in place.

When I reflect on the hon. Gentleman's peroration I reflect also on what the Leader of the Opposition said about domestic rates, which he described as the

"most unjust of all taxes."

The right hon. Gentleman was right, and I am surprised that he is prepared to lead a party that wants to return to domestic rates.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I repeat to the House what I said previously? The House knows that we are discussing a consultation document. There will be plenty of opportunities between now and June to discuss it further. As there are 18 groups of amendments to the Ports Bill, in which there is a great deal of interest, and a ten-minute Bill, I shall allow questions on the statement to continue until 5.55 pm. I hope that during that time I shall be able to call all those who wish to question the Secretary of State for Scotland. That should be possible if they ask only single questions. We shall start with Sir Hector Monro.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, coupled with the current reduction of £140 in the community charge and his insistence on keeping down local government expenditure, the new scheme will be widely welcomed in Scotland? Will he say a little more about standard charges and any other anomalies that he has had to remove from the current community charge with the welcome changes that we have following the abolition of that and of the old rating system?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend for the welcome that he has given to our proposals. He might like to know that the average bill for the two-person household in Annandale, Eskdale and Nithsdale would be about £290 under our proposals as we are illustrating them today. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the reduction introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer by which a switch of emphasis took place between local government and central Government, thus reducing the overall level of moneys required to be raised at local level.

My hon. Friend will know that the standard community charge was considerably modified over the past two or three years to remove some of the worst of the anomalies. I believe that the system is much more stable now. To a large extent, the sort of arrangements that exist for the standard charge will carry over to the new arrangement.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Is it not extraordinary that, after the debacle of the past two years—the abolition of rates and the introduction of the poll tax—both the Labour and Conservative parties are now united in their commitment to bring back the rates with added confusions of their own? Surely it is extraordinary that the Secretary of State should be remitting the matter to the Inland Revenue. As it is qualified for tax assessment, would not it be more appropriate to ask it to assess for local income tax rather than property valuation, for which it is not qualified? Is it not a fact that capping will become a feature of the scheme, which makes accountability—the original claim of the Government—a mockery? For the next two years we shall continue to have the shambles of the poll tax, only worse.

Mr. Lang: Every hon. Member should reflect on the fact that we are putting a much more substantial proportion of resources into local government from central Government. It is important to ensure that that does not leak away in the form of higher spending by local authorities but goes to the benefit of local residents. It is important that we have an adequate capping mechanism.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that the proposals that we are now putting before the House are the same as rates. He could not be more wrong. Rates on a £50,000 house in his constituency would have risen to £540, compared with £250 under the council tax. A personal element is provided for within the council tax, and there is a banding of properties that affords a protection that the old rating system never did.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I should declare an interest as chairman of Historic Scotland. May I ask my right hon. Friend to bear in mind—I think that it is a matter that will be borne in mind by Members of all parties—the fact that the value of a house is not a sign of people's ability to pay and that the fragility of the heritage of Scotland, of which I am privileged to be in charge, is an extremely subtle matter? If buildings that require normal duties of upkeep as part of the heritage of Scotland are to be burdened with a tax that has nothing to do with their upkeep, my right hon. Friend must be careful to ensure that the Government, in giving a grant for their upkeep, do not destroy them by the tax that is being introduced.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend makes an important point. He is right to draw attention to the important advantages that will be derived by the owners of Scotland's historic buildings. It was precisely such buildings that bore an undue proportion of the domestic rating burden and a lack of incentive to improve and maintain. Now, because the burden will be more evenly and equitably spread, they will be protected from such burdens, and from the depredations of high-spending local authorities. That will lead to a continuing improvement in the quality of the fabric of Scotland's built heritage.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State, after turning somersaults on a full stomach, having eaten a bellyful of his own words, is understandably queasy and cannot focus on the main issues. Is he aware that the shambles that he has now produced means

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

that the poll tax will exist for another two years, that councils will be in great difficulty, that low-paid people will still not have the full rebates to which they are entitled and that we need swift action to move much faster than the right hon. Gentleman currently proposes, rather than wait for another two years? Will he think again, withdraw this nonsensical review and introduce proposals for a rapid change which, with the co-operation of the Opposition, he would get through?

Mr. Lang: We are moving as quickly as is sensible, practical and prudent, and I believe that the new system, when in place, will be found to work smoothly and effectively and be simpler and fairer than what has gone before. In the meantime, the fact that we have reduced the burden that falls on local government by a substantial amount as a result of the switch from local to central taxation will considerably reduce the difficulties and anxieties that people will face. In addition, as I said, I am taking powers to strengthen my ability to cap local authorities that overspend. If the need arises, I shall use such powers to protect residents from high spending.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the sensible use of VAT to reduce bills will produce a bill for North Tayside for the lowest band of property of about £250 and for the highest band of about £600? If those figures are accurate, they show clearly that the new tax will be seen by the Scots as a big improvement on rates or community charge.

Mr. Lang: The figures that my hon. Friend uses sound about right to me. The arrangements that we are introducing into the new system will give protection to property owners, will ensure that local authorities are not able to impose an unduly high burden on them and will see that the burden is sensibly spread across the whole population.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Does the right hon. Gentleman, in introducing this form of roof tax, make the same claim that the Secretary of State for Wales made, which is that, when the new scheme is introduced in three or four years' time, that will be the final death of the poll tax? Has the right hon. Gentleman costed the new scheme? For example, what will it cost to advertise and administer?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is unduly pessimistic. I sincerely hope that it will not take three or four years to introduce the new tax. I hope that we shall be able to introduce it by 1993 and abolish the poll tax then, because this is an infinitely better and more efficient system. I anticipate that the costs of administration and collection will be substantially reduced over those of the poll tax.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I hoped that, as Scotland was lumbered with the poll tax a year earlier than England and Wales, the Secretary of State would be leading the campaign to get rid of it a year earlier than in England and Wales, instead of which he is reported as trying to fight a rearguard action to keep it. Will the valuations take account of the condition of property, given that there will not be individual house valuations, or will a person living in a large slum pay more than someone living in a small decent house?

Mr. Lang: As for the alleged reports to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, I hasten to reassure him that they are and were entirely without foundation. I have never read so much fantasising as I have in the last few weeks. The valuation process is intended to achieve as accurate a valuation as possible. It will not be such a detailed valuation as existed under the old rating system, and it will be open to any householder who feels that his property has been placed in the wrong band to appeal against that. The incentives will be that much less to do so because, with a range of seven bands, the variation in bills between the different bands will not be so substantial.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the right hon. Gentleman now answer the question that was put to him earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)? Why should a person who is so rich that he lives in a large mansion set so well back from the road that his house is out of sight from the ordinary public pay only about two and a half times the amount paid by a council tenant? The right hon. Gentleman said that that was fair. Will he kindly explain why he thinks it is fair?

Mr. Lang: It is fair because what happened under the domestic rating system was unfair, when there was no protection for those in more valuable houses. A range of two and a half times between the highest and lowest bands is about right, given the rebate scheme which we shall be introducing and given the fact that we are talking about 11 per cent. of the cost of local government. A substantial proportion of the rest will come through indirect and direct taxation, to which the better-off in society will contribute much more than those on low incomes.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Will the Secretary of State pay tribute to those local government officers who, in council offices throughout the country, have tried to make the poll tax work and who will continue to have that job? Will he clarify the manpower implications to today's statement for local government and explain why he is encouraging the use of assessors from the private sector when there are skilled and professional people in local government well capable of discharging that task?

Mr. Lang: I pay tribute to the officials in local authorities that have administered the poll tax efficiently, as some of them have. As for the manpower implications of the change to the new arrangements, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman detailed figures now, but in the course of the consultation process a clearer picture may emerge.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about valuation is that the Government took the view that the most effective way to get the new system up and running quickly and with the appropriate accuracy of valuation was to use Inland Revenue valuation officers, supervising the arrangements and employing, as appropriate, valuers from the private sector. It is in everybody's interest that we get the new system up and running as quickly as possible, and I believe that what I have described will achieve that.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we in the SNP have extreme difficulty in accepting his figures, in view of the fact that it took him two months to respond to our statement about a local income tax? We shall wish to discuss the matter with him further. Is he further aware that the new scheme

smacks of a band-aid tax, with the whole thing stuck together to give a spurious view of coherence that it totally lacks? Those who are interested in decision-making and responsibility in local government read centralising forces into the right hon. Gentleman's statement.

If the right hon. Gentleman is really interested in getting the scheme up and running, why will he not, in view of the scarcity of Scottish legislation before the House, immediately introduce a Bill giving 100 per cent. rebates, so making it clear that students and others will not have to pay the tax and showing that local authorities in Scotland will not again have to go through the stupid exercise of trying to collect money from people who manifestly cannot pay?

Mr. Lang: The question of rebates in the remaining two years of poll tax is still under consideration. The hon. Gentleman says that the new tax lacks coherence. We have worked on the proposal carefully and gone into all the issues in great detail. I urge him to examine it more carefully, when he will find that, far from lacking coherence, it is an extremely coherent and effective system. I welcome the sign that I took from his remarks that he will take part in the consultation process. I shall look forward to his submissions once he has had an opportunity to study the detail of the matter.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Secretary of State now eat humble pie and admit that he has been forced into a U-turn in the face of the massive demonstration of people power, including a disciplined, conscientious campaign of civil disobedience to an extent not seen in Scotland for centuries? Will he admit that, if everybody had dutifully touched the forelock and stumped up every penny of poll tax on demand, the right hon. Gentleman would not have been forced into making his historic statement to the House today?

Mr. Lang: The main reason why we had to decide that the community charge was no longer viable was its failure to control high-spending local authorities. It was perfectly clear from some of the levels of poll tax that some local authorities sought to impose on their residents that the tax was no longer an acceptable method of funding local government. Far from carrying out a U-turn, we are going on both from the discredited domestic rating system and from the community charge with its shortcomings, to a new system which is infinitely better than both.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Since 1989, the Secretary of State has personally and passionately defended the defining characteristics of the poll tax—the liability of everyone to pay something, the requirement for a poll tax register, the rejection of any sort of property tax. This afternoon he has been forced to eat his words. How can he with any honour hang on to his high office when his personal credibility has been so undermined by the retreat of his right hon. Friends in the Cabinet? Should not he and the other poll tax fanatics in the Scottish Office do the decent thing and resign?

Mr. Lang: This is the first local government finance system that I have helped to design. I believe that it is more effective than the community charge system or the domestic rating system. I believe that it meets the objectives that I set out in my statement on 21 March. Once the hon. Gentleman has considered it further, he will think so, too.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will the Secretary of State cast his mind back to the recent council elections when there were Tory party posters all over Scotland condemning what they called the roof tax? The Secretary of State and his right hon. Friends have today announced a seven-band roof tax for the United Kingdom and for Scotland.

Since we have a proposal today offering transitional benefits and payments to millionaires, why cannot we have immediately a one-clause Bill that will do away with the minimum contribution of 20 per cent.?

Mr. Lang: The roof tax was locked up so quickly when the Labour party realised how unpopular it was that it is difficult now to scrutinise its details. As far as I am aware, it had few of the features of our new council tax, which will limit the burden on householders in the top band to paying two and a half times what those in the bottom band will pay. The system includes a personal element in the form of the 25 per cent. discount for one-person households, and the new system avoids arbitrary revaluation leaps every few years. It will operate fairly and, unlike the roof tax, it will gain widespread acceptance.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Secretary of State consult the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to explain why England is to have a commission to consider structural changes but Scotland is not? Will he also meet representatives of the Keep Scotland Tidy campaign to consider the removal of the vultures from rooftops and advertising hoardings placed there by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and now looking like chickens that have come home to roost?

Mr. Lang: Knowing the hon. Gentleman's history as a former president of COSLA, I can reassure him that I look forward to further consultations with that organisation on these proposals and to the opportunity to discuss the proposals that we announced on 21 March, following which I went to the COSLA annual general meeting the next day.

As for the vultures, they flew away from the rooftops as soon as the Labour party abandoned its roof tax proposals, recognising that that system was not viable. The hon. Gentleman can rest happy: there is no question of the vultures reappearing against the background of these extremely effective and efficient proposals.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In the past, the Secretary of State has said that local accountability is an important feature of a local tax. How does he see local accountability operating in the islands areas, when his illustrative bills show that there will be no local tax and when, regardless of the size of house in which they live, people will still have to pay 2·5 per cent. more in a national tax in an area in which the cost of living is already among the highest in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman always draws attention to the fact that the situation in the islands is different—as it is in this case. Spending in the islands is below assessed need—a lesson that I wish many other local authorities would learn. Our present grant distribution assumptions mean that there would be no council tax in those islands, but I think that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that that should be dealt with, in the interests of equity. We shall be willing to discuss the matter in the course of consultations to try to achieve a system that is fair.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his credibility is at an all-time low following his humiliating U-turn and the mess that he has created and announced today? Does he realise that there is an easy way to get some of that credibility back? It is to announce today that he will abolish the 20 per cent. rule, which affects so many pensioners and unemployed and disabled people, and that he will consider rebating them for the extra year that they have paid the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: I have no announcement of any sort to make about that. We are contemplating a new kind of tax and a new kind of arrangement for it. It is the Labour party which would lose credibility if ever it sought to implement its proposed return to unfair rates, not least because of the impact that that policy would have on the business community in Scotland, for which the Opposition propose to remove the harmonisation progress that we have achieved in the past few years—progress towards a uniform rate and the reduction of business rates all over Scotland. The Labour party's policy would allow local authorities to let rates rip, to the extreme detriment of business throughout Scotland.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): The Secretary of State must realise that the millionaire living alone, perhaps in Eastwood, might be content to wait until he receives his 25 per cent. rebate—lonely money. But there are many lonely, poor people who cannot afford to pay the poll tax and who never have been able to afford it and who have run up debts, thereby contributing much to the £600 million arrears faced by Strathclyde. What will he do to assist Strathclyde with its massive arrears bill and to help people caught in the poverty trap who cannot afford to wait until 1993 for an easing of their pain?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware of the fact that under the community charge system rebates are paid up to 80 per cent., and that the remaining 20 per cent. for which people are liable is taken into account when calculating income support. The difficulty facing many people on income support is that many hon. Members in the Labour party, and in the Scottish National party until recently, encouraged non-payment. That created difficulties for local authorities such as Strathclyde and for people who took the advice proffered to them so irresponsibly; and the responsibility for those problems lies with many hon. Members in the Opposition parties.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Does not the Secretary of State see that, by insisting on retaining a link with the poll tax through the personal discount, he is building in some of the same problems as existed with the poll tax? The fact is that many people who live in two-person households will register elsewhere so that their households can get a discount, and they will be able to register with households containing two or more people without adding to those households' bills. The right hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the tax will be discredited from day one because of that possibility of evasion.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman has a mind which seems to seek out methods of evasion. It will be up to local authorities to ensure that there is no evasion; in any case, there will be little incentive for evasion, because this is a fair tax which will be well imposed at a reasonable level. The discount is expressed as a proportion of the property element and is thus a progressive tax: the personal element will increase the higher the band.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Can the Secretary of State explain why a house with two people and only one income has to pay more than a house with only one person and one income?

Mr. Lang: If she looks at the figures, the hon. Lady will see, when she has had the chance to study them carefully, that the system is a fair one which takes account of the difference in the burden that falls on a house with two or more occupants and the burden that falls on a house with only one occupant. The 25 per cent. discount is a fair way of taking account of that difference, against the background of a rebate scheme.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I should like some clarification from the Secretary of State. The consultation paper seems to reject the idea of capital values as a basis for assessment and speaks of bands expressed as a percentage of the average national property value. What is that average national property value? Will it be set at a United Kingdom level or a Scottish level? Is there a distinctive Scottish element to the proposal? If so, what form will it take?

Mr. Lang: Property bands will be based on values of properties within a Scottish context. Those valuations will be different from valuations in Wales and England. We are going for capital values because they are banded and their impact is thus dampened; the impact of the capital value of a house on what a person has to pay is modified. That is a more sensible, fairer and more realistic way of proceeding than reverting to the notional rental value basis used under the old domestic rating system.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Does not the Government's ignominious retreat today show that they do not even know how to retreat in good order? Have they not forgotten the first law of Healey—when in a hole, stop digging—and staggered from one tax which was unfair and unjust to another which is unfair, unjust and complicated, with this band, that band and the next band? Every day will be 12 July for the next few years in local government. Why are we discussing today how to raise tax for local government, in what form it will be raised, how it will be capped and how it will be spent when it has not yet been decided when to issue the consultation paper on what form local government in Scotland will take?

Mr. Lang: I made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that our first consultation paper on the structure of local government will be issued in a few weeks' time and it is not necessary or desirable to rush that process either in the preparation of the document or in the consultation period that will follow. We intend to consult widely on the structure of local government because we intend to get it right. We have considered carefully the system for the funding of local government and once the hon. Gentleman has become more familiar with it, he will realise that it is not nearly so complicated as he thinks it is at first glance and that it will work effectively.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State has referred to possible changes in water charges, which will be of particular interest to fish and food processors in the Grampian region who pay the highest water rates in

the United Kingdom. What steps will he be taking to ensure that the industrial voice is heard in the consultations, and does he expect that the charges in water and sewerage charges will be implemented at the same time as the council tax?

Mr. Yeo: The proposals on which we are consulting concern personal water and sewerage charges. In the past, sewerage charges have been absorbed within the community charge system, whereas water charges were separately billed as a community water charge. Therefore, we have to take account of the need to reform that as well as reforming the community charge. We shall consult on that and the hon. Lady will have every opportunity to study the paper, and, if she wishes, to submit her views.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Llinlithgow): In the consultation paper, will there be an appendix or a specific explanation of those points where Ministers now think that the Wheatley report was wrong? Will there be a full explanation of the amount of compensation that will have to be paid to officials in Strathclyde, Lothian and elsewhere if there are to be changes?

Mr. Lang: I will obviously consider the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. We have not yet written the consultation paper, but we will bear in mind his suggestion that we should make reference to the Wheatley commission, possibly in an appendix or in the body of the paper. With regard to compensation, it is certainly part of our purpose to ensure that any change to any new system of local government structure in Scotland should achieve that changeover with a minimum of expense, disorganisation and disruption, learning the lessons that we should all learn from what happened last time.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Is the Secretary of State aware that a couple in modest circumstances owning a small house in Gorgie in Edinburgh will find their house in the same tax band as a large three or four-bedroomed house in rural Scotland owned by a single person who may well receive the 25 per cent. rebate? Where is the link with ability to pay, and why should most houses in Edinburgh find themselves in the top three bands in the new tax system?

Mr. Lang: The problem that Edinburgh faces is that it has a high-spending district council. The solution to the problems that are faced in Edinburgh lies in the hands of the local authorities, both district and regional.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Secretary of State knows that there is more than one way in which to arrive at the capital value of a property. What principles of valuation will be used by the Inland Revenue in deciding into what band particular houses should fall? If a householder embarks on improvements such as installing double glazing, central heating or a new bathroom, will that take the house from one band into another, thereby incurring additional cost?

Mr. Lang: The precise details of the basis of valuation will obviously be part of the consultation process, but essentially it will be the market value that arouses the interest of the valuation office. It is most unlikely that in the vast majority of cases changes such as the installation of central heating which the hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned would lead to a change of valuation banding. Only a substantial change in the nature of a house would lead to an upgrading from one band to another. But even if there were such an upgrading, the relative movement in terms of the extra burden of local government tax would be small because of the existence of seven bands and the gradation which exists within them.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As we know from the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment that he believes that a commission is necessary to carry out the review of local government in England, and as on the last occasion that there was a major review of local government in Scotland it was carried out by the Wheatley commission, how can the Secretary of State honestly believe that a review of local government can be carried out systematically and, above all, fairly without an independent commission in Scotland? Will it not be yet another political gerrymander by the Secretary of State?

Mr. Lang: No, there will be no question of any Conservative Member contemplating gerrymandering of any kind. The very existence of the Wheatley commission and the work done by it gathered together a large amount of information that will prove a useful quarry as we review the reform of local government. The local government commission contemplated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be an advisory body and my right hon. Friend made it clear that the Government would decide what changes to make and what form they would take.

It is proposed that the local government commission will replace the local government boundary commission in England and undertake its work on a long-term, gradual, area-by-area basis, taking account of the wide diversity of local government structures in England. In Scotland, we have a much greater cohesiveness and coherence in the system and I believe that it will be possible, without haste and without lack of consultation, to move to a single tier process that will win general acceptance.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): The Secretary of State has admitted little today, but he has admitted that the poll tax has been a mistake. Why should the low-paid in Scotland pay for the Government's mistake? Why should working-class people pay for their mistake? Surely there should be an amnesty. Even Charlie Gray, the leader of Strathclyde regional council, has argued for that. Mr. Gray is not a left-winger—I understand that he is a moderate—so surely his views should be taken into consideration. I understand that they reflect the general consensus within COSLA. Will the Government listen to reason in Scotland? Clearly, many feel that the only alternative to the Government is a Scottish Parliament with proper economic and political powers so that the Scottish people can run their own affairs.

Mr. Lang: I always listen with great care to anything said by the leader of Strathclyde council, although it is intriguing to find him forming an axis with the hon. Gentleman. Whether that is a reflection of the way in which the Labour party is going, I do not know. Suffice it to say that I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like everyone else in Scotland, will, once he has digested the proposals, find them a good, sound and secure way forward for local Government funding.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Does the Secretary of State not understand that the people of

[Mr. John Maxton]

Scotland, who have suffered under the poll tax and seen their local government dive into crisis as a result of it, expected today to see some sense of shame and regret that the tax had been imposed on them by the right hon. Gentleman who, as a Minister, served on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill which introduced it?

After the humiliating climbdown that we have seen, the people of Scotland expected to see the Secretary of State and his Ministers announce their resignations today. Why is he allowing the crisis that is now facing local government in Scotland and the poverty that is facing so many people there to continue for at least another two years instead of, with our support, introducing legislation that would bring back the rating system on 1 April 1992, abolish the 20 per cent. minimum payment, backdate rebates and get rid of the poll tax once and for all and do it efficiently and quickly.

Mr. Lang: Far from regret, I feel a sense of pride that we have achieved a new system of funding local government which is infinitely better than the domestic rating system of the community charge. My involvement in the Committee to which the hon. Gentleman referred was, as he recalled, primarily concerned with the standard community charge and the introduction of the new arrangements for business rates. I believe that what we have done for business rates in Scotland is widely welcomed and will be greatly to the advantage of the Scottish economy. It is clear that, at the next general election, the Scottish electorate will have a choice between our new, simple, easy-to-collect and fair council tax, or returning to the old rating system under Labour. I have no doubt which they will choose.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Representation of the People (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell]*

Garden Supplies (Sunday Trading)

5.59 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Fifth Schedule to the Shops Act 1950 to make lawful the sale of garden supplies on Sundays.

As the House may know, I am not only chairman of the Conservative parliamentary horticultural committee and the parliamentary consultant to the Horticultural Trades Association, as is shown in the Register of Members' Interests, but I have a large number of garden centres in my constituency. I am therefore delighted to have the opportunity to introduce this Bill, which has the aim of making one small improvement to the way in which Sunday trading laws operate.

It forms no part of my purpose to rehearse the arguments for and against wholesale reform of the Shops Act 1950. Those arguments have been made on several occasions over the past decade or so—most recently, last month, when my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) introduced new proposals relating to the vexed issue of Sunday trading. I am delighted to reassure right hon. and hon. Members that I have no intention of embarking on a discussion of the complex arguments involved in the wider debate on Sunday trading. That would be far too major and wide-ranging a debate for an occasion such as this.

The measure that I propose should be seen for what it is: a tiny change that is designed to reflect contemporary reality. My Bill has little bearing on the wider debate about the future of the 1950 Act, which will have to wait for some time yet. The Bill suggests that garden supplies should be added to the list of exemptions that are contained in schedule 5 to the Shops Act 1950, to make lawful the sale of garden supplies on Sunday. The Bill would set no precedents, nor would it trigger any controversy over Sunday trading laws, and it could be implemented immediately. It is not the thin end of the wedge.

Throughout the ages, part of the strength and richness of our national life has stemmed from the special status that Sunday holds. The best safeguard of that status is not to be found in legislation, but in good sense and contemporary custom. People, not laws, make Sunday special.

Part of the pleasure of Sunday is that it is a time to reflect, worship, rest, and enjoy oneself. One way that millions of British people enjoy themselves on Sunday is by gardening. It is something of a national obsession. Napoleon called us a nation of shopkeepers, but today we are a nation of gardeners. It strikes me as perverse that one of this nation's most innocuous creative hobbies, which is enjoyed by countless millions on one day more than any other in the week, should be hampered by the exclusion of garden supplies from the list of goods that shops are allowed to sell on Sunday.

In an age in which the law allows people to relax and enjoy themselves in countless other ways on Sunday—by attending any number of sports events, visiting the park or local cinema, or walking around a stately home or castle—it is peculiar in the extreme that the law hampers us from indulging in that most British of pastimes—gardening.

Every time the Sunday trading issue is raised, the House has great fun comparing and contrasting the anomalies that exist in current legislation. Under current law, selling

plants, flowers and vegetables is legal, but selling trowels, spades, hoes, and pots is not. Who would have thought that it would be illegal to sell a common or garden watering can on Sunday?

Sunday is the busiest day of the week for garden centres, when as much as 40 per cent. of their weekly turnover is achieved. Around 2,000 centres open each Sunday, and many depend on Sunday sales for their very existence. Only a handful stay closed. People want to garden on Sunday, and to buy the supplies that they need on that day too. As the majority of garden centres open on Sunday anyway, my Bill would not mean more Sunday openings; it would just mean more legal Sunday openings.

I say to those who argue that legalising the Sunday trading of garden supplies would adversely affect the work force by taking away their one day of rest, that most garden centres encounter no difficulty in recruiting weekend staff, even for Sundays. Many people are happy to work that day in exchange for another day off during the week. In that way, they can earn overtime pay on Sunday, as well as have another day off in the week free to run errands or to shop themselves on a day when stores are far less crowded than they are on Saturdays.

No one goes to work in a garden centre in the expectation that it will close on Sunday. That would be like going to work in a national museum on the assumption that it will close on Sunday—the very day that most of the public actually have a chance to visit it.

People do not complain about the Sunday opening of garden centres. In fact, it is generally assumed that they are legally open that day—which is not surprising, given that public demand has led to garden centres opening on Sunday. For many, a Sunday afternoon visit to a garden centre is a family outing. There is no outcry over the lack of law enforcement in closing garden centres on Sunday. In fact, enforcement of the law in that regard is notoriously patchy and unfair. Some local councils turn a blind eye to Sunday trading; some enforce it here and there, and others actively encourage it.

Schedule 5 to the Shops Act 1950 identified goods and services that were then needed on Sundays in the ordinary course of life. I am sure that schedule was not meant to be cast in stone, never to be changed. I imagine that, had garden centres existed in 1950, the wording "fruit, flowers and vegetables" that schedule 5 currently contains would have read, "garden supplies, flowers, fruit and vegetables."

Forty years ago, it was recognised that the list of exemptions would need to change, to keep with the times. The fact that thousands of garden centres, employing thousands of people, open on Sundays is testimony to the need for change. To the best of my knowledge, no organised group opposes trading by garden centres on Sunday.

The Bill makes a modest addition to the list of goods that can be sold in shops on Sunday, and will relieve many people who run garden centres of the fear of prosecution. It will ensure that Britain's gardeners have a chance to buy the supplies that they need, when they want them. The Bill will not alter Sunday's special status. I venture to suggest that it will probably enhance it, and, crucially, will not impinge on the rights of those who work in Britain's garden centres. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will give the Bill their support.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Marion Roe, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Patrick Cormack, Dame Peggy Fenner, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Mr. Cecil Parkinson and Mr. Timothy Raison.

GARDEN SUPPLIES (SUNDAY TRADING)

Mrs. Marion Roe accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Fifth Schedule to the Shops Act 1950 to make lawful the sale of garden supplies on Sundays: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 May and to be printed. [Bill 140.]

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), whom I thoroughly support in this matter, referred to Britain's gardeners. May I remind her that section 5 of the Shops Act 1950 has never applied to Scotland, which is a Calvinist country? We have never had any difficulty. We garden on Sundays, and we welcome it. After all, religion started in the Garden of Eden, and I think that she should copy the example of Scotland.

Orders of the Day

Ports Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 2

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PROPOSALS TO MAXIMISE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN EQUITY OF SUCCESSOR COMPANIES

'.—(1) The power under subsection (2) below—

(a) is exercisable by a body which is a relevant port authority in any case where that body proposes to form or has formed a company in pursuance of section 1 above; and

(b) is exercisable by a body which was such an authority immediately before the transfer under section 2 above to a company formed by that body of its property, rights, liabilities and functions;

and references below in this section, in relation to any such body, to the relevant company are references to the company it proposes to form or has formed (as the case may require).

(2) The body concerned may on such terms as it thinks fit agree with any persons who at the time of the agreement qualify for assistance from it under this section—

(a) to indemnify those persons in respect of the whole or any part of any expenditure to which subsection (4) below applies; or

(b) to discharge on their behalf the whole or any part of any liability to which that subsection applies.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above persons qualify for assistance under this section from any body if—

(a) each of them satisfies the employment condition as regards assistance from that body;

(b) they have formulated a proposal for maximising participation by employees of the relevant company in ownership of its equity share capital; and

(c) they appear to the body concerned to be best placed to secure the implementation of such a proposal.

(4) This subsection applies to any expenditure or liability of the persons concerned incurred wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the proposal mentioned in subsection (3)(b) above.

(5) A person satisfies the employment condition as regards assistance under this section from any body—

(a) so long as it is a relevant port authority, if he is employed by it; and

(b) after it has ceased to be such an authority, if he is employed by the relevant company.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following: Government new clause 3—*Financial assistance for proposal to maximise employee participation in equity of the company.*

New clause 12

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR EMPLOYEE SHARE OWNERSHIP SCHEMES

'(1) Before inviting bids for their holding any relevant port authority under Part I or Part I of this Act shall give employees (including management) of the successor company the opportunity to put together a bid to purchase the holding, and the authority shall accept such a bid without inviting competing bids providing the following conditions are met:—

(a) the amount of the bid represents at least the market value of the authority's holding in the successor company, such market value to be certified by independent professional advisers acceptable to the appropriate Minister; and

(b) the structure of the bid must incorporate a substantial element of employee shareholding, ("substantial" in this context meaning that at least 25 per cent of the ordinary voting capital of the acquiring company should be held by, or on behalf of, employees, in addition to those held by directors and senior managers of the acquiring company).

(2) Financial assistance shall be available in respect of bids put together substantially by management and employees of the successor company and incorporating a substantial element of employee shareholding in order that those involved in preparing such bids are able to obtain the appropriate level of professional advice. Subject to the overriding discretion of the appropriate Minister, 75 per cent of fees and costs (including value-added tax) incurred for this purpose may be reimbursed out of moneys voted by Parliament up to a maximum amount (on which the 75 per cent reimbursement will be based) of £80,000.'.

Government amendments Nos. 5 to 7.

Amendment No. 53, in clause 8, page 6, line 12, at end insert—

'(6A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (6) above, in deciding whether or not to confirm the scheme, the Minister shall have regard to the implications of the scheme for those currently employed by the relevant port authority and for their pension and employment rights, and to any proposals in the scheme designed to promote employee participation in the company.'.

Amendment No. 57, in clause 12, page 9, line 36, after '(2)', insert

'Except as provided for in subsection (2A) below,'.

Amendment No. 50, in page 9, line 37, at end insert—

'(2A) Levy shall be charged at one half of the rate stipulated in subsection (2) above, in circumstances where at least fifty per cent. or more of all the securities disposed of are transferred to employees of the relevant port authority or to a trust fund created or operating for the benefit of the said employees, except that where, within five years of the original disposal of securities, as a result of subsequent transfers inter vivos of the securities, more than fifty per cent. of the securities are held by persons other than the said employees, or trust fund, the company shall be charged a further levy of one half of the rate stipulated in subsection (2) above.'.

Amendment No. 61, in page 9, line 37, at end insert—

'(2A) In the case where the successful bidder for the authority's holding in the successor company incorporates a substantial shareholding by, or on behalf of, employees or former employees or their dependants of the successor company and its subsidiaries ("substantial" in this context meaning that at least 25 per cent. of the ordinary voting capital of the acquiring company should be held by such employees, in addition to those shares held by directors and senior managers of the acquiring company) the levy shall be charged at the rate of 50 per cent. on the consideration given for the securities disposed of.

(2B) In the event that the percentage of the ordinary voting capital of the acquiring company held by or on behalf of such

employees falls below 25 per cent. within five years of the date of the initial transfer of securities in the successor company, the Secretary of State may require the payment by the chargeable company of an additional levy, which levy may be an amount up to 20 per cent. of the consideration given for the securities at the time of their initial transfer (or, if lower, up to 20 per cent. of the market value of the securities at the time the employee holding falls below 25 per cent.).'.

Government amendments Nos. 9 and 10, 15 to 17 and 22 and 23.

Mr. McLoughlin: First, may I draw the attention of the House to new clause 2, tabled in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. These amendments fulfil a commitment that I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) when I accepted in principle an amendment that he proposed in Committee to enable port authorities to repay the costs incurred by their management and employees in buying or attempting to buy the authority's successor company. The main amendment is new clause 2, which substantively gives effect to my hon. Friend's proposal. Perhaps inevitably, there are a number of changes in the drafting, but I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that the Government's amendment goes at least as far as—and in some respects possibly further than—his proposal did in providing practical assistance for management-employee buy-outs when ports come to privatise themselves under the new legislation.

I will mention briefly the other amendments grouped with new clause 2.

New clause 3 makes equivalent provision to new clause 2 for the Port of London Authority and the new Tilbury company. Amendments Nos. 5 and 6 are consequential to new clause 2. If a port authority has incurred liabilities by giving financial assistance to a management-employee buy-out team before transferring its undertaking to its successor company, those liabilities of course need to be excluded from the transfer, and remain with the former port authority. Amendments Nos. 10, 16 and 17 are drafting amendments consequential to new clause 3, in particular of the need to relate the definition of "the port of Tilbury" to that clause.

Amendments Nos. 22 and 23 define what is meant by the terms "equity share capital" and "maximising participation by employees of the company in ownership of its equity share capital", which are used in new clauses 2 and 3.

Amendment No. 9 enables an authority to offset against the proceeds of disposal on which levy is payable any costs that it may incur as a result of meeting the expenses of a bid mounted by its management and employees, whether or not that bid is ultimately successful.

An amendment along those lines was proposed in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich when he made his important proposal, now reflected in the new clause 2, that the authority should be able to reimburse the expenses of a management and employee buy-out team.

The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich made in tabling his amendment in Committee was valid. Obviously, if an authority is to pay these expenses, they must be clear at the outset how the cost is ultimately to be met, given that their own assets and liabilities will in due course be transferred to the successor company after disposal. One possibility would be to let the new owner of the successor company eventually pick up the liability. But that approach would mean that, if an outside bidder purchased the company, he would then be saddled with meeting the expenses of a rival bid that had failed, a result which could hardly be justified.

Accordingly the Government accept that these expenses, like those that the authority incurs directly in organising the disposal, should be allowable as a deduction against the amount liable to levy.

Amendments Nos. 7 and 15 further underline the Government's commitment to the encouragement of management-employee buy-outs. Amendment No. 7 fulfils a commitment that I made in Committee to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), when I accepted in principle an amendment that he had tabled. I undertook to table an amendment which would reflect my hon. Friend's views, as expressed in his own amendment, and he will see that the amendment now before the House is very close to what he proposed.

I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that this embodiment in the legislation of the Government's wish to encourage management-employee buy-outs is a useful addition to the Bill.

Amendment No. 15 makes similar provision to amendment No. 7 about the exercise of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's powers concerning the disposal of the port of Tilbury by the Port of London Authority.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I am sorry that we are so late in commencing our discussion of the Bill. I have a feeling that if the Bill is passed without our amendments it will be as expensive a mistake as the poll tax, which was the cause of the delay that kept us from further consideration of this Bill.

The Minister says that the new clause is all about money. The amendments in this group deal with employee share ownership bids, to some extent with the port of Tilbury and with various aspects of pensions. The point is that they are all concerned with money. The question is whether the commitment given by the Minister in Committee allows him to give an assurance to the House that proposals on employee share ownership plans and other forms of management and employee share ownership will be able to go ahead, or whether trust ports forced into privatisation and seeing ESOP schemes as perhaps the best way out will be so unfairly disadvantaged that they will not be able to achieve the ESOP scheme that they want.

6.15 pm

We remain fundamentally opposed to the privatisation of trust ports and to the sale of the municipal ports. We had hoped that a general election might intervene early enough to prevent this measure from going through—it still could. If the legislation goes ahead, an employee-management buy-out could give the local work force some hope of being able to continue to play a vital part in the local economy.

The amendments that we have tabled provide for a series of changes in the legislation that will promote share ownership schemes in the event that this unwelcome legislation is passed.

New clause 12 allows the authority to accept a bid from employees and managers "without inviting competing bids" provided that certain safeguards are met. Therefore, we are not saying that the ports should be

given away per se, but that there could be safeguards and we have given an illustration of what they could be. The safeguards relate to the market value being independently certified and to the bid incorporating a substantial element of employee shareholding—at least 25 per cent. I cannot over-emphasise the importance of the fact that those making such bids should have access to financial assistance. For that reason our new clause provides for the reimbursement of £80,000.

Amendment No. 61 states:

"the levy shall be charged at the rate of 50 per cent. on the consideration given for the securities disposed of."

We have to consider the Government's proposals in detail as well as the other amendments that have been tabled in this group, because we want the best possible scheme to be written into the Bill.

I am not sure what the Government proposals mean. I am not clear how much further they take us down the route to employee and management share ownership. Amendment No. 7 states:

"The appropriate Minister shall have particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal to managers or other persons employed by the successor company of the whole or a substantial part of its equity share capital."

Unlike the Minister's proposals, ours show in detail how that could be done. For those reasons, we press the House to accept the direct and detailed proposals that we have made. We feel that the Government have not included the detail that we would like.

In Committee, the Minister said that too much preferential treatment would destroy competition and that there was a danger that, if there were no competition, no other bids would be put alongside the ESOPS. He said that share ownership schemes might result in delays in the trust ports paying off their debts to the Government. The Government must address the whole issue of competition. They must tell us where they stand with regard to the question of employee and management share ownership. Does the concept have their support in principle only? Will the Minister say whether the terms of the amendments could be made more detailed, perhaps in another place?

In Committee, I said that should privatisation go ahead there would be some support among the Tilbury work force for such schemes. I expressed serious concern about the possibility of the Tilbury management's taking a naive view. The position might not be as easy as the management thought. I said that it was more likely that a large predator company would come along and would then want to sell everything off.

I should like to draw to the attention of the House press reports suggesting that Hong Kong International Terminals has expressed great interest in buying out the port of Tilbury. Given all the Minister's assurances with regard to management and employee share ownership—and to Opposition Members, employee share ownership is important—I hope that the Minister will be able to tell the House how the arrangements will fit in with his amendments. How are they affected by the information that there will almost certainly be bids such as the one from Hong Kong International Terminals?

The Minister may say that if there were no competition, the Tilbury employees would be worried about the danger of buying something that might not be a going concern in the future. If privatisation is to go ahead, this kind of share ownership could be the best of a bad job. These amendments do not provide employees or management with the assurances that they sought.

The issue of pensions is included in this group of amendments. The Minister looks puzzled. Does he intend to refer to this matter at a later stage? The amendments on employee share ownership plans are related to those that concern the pensions of the Tilbury work force. I reiterate the Opposition's view. Given all the problems that have arisen from previous privatisations, and all the real fears of employees, when public utilities have been sold off, about their pensions being kept on the same basis, will the Minister avoid simply repeating the assurance that he gave earlier? Can he tell us that he has found a way round the problem whereby about 400 employees of the Port of London Authority will be worse off as a result of these proposals?

It is important, in this context, to emphasise that the pension fund of Port of London Authority employees is so healthy that those people could have index-linked pensions in the not too distant future. Clearly, that is a benefit that employees transferred to the port of Tilbury would not enjoy. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure the House on this point.

Finally, there is the issue of the Port of London Act 1968. Members of the Standing Committee had difficulty determining exactly what constitutes the port of London, and what constitutes the port of Tilbury, for the purposes of deciding which port owns what. The 1968 Act is now out of print, and we still do not have a clear definition. Is the perimeter fence at Tilbury the determining factor? Can the Minister assure us that what belongs to Tilbury will stay with Tilbury and that large tracts of land will not be transferred?

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I did not wish to interrupt the hon. Lady just after she started her speech, but I am grateful to her for giving way now. She referred to the future. Can she tell the House whether the Labour party is committed to renationalising trust ports?

Ms. Walley: I repeat my party's assurance that it intends to implement an integrated transport policy, in which ports will play a most important role. We shall set up the advisory bodies that are necessary to secure investment in a national infrastructure. Our policies are laid out clearly in the party's documents. The hon. Gentleman seems to be uncertain as to the status of trust ports. I do not know whether I should be in order if I were to give him a history lesson. These ports have been held in trust by authorities. I think that I have dealt more than adequately with the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Ms. Walley: I shall not give way again. I want to get on with this important group of amendments relating to management and employee share ownership schemes.

Mr. Holt: It is a debate.

Ms. Walley: Yes, it is a debate.

We should seek ways of making sure that the Bill will result in the introduction of the best possible share ownership schemes. The amendments that we have tabled give more than a general commitment to such schemes. We spell out how they could be introduced and implemented. To that end, we have consulted those who are in the best position to give advice.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I shall leave aside the future, as we are debating this Bill. The query of the

hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) was inappropriate. My hon. Friend referred to the fact that the definition of the port of Tilbury was debated in Committee. She may have noted that amendment No. 65, which is in my name and has been selected for debate, refers to the curtilage of the port of Tilbury. Is it not a fact that certain installations at Tilbury have an accepted geographical boundary? Is not the boundary indicated in some map, or set out in the Bill?

Ms. Walley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing that matter to the attention of the House. He has echoed a discussion that we had in Committee, when it seemed that we should be referring the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It seems impossible to determine which part of the port of London belongs to the Port of London Authority, and which part belongs to Tilbury. We pressed the Minister about the issue. Members of the Committee had a copy of the very glossy brochure issued by the port of Tilbury, in which red and green squares indicate the various operational parts of the port. I hope that the Minister will be able to give the House a full audit of the land available at the port of Tilbury, and will make absolutely clear, before any sale, what exactly is being sold.

In Committee, it was said that discussion of this matter was premature, and that we should wait until the whole mechanism was set in motion. What we need is a full audit of the land. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us more detail about which land belongs to whom. As I said, the 1968 Act is out of print. I found it almost impossible to get a copy. It would help if the Minister defined the land that belongs to each port and say why there cannot be a full audit of that land.

Mr. Spearing: Bills usually contain definition clauses. At the end of this Bill I see that there is a clause with the rubric "Interpretation". Is my hon. Friend telling the House that in Committee the Government were unable to present either a map or a draft deed defining the boundaries of this possible future port—I say "possible", as the Bill has not yet been passed. If one purchases a house there is, at the very least, a boundary map. How on earth can the House of Commons consider the future sale of a port whose boundaries have not been defined? If my hon. Friend does not know the answer to that question, will she invite the Minister to intervene and tell us?

6.30 pm

Ms. Walley: I share my hon. Friend's concern. He has expressed it much better than I could have. In Committee, the Minister for Shipping was unable to say what land belonged to the port of London, what land belonged to the port of Tilbury and which part of it would be sold off. We pressed the Minister for the details, but he did not provide us with a significant answer. We have had to wait until now, presumably because of the pressure that we have exerted, for the Minister to define the port of Tilbury as that which is defined in the references to be found in the Port of London Act 1968. The Minister does not appear to be willing to deal with that question now. Perhaps he intends to deal with it later.

Mr. McLoughlin: I should point out to the hon. Lady that, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has tabled amendment No. 65, that would be the most appropriate place to deal with the matter.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My intervention, in the form of a question to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), related specifically to my amendment, which Mr. Speaker has kindly selected. However, in the debate on this clause, we have discussed the port of Tilbury. It runs as a theme throughout the Bill. Is it in order for the House to consider a Bill that would permit the Secretary of State to sell part of a publicly owned property—the port of London—without the part that is proposed to be sold having been defined? I know that you cannot answer that question immediately, but there are some hours yet before Third Reading. Therefore, I draw it to your attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am sure that he will take into account the fact that the Minister said that he believed that it would be more convenient to deal with the matter when we reach amendment No. 65, which has been selected for debate.

Ms. Walley: The Government are attempting to sell off something that they do not own; furthermore, they do not even know who owns it. That is extraordinary. It emphasises the terrible way in which this privatisation is taking place—presumably because the Treasury want to get their hands on the money. When the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is debated, I shall seek guidance from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on whether it would be in order for the sale of this part of the land to proceed without that information having been provided.

Ports that are against privatisation have expressed great interest in employee-management share ownership schemes. I cannot express too strongly the keen disappointment that is felt within the ports following the Government's insistence on going ahead with auctioning off the trust ports, by means of sale by tender. Many ports would have preferred an unlisted quotation and the opportunity to explore with the managers of local authority pension funds and their customers ways in which to make a bid. It was agreed to go forward on that basis in the case of Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, which was so severely damaged in the other place that its future is being considered in this Bill.

Whatever the Government say, the simple fact remains that the sky is the limit. They will not tell the House what positive action they intend to take so that these schemes can go ahead. Unless our amendments attract support and unless we can persuade the Government to go down this road, it will be impossible, whatever they may say, to establish employee-management share ownership schemes.

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): On Second Reading, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said that he was considering how best to encourage management-employee buy-outs. New clauses 2 and 3 and the related amendments make it clear that his considerations have been fruitful. Management-employee buy-outs faced a major difficulty arising from the provision for competitive bidding. It was quite clear that to set up a competitive management-employee buy-out would be complicated, requiring specialist legal and financial advice and a range of valuations of property and equipment.

It was suggested that, in the case of an average port, the cost could amount to about £250,000 and that, in the case

[Mr. Michael Irvine]

of larger ports it could amount to considerably more. That would have been a very real deterrent to a management-employee buy-out bid. As the Bill was drafted, in the event of the bid failing, managers and employers would have been at risk of having to find the money to meet those costs themselves.

The problem does not apply just to this privatisation or to privatisations generally; it applies also in commerce when companies wish to sell off part of their operations by means of a management-employee buy-out. In the commercial world the problem is usually overcome by the vendor agreeing to underwrite the cost of legal and financial advice and the necessary valuations.

Specific statutory authority is needed to permit such underwriting in this case. It is interesting to note that there are precedents for such assistance to other management-employee buy-outs of state industries, or parts of them. In Committee, I made the point that such assistance was afforded when the National Bus Company was privatised. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) gave a better example—the important privatisation of Harland and Wolff. A clause similar to new clause 2 was introduced to facilitate that management-employee buy-out, with very good results.

In Committee, I sought to move an amendment to deal with the difficulty. I acknowledged that my amendment was imperfect and I withdrew it when the Minister accepted that its provisions contained force. I am glad to see the new clauses and amendments, which put the matter far better and far more effectively than my amendment did.

I know that there is a great deal of interest in a management-employee buy-out in my constituency port of Ipswich, not only among the managers, but among all who work in the dock. I suspect that that is the experience of many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members. It is significant that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) got herself into a contortion when she explained how she was basically opposed to this privatisation yet she was in favour of management-employee buy-outs. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for the new clauses and amendments.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston-upon-Hull, East): The hon. Gentleman did not quite understand the intent of what my comrade the Member for Stoke-on-Trent (Ms. Walley) said. [HON. MEMBERS: "Comrade?"] It is a good and useful description. The Tory twits come out with silly nonsense.

When debating the Bill, we have to deal with matters in the order in which they appear in the Bill. The Bill is basically intended as a privatisation measure and we are against the privatisation of the trust ports. The difficulty associated with the trust ports—that of getting access to develop their assets—can be dealt with by a harbour revision order. We explained that on Second Reading and in Committee. We should prefer such an order. In the course of this debate, we must keep within the context of the Bill.

The Government have claimed that they want an ESOP arrangement. Given that, we have tried to make the point that if they wish to do that, heavy costs are involved. In that sense, we have an agreement. We may not have an agreement on what we do with the trust funds and on how we might deal with the ports. In the context of the Bill, it is right for my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North to make her point.

Mr. Irvine: The problem facing the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and his hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North is that, from an ideological viewpoint, they do not like privatisation, but they know very well that, among the dockers, the idea of a management-employee buy-out has a lot of support. It has a lot of support in Ipswich, and I believe that it has a lot of support in other ports. I welcome the new clauses and the related amendments, which clear the way for such management-employee buy-outs.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The fact that the Government have tabled amendments to promote employee participation in management-employee buy-outs, that the Labour party has tabled similar amendments and that I have tabled amendments towards that end shows a remarkable consensus that management-employee buy-outs tend to be a good thing. We should therefore examine in some detail, if not at great length, the extent to which the new clause tries to promote an objective that is shared by hon. Members of all parties.

It is fair to say that there will be some cases in which the number of employees is not sufficient for such a buy-out. However, one would have hoped to find other provisions in the Bill which would seek to promote some employee participation, even if it does not amount to a buy-out.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) was perfectly right to point out the number of additional expenses, especially the expensive buying in of professional expertise, which will be necessary to allow management and employees to put together a package. Undoubtedly, the new clauses and supporting amendments go a considerable way towards helping to promote management-employee buy-outs by taking that cost off the shoulders of those seeking to put together a package, if the trust port or company wishes such a package to go ahead. I note that the new clause says that the trust port

"may on such terms as it thinks fit agree with"

the bodies concerned. It is a permissive provision rather than one that would require the trust ports to agree.

I also note that the provision will come into play only if there is an association of employees and management. They will have to have formulated a proposal to maximise employee participation. The third condition, which is contained in new clause 2(3)(c), is that the employee-management team must

"appear to the body concerned to be best placed to secure the implementation of such a proposal."

Will the Minister tell me what he understands by that? Does it mean the best proposal of a series of potential management-employee buy-outs, or does it mean that the management-employee buy-out seems to be the best of numerous proposals, including non-management-employee buy-outs? If the latter interpretation is intended, it begs a further question about whether there are other provisions in the Bill—or more likely, not in the Bill—which would try to give some encouragement to management-employee buy-outs.

Amendment No. 58 was a stab at answering that question. Given the resources available to us, I do not pretend that it is the best means of trying to promote an employee buy-out, but it would at least allow for the levy to be at one half of whatever is stipulated in cases in which

there is a management buy-out. That would give management and employees a certain edge in putting together a package.

6.45 pm

Amendment No. 53 not only relates to encouraging proposals to promote employee participation in the company, but suggests that, when considering schemes, the Minister should have regard to the pension and employment rights of those employed, irrespective of whether it is a management-employee buy-out.

That point was made to me last week by employees when I visited the port of Poole. They want some assurance about the transfer of pension rights and about the theoretical possibility—which may be more than theoretical—that the business might not continue as a port as we know it with stevedoring and cargo handling, and that the person purchasing the port might carry out an activity entirely different from the main port activity, which could put many people's jobs in jeopardy. I suspect that there are similar concerns at other ports. People want some assurance that the rights of employees would at least be taken into account when the Government consider various schemes. Such an assurance would be welcome, and I look forward to hearing what the Minister says.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me early in this debate. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) raised an important point on Second Reading, which was taken up in Committee. We have congratulated the Minister on the draftsmanship and workmanship of the new clauses. From what the hon. Member for Ipswich has said, it seems that the new clauses are a straight lift from the Bill that privatised Harland and Wolff. That privatisation has been a great success in terms of productivity, management and competition. I visited Harland and Wolff not long ago, and I saw how well it is doing after privatisation. If the wording of the new clauses has the same impact, we should welcome it.

My worry on behalf of those who have invested their lives in the docks is that the wording of the new clauses is not strong enough to ensure that there is worker participation that includes employees rather than simply the management. I am somewhat reassured by amendment No. 7, which says:

> "In exercising his powers under sub-section (2) above the appropriate Minister shall have particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal to managers or other persons employed by the successor company".

That may cover my concern. The only way in which the Government could entirely cover my concern would be for them to accept new clause 12, which was tabled by the Opposition.

The point that there would be massive expenditure by any management-employee team who wished to compete with the godfathers of the shipping trade was well taken in Committee. Such godfathers might want to come into the port as it came up for privatisation, and it would be difficult for employee-management buy-out teams to compete. We know that the Tees and Hartlepool port went to celebrated merchant bankers in the City of London, who came up with a scheme that was so disastrous that it was kicked out in the other place.

Mr. Holt: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House how many of those godfather shipping companies have acquired the companies in the ports industry that are already in the private sector? Is that not an unnecessary scare?

Mr. Bell: I do not think that it is a scare, because my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has mentioned one already. When I was in Northern Ireland, I talked to the people at Warren Point; they are in the same situation as Felixstowe. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend, from a sedentary position, mentions Sealink, and there are quite a number of others that I could mention, such as Hanson Trust. I could mention quite a number of companies which may not have thought of the great assets that are linked to our ports and are there for the taking under the Government scheme. We are debating a way of preventing these predators from moving in, of giving the management and the employees, who are the ones who have invested their lives in the business, a chance to maintain that investment and—to get back to our central point—of seeing that there is a benefit for the local community.

I think that we are all aware of what is out there in the wide world waiting to try to take over our ports. Therefore, anything that strengthens the concept of the management buy-out, which is a buy-out with a strong employee interest—we are not interested in a straightforward management buy-out that leaves the employees out in the cold—must have the support of the House.

My feeling is that, to overcome the essential difference between us—the emphasis in the Government wording is on management while the emphasis in ours is on employees—the House would be better served if the Government accepted new clause 12 at this stage.

I am grateful that I am following the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and I sympathise with his other problems. It is good to see that, despite the difficulties he has had in his constituency in Orkney, he has nevertheless maintained a strong interest in this Bill, both in Committee and on the Floor of the House.

I therefore hope that I can persuade the Minister, in my usual seductive fashion, to look again at new clause 12, which is our new clause, to pit that against new clauses 2 and 3 and to give us credit on this occasion for getting the balance right in the interests of the employees and of the local community.

Mr. McLoughlin: I think that this has been a useful start to the debate. I tried to explain in opening and putting forward the Government amendments that the Government are committed to seeing management and employees given every incentive and certainly put at no disadvantage. I can say, with regard to a point made by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), that the new clause is designed to enable the authority to work out which are the best placed of the management-employee buy-outs to sponsor. He may remember that that was a question on which I was asked for clarification by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). That is certainly the Government's intention.

New clause 12, which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) tabled, is basically a well-balanced combination of the unacceptable and the unnecessary. Taking the latter first, subsection (2) of the proposed new clause has been anticipated in the Government's amendments on financial assistance in new clause 2 and, in the case of the PLA, new clause 3. As far

[Mr. McLoughlin]

as the unacceptable part is concerned, subsection (1) would completely undermine the Government's policy of inviting competitive bidding for the ports by giving a MEBO team first refusal in every case. That goes far beyond the intention of providing a level playing field for all possible potential bidders. We believe that it is right to establish the market price of a port by competitive bids rather than by a theoretical valuation. If there were to be a theoretical valuation and that proved to be wrong, who would be the people shouting the loudest about the Government's selling off at a lower price than could be expected? We all know who would be shouting the loudest and most vociferously. It would obviously be the Opposition.

Ms. Walley: In view of what the Minister has just said, will he tell the House why it was possible to do that in the case of Tees and Hartlepool, and to come to an agreement on £62 million—my hon. Friends will correct me if I am wrong—and comment on the fact that there should be tax amounts based on £31 million, that is 50 per cent? Why was it possible to do that in the case of Tees and Hartlepool but not possible in the case of the other trust ports? Will the Minister tell the House that?

Mr. McLoughlin: The House is dealing with a Government Bill; it is not dealing with the private Bill that passed through the House and has not made all the progress which its promoters would have liked.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The Minister, of course, is seeking an explanation for the point which my hon. Friend put, but the essence of the matter is this. The Government supported the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill; they supported the principles and the financial measures in that Bill. Therefore, my hon. Friend's question is pertinent. Why is it not now a possibility even under this Bill?

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government made their position quite clear at the time of the starting of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill; we said that we would bring forward our own legislation which would enable all trust ports to follow the system of privatisation. That was not the case at the time when Tees and Hartlepool first promoted their private Bill. The House is not now dealing with a history lesson on the earlier private Bill; it is dealing with the Bill that is before it.

Mr. Leadbitter: The Minister says that that was not the case when we were dealing with the private Bill, but he must recognise—I am sure that he will not deny it—that the Bill before us was going through the House a few weeks behind the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, which had been through the House and was in the Lords. Therefore, his explanation is not adequate.

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not have the precise dates before me, but I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill began its stages in the House in March 1989 and the Government's Bill was announced in November in the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Leadbitter: The hon. Gentleman's dates are wrong. The Bill did not come to the House until 27 November 1989, and it was kept in the House for many months after that in Committee, and some weeks after that before hon. Members could examine the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority proposals on site. Therefore, I am suggesting to the Minister—and I am sure that he will react honourably to this—that the point he is making to my hon. Friend is invalidated because the private Bill was running only a few weeks ahead of the Bill to which he is now addressing himself.

Mr. McLoughlin: I should like to correct myself and apologise, in part, to the hon. Gentleman. He is right that it was in November 1989. And of course the Gracious Speech in which the Government's intention to bring forward a ports Bill was announced was in November 1990. So I was perfectly right in saying that the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill started a long time before the Government secured the position in the legislative programme to bring forward the Bill that is before the House tonight.

Mr. Holt: It may assist my hon. Friend and all Opposition Members who are floundering to know that I moved the Second Reading of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill on 15 March 1990, when 29 Opposition Members voted against it

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can make some progress instead of going through a history lesson. I want to deal with various amendments put forward by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland.

First, I believe that his amendment No. 53 is unnecessary, because the Bill already takes care of some of the hon. Member's concerns and a tabled Government amendment would take care of the remainder. The transfer of undertakings regulations apply to the employment rights of those affected by transfers under the Bill. Although the regulations do not apply to occupational pension schemes, the general transfer clause 2(2)—this is the important point—ensures that the rights and liabilities of a port authority would be transferred to its successor company and the rights and liabilities of the employees in relation to such a scheme would continue. It is later on, when we come to deal with Tilbury, for special reasons that were discussed in Committee, that the position is different. I therefore hope that it will be seen that there is no need to pursue amendment No. 53.

The amendment would also require the Minister to have regard to the promotion of employee participation. Provision for this is already made in Government amendment No. 7, which is cast in similar terms and would have substantially the effect desired by hon. Members. I could offer the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland a long explanation in respect of amendments Nos. 57 and 58, although I do not know whether I need to do so. I realise that the amendments are well intentioned, but they would give too much of an advantage, and it would not help management-employee buy-outs to reduce the levy to 25 per cent. in such cases. The hon. Gentleman should think through what effect that might have on the base price and on price pegging. We will deal with the matter in greater detail when we discuss the proposed levy.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister said that the amendments would give too much of an advantage. Then he said that they would not help. Which of those statements is right?

7 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments would not help in respect of the amount that would have to be paid, but they would not provide the level playing field that the Government want, either. Although my two statements may appear contradictory, I believe that they can both be defended.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): If the Government are serious in claiming that they want to give port employees the opportunity to be involved in management-worker bids, why does the Bill not discriminate in favour of such people? The people most likely to ensure that a port continues to function as a port are those who have spent a lifetime working in it. Probably generations of their families have worked in the industry, too. The Government pay lip service to the idea, but they are not prepared to remove the disadvantages to such people, even if they recognise them.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is partly because of such considerations that the Government seek to give people who have worked in the ports all their lives and contributed a considerable amount a share in their companies, and to allow them to play a more positive role. They are likely to benefit the most if companies are successful, and that is precisely what privatisation will achieve.

I hope that the House will accept the Government amendments, and that the Opposition will feel able not to press their amendments.

Mr. Leadbitter: I want to reason out my argument with the Minister, without challenging him, because that is the best way to elicit a response to the good sense in new clause 12.

I apologise for repeating myself, but the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill was brought to the House of Commons, without consultation with anybody, on 27 November 1989—the deadline for the submission of private Bills. During the following year, that Bill spent most of its time in the House of Commons. The proceedings of the Committee that dealt with it were protracted and its deliberations were held up, because its members insisted on seeing the Tees and Hartlepool port authority on site—much against the wishes of the Chairman of the Committee. The present Bill eventually came to the House in the latter part of 1990, following the Queen's Speech. A procedural motion was needed for the reference, following a message from the House of Lords, to take the Bill to the other place.

Perhaps the Minister will think again about new clause 12, which says:

"Financial assistance shall be available in respect of bids put together substantially by management and employees".

Under the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill the management would have been permitted to seek financial resources to assist a management takeover. Such a takeover would have involved, first, the setting up of a holding company and, secondly the port authority's becoming a subsidiary company of the holding company. The Government supported that Bill then and agreed that the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill could raise its own finances. The Minister's approach to this Bill contradicts the Government's previous position.

Two or three months ago, the House of Lords turfed out the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill because it was said that the Government were introducing a Ports Bill. The Government must have been cognisant of the provisions of their own Bill, which rejects financial assistance for management takeovers, whereas the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill allowed for such assistance. That reveals a dichotomy in Government thinking. They supported the provisions of the private Bill on management takeovers, but the public Bill does not embody support for the same principle. The Minister is a reasonable man. He must respond to that argument. I do not think that his promotion prospects will be diminished if he responds in the proper manner.

Mr. McLoughlin: I now have the timetable before me, and I hope that it will not stretch your patience too much, Madam Deputy Speaker, if I give some details. As the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) said, the Bill was laid on 27 November 1989 and Second Reading was on 15 March. I remember enjoying the hon. Gentleman's speech on that occasion, although I hope that his speeches tonight will be shorter. The Bill went into Committee on 15 May and came out on 25 July. Third Reading was on 22 October 1990. The Bill had therefore gone through all its stages in this House when the Government's intention to introduce a Ports Bill in their own time was announced in the Gracious Speech. A revival motion was debated after the Gracious Speech, on 4 December.

On Second Reading, in response to a question about the private Bill from the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said:

"No such advice will be given to the sponsors of that Bill or to the sponsors of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill which is going through this House. Those private Bills were sponsored by the port authorities in question. It is entirely for them to decide whether they wish either to continue with their Bills or to wait and then use the provisions of the Bill."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 670.]

The Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill did not go all the way through the House of Lords, although I understand—I am not 100 per cent. sure of the procedure in the other place—that an attempt could be made to overturn the Committee's decision. We have always made it perfectly clear, as the Secretary of State did on Second Reading, that the provisions of any of the private Bills before the House at that time might come within the scope of this Bill if they did not succeed. That is what the House is discussing now.

Mr. Holt: Before he finishes speaking, will my hon. Friend reflect on what the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) said about the reasons why their Lordships threw out the private Bill of which I was a sponsor? The report said that it was not felt that the management would have the experience to move into new areas of activity. What has changed, now that we are dealing with a Government Bill? Why should managements now be deemed to have sufficient experience to overcome the objections voiced in the House of Lords?

Mr. McLoughlin: We have always made it plain that any trust port can come under the provisions of the Government's Bill. I cannot be responsible for the reasons on which the upper House decided, in its wisdom, to report. All that I can be responsible for is the Bill at present before the House of Commons. I commend the new clause.

Question put and agreed to.

[Mr. McLoughlin]

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PROPOSAL TO MAXIMISE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN EQUITY OF THE COMPANY

'.—(1) Where the Port Authority propose to form or have formed a company in pursuance of section 18 above ("the relevant company"), they may on such terms as they think fit agree with any persons who at the time of the agreement qualify for assistance under this section—

(a) to indemnify those persons in respect of the whole or any part of any expenditure to which subsection (3) below applies; or

(b) to discharge on their behalf the whole or any part of any liability to which that subsection applies.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) above persons qualify for assistance under this section if—

(a) each of them satisfies the employment condition;

(b) they have formulated a proposal for maximising participation by employees of the relevant company in ownership of its equity share capital; and

(c) they appear to the Port Authority to be best placed to secure the implementation of such a proposal.

(3) This subsection applies to any expenditure or liability of the persons concerned incurred wholly and exclusively for the purposes of the proposal mentioned in subsection (2)(b) above.

(4) A person satisfies the employment condition as regards assistance under this section—

(a) before the transfer under section 19(6) above, if he is employed by the Port Authority in that part of their undertaking which consists in operating the port of Tilbury; and

(b) after that transfer, if he is employed by the relevant company.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

TREATMENT OF NET PROCEEDS OF DISPOSAL OF OWNERSHIP

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, an amount equal to the aggregate amount of the sums paid by the authority to the successor company under section 4(4) above shall be treated as accumulated realised profits of the successor company.

(2) The amount which under subsection (1) above falls to be treated as accumulated realised profits of the successor company shall be—

(a) increased by any amount by which the asset value on the transfer to the successor company under section 7 above exceeds the liability amount; or

(b) reduced by any amount by which the liability amount on that transfer exceeds the asset value;

as the case may require.

(3) In subsection (2) above—

"the asset value" means the aggregate value of the assets transferred; and

"the liability amount" means the aggregate amount of the liabilities transferred.

(4) For the purposes of this section the value of any asset and the amount of any liability transferred to the successor company under section 7 above shall be taken to be its value or amount determined in accordance with any provision made by the scheme under paragraph 9 of Schedule 1 below (transitional provision as to accounts, etc., of the successor company).'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a short new clause, intended to make clear the accounting treatment of the net proceeds of sale of a port after the levy on proceeds and any tax liability has been paid. Without such a specific provision, there might have been doubt whether the net proceeds of disposal could be treated as accumulated realised profits of the successor company available for distribution. The new clause makes it clear that that is the case.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister for giving that explanation to the House. I read the entire new clause with great perplexity throughout the afternoon. I even missed the statement of the Secretary of State for the Environment on the so-called abolition of the poll tax. I still could not make head nor tail of the new clause.

As I understand it, the Minister said that the new clause defines an asset on which tax has already been paid. When I read the new clause in relation to schedule 1(9), I wondered how I would annotate the Bill for legal publishers and how I would square schedule 1, paragraph 9 with the new clause. I wondered what explanation I would give. Is there a contradiction in terms between schedule 1, where the assets are described, and new clause 4, as explained by the Minister?

Mr. McLoughlin: I think that the answer to that question is no.

Mr. Bell: The Minister is improving somewhat on Mark Twain, who, when asked the distance from Nashville to New Orleans on the Mississippi, said with great prompitude that he did not know. I suspect that that was the true answer that the Minister gave. It was with a nod of the heads of the—two, four, six—seven officials in the Box that he was able to give such a prompt answer. In any event, the explanation seems to be that the assets of the port are assets on which taxes have already been paid and on which taxes are not likely to be paid a second time.

Mr. Prescott: Is new clause 4 in any way related to the new clauses which affect clause 16, in which estimates are made of what the assets are, what will be taxed and what will be the Government's take? I take it that the Minister does not think that that is so.

Mr. McLoughlin: Let me reassure the hon. Gentleman. This is a fairly technical matter. We shall come to the points that he made, and it is clear that we shall have a long debate on them. The new clause has been tabled simply for the avoidance of doubt and uncertainty and to make clear the accounting treatment of receipts of a somewhat unusual nature, in that they represent part of the purchase price returning to the purchaser. We have sought to clarify that matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

THE REQUIRED PROVISION FOR THE PROTECTION OF PENSION RIGHTS

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, this section applies to—

(a) any person transferred by virtue of the transfer under section 19(6) above from the employment of the Port Authority to that of the company who—
(i) immediately before the date of the transfer was a member of the Port of London Authority Pension Fund ("the Fund"); and
(ii) ceased to be such a member by virtue of the transfer; and
(b) any person who, after that date, acquires pension rights under any pension scheme provided or amended in pursuance of any provision made in accordance with the following provisions of this section by the scheme under section 19 above (a "relevant pension scheme") by reason of the death of a person within paragraph (a) above;
but only, in the case of any person within paragraph (b) above, as respects the pension rights by virtue of which he falls within that paragraph.

(2) Any person to whom this section applies may elect in such manner as may be prescribed that this section shall cease to apply to him; and if any person within subsection (1)(a) above—
(a) ceases to be in continuous employment; or
(b) voluntarily withdraws from a relevant pension scheme;
otherwise than in such circumstances as may be prescribed, this section shall cease to apply to him except as respects pension rights which have accrued to him before that time.

(3) The required provision for the protection of pension rights mentioned in section 20(1A) above is provision for the purpose of securing that—
(a) no person within subsection (1)(a) above is placed in any worse position by reason of—
(i) ceasing to be a member of the Fund by virtue of the transfer of employment mentioned in subsection (1)(a); or
(ii) being prevented from continuing to participate in or acquire pension rights under a relevant pension scheme by any subsequent change of employer which does not affect his continuity of employment;
(b) no person to whom this section applies is placed in any worse position by reason of—
(i) any winding up, in whole or in part, of a relevant pension scheme; or
(ii) any amendment of a relevant pension scheme which results in benefits under that scheme being reduced or contributions by employees being increased.

(4) The references in subsection (3) above to any worse position shall be construed, in relation to a person within subsection (1)(a) above, as references to a position which is any worse than his position immediately before he ceases to be a member of the Fund.

(5) Provision made by virtue of subsection (3) above may impose duties (whether as to the provision or amendment of pension schemes, the purchase of annuities, the making of payments or otherwise) on persons, other than the Port Authority, who are or have been employers of persons within subsection (1)(a) above.

(6) Duties imposed on any person by any such provision may include duties owed to persons of whom he is not and has not been an employer.

(7) The scheme under section 19 above may also provide for any dispute arising under any such provision to be referred to arbitration.

(8) So much of Schedule 13 to the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 as has effect for the purpose of ascertaining whether any employment is continuous shall apply for the purposes of subsections (2) and (3) above as if those subsections were contained in that Act.

(9) In this section—
"employer", in relation to a person employed by a company which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of another company, includes that other company;
"pension", in relation to any person, means a pension of any kind payable to or in respect of him, and includes a lump sum, allowance or gratuity so payable and a return of contributions, with or without interest or any other addition;
"pension rights", in relation to any person, includes—
(a) all forms of right to or eligibility for the present or future payment of a pension to or in respect of him; and
(b) any expectation of the accruer of a pension to or in respect of him;
and includes a right of allocation in respect of the present or future payment of a pension;
"pension scheme" means any scheme for providing pensions to or in respect of any persons;
"the Port of London Authority Pension Fund" refers to the Port of London Authority Pension Fund established under section 5 of the Port of London Act 1928; and
"prescribed" means prescribed by the scheme under section 19 above.".—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment No. 49, in clause 19, page 16, line 12, at end insert—

'(5A) The scheme shall contain provisions for the setting up of a mirror-image pension scheme identical in all ways to any scheme operated by or funded in whole or in part by that authority. The Secretary of State shall provide for the funding of this scheme equivalent to the amount held in respect of each member's accrued pension benefits, allowing for expected future pay increases. Bulk transfers without consent should be conditional upon the Actuary to the transferring scheme supplying a certificate of broad equivalence. Pensionable service shall be regarded as not having terminated in any change of scheme.'.

Government amendment No. 4.

7.15 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: The purpose of new clause 1 is to require the transfer scheme under clause 19 to include provision for the protection of pension rights of members of the Port of London Authority pension fund who are transferred from the employment of the PLA to that of the new company and who cease to be members of the fund by virtue of the transfer. That point caused anxiety among all members of the Committee. I hope to explain to the House how the Government intend to tackle it.

The protection of such pension rights was an important point and it was raised often in Committee. It was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). In Committee I said that it was the intention of the PLA that benefits available to employees joining the new company would be no less favourable than those under the PLA pension fund, and that the Government intended to give statutory effect to that. New clause 1 and amendment No. 4 have been tabled to implement the undertaking that I made to the Committee.

I said to the Committee that the detailed provision was likely to be more suitable for inclusion in the scheme of transfer under clause 19 than in the Bill itself, and this has turned out to be so. The details will therefore go into the scheme, and the purpose of these is to require the scheme to include such provision.

The House will appreciate that the provisions of the new clause are complex. In essence, they establish a category of protected persons and they require that such

[Mr. McLoughlin]

protected persons are not placed in a worse position through ceasing to be members of the PLA pension fund or for other specified reasons, such as the winding up or amendment of a pension scheme provided by the successor company.

The persons to be covered by these provisions are transferred employees who are contributing members of the PLA pension fund immediately before transfer day and certain dependants of such employees. Transferred employees will retain their protection so long as they are "continuously employed", as defined in the clause.

The scheme under clause 19 will require the employer of the protected persons to ensure that such persons will continue to enjoy pension rights that are no worse than they would have been if they had continued to be members of the PLA pension fund as it was before the transfer date. The clause also enables any dispute in respect of the protective provision to be referred to arbitration.

I have given only a summary of new clause 1, but I hope that the House will recognise from the details of the new clause that we have been concerned to make full provision for the protection of the people concerned.

Amendment No. 4 is a paving amendment for the new clause. It amends clause 20, which provides for the supplementary provision that may be included in a scheme under clause 10. Amendment No. 4 inserts into clause 20 a requirement for the scheme to include the provision for protection of pension rights described in subsection (3) of new clause 1.

Amendment No. 49, tabled by Opposition Members, has basically very similar objectives to those in the amendments which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has tabled. I am told that some of the phraseology used would be difficult to interpret. It also seems to require the Secretary of State to fund a pension scheme to be available to the transferred employees and this would be quite unacceptable. I hope, therefore, that Opposition Members will withdraw their amendment and that the House will accept the amendments that I have described. They should go a long way to allaying the fears of the employees to be transferred from the PLA.

Ms. Walley: We are pleased that the Minister has introduced proposals to deal with pensions. He was right to say that the interview caused great anxiety in Committee, certainly among Opposition Members. We pressed the Government on the matter at great length. The Minister referred to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). I do not see the hon. Gentleman in the Chamber. I wonder where he is.

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope that the hon. Lady will not press the non-attendance of my hon. Friend. He is serving on a Select Committee, so he cannot be here this afternoon.

Ms. Walley: I am grateful for that explanation. I was referring to the debates and disagreements in Committee. I should have expected the hon. Gentleman to be here, but we have had an explanation from the Minister of his whereabouts.

We had a commitment from the Minister that the Government would return with the mechanics of introducing detailed proposals to enshrine the pension rights of the workers in the legislation. We are pleased that the pressure that we applied has borne fruit and that the Government have addressed the issue. Previously the Bill ignored it.

The Minister referred to our amendment, which sets out the principles of a pension scheme that will in no way undermine the rights of the Tilbury workers and those remaining with the Port of London Authority. The Minister promised to state in the Bill that the same benefits would be available from the new company. I want to press him further. I want from him an absolute assurance that the Government's amendments, technical and complicated as they are, will satisfy the concerns of the port of London work force.

We debated the matter at length in Committee, when we echoed the concerns of the Transport and General Workers Union and of the prospective candidate for Thurrock, Andrew MacKinley, whom I am pleased to see in the Strangers Gallery.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Lady knows, under our procedures we do not refer to people outside the Chamber.

Ms. Walley: I am grateful for that advice, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I was interested to hear the Minister say that the amendments which he has tabled would mean that the employees would not have worse conditions at the date of the sale. One point which we should address is that employees who are covered by the Port of London authority pension scheme can look forward to index-linked benefits, because that is a healthy fund, with large investments.

I appreciate that we are dealing with a complicated and technical issue and that what the port of London pension fund can and cannot do is enshrined in legislation. However, I want to press upon the Minister concerns that have been brought to my attention by people employed by the Port of London authority. I quote directly from a letter:

> "It is therefore most imperative that, if it is not possible to remain within their own fund, then Government statutes should provide that whatever future pension changes that are imposed on us, they will not diminish in real terms the members' final settlements."

The pension benefits of some 400 workers may not seem an important issue in direct comparison with the other matters with which we are concerned in the Bill, but pensions will clearly be crucial when those workers reach retirement age. It is up to the House to protect their interests fully. I do not know whether the Minister will address the matter in more detail, but we do not want people to be worse off as a result of the Government's proposals. We need further clarification from the Minister.

Mr. Loyden: I support fully what my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) has said. Many of us have been concerned in the past about pensions when employees have been transferred from one company to another. In many cases the workers find themselves worse off. I hope that the Minister will take into account the principle that those covered by the pension scheme at present will be no worse off and will gain any advantages that accrue from index linking in future. My hon. Friend has made the case, and I hope that the Minister will respond positively.

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not think that it was fair of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) to maintain that the point was ignored earlier. As I said in Committee, the Government always intended to address the point that Tilbury was different from all the other trust ports in that it was being split from the Port of London authority. The problem did not arise from the other trust ports, where there was a straight transfer.

For the hon. Lady to say that the matter was ignored was to over-egg the importance of the Opposition's case. We always accepted that it would be an important part of the Bill. Certainly I would not say that it was not important for the House to spend time on the pensions of 400 people. It is exceptionally important and vital for those people that we get the clause right.

That is why the Bill will provide that the scheme proposed for the privatisation will ensure that those people are treated in the same way as those who are in the PLA scheme. It is impossible for them to remain in that scheme, because they will cease to be employees of the port of London. I do not think that anybody should be under any misapprehension that we intend to make sure that they get equal treatment to those who remain in the scheme.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

SUPPLEMENTARY AND CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS RELATING TO LEVY UNDER SECTION 16

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, by order substitute for any percentage for the time being specified in section 16(2) above such other percentage as may be specified in the order.

(2) Subject to subsections (3) and (4) below, any amount payable or paid by any company in respect of levy under that section on any disposal shall be allowable as a deduction from the consideration in the computation under the 1979 Act of the gain accruing to that company or to any other person on the disposal.

References below in this section, in relation to any disposal on which levy under that section is chargeable, to the levy amount are references to any amount so payable or paid in respect of the levy.

(3) Subsection (2) above shall not apply where—

(a) apart from the deduction of the levy amount an allowable loss would accrue to the company or to any other person on the disposal; or

(b) such a loss would so accrue if the levy amount were deducted;

but in the latter case the person making the disposal shall be treated for the purposes of corporation tax on chargeable gains as if the disposal had been made for a consideration of such amount as would secure that neither a gain nor a loss would accrue to that person.

(4) Subsection (2) above shall not apply where a disposal on which levy under section 16 above is chargeable is one which, by virtue of section 267(1) or 273(1) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (company reconstructions and amalgamations and transfers within groups of companies), is treated as made for a consideration ("the original consideration") giving rise to neither a gain nor a loss.

(5) Where in any case within subsection (4) above the original consideration is less than the market value at the time of the disposal of the land or interest in land which is the subject of the disposal, the consideration for which the disposal is treated by the provision in question as being made shall be increased by—

(a) the levy amount; or

(b) the excess of that market value over the original consideration;

whichever is the less.

(6) Except as provided above in this section, no amount payable or paid in respect of levy under section 16 above or interest on such levy shall be allowed as a deduction or otherwise taken into account in computing any income, profits or losses for any tax purposes.

(7) There shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund—

(a) all payments received by the appropriate Minister in respect of levy under section 16 above; and

(b) all interest paid to the appropriate Minister by virtue of any provision of an order under that section.

(8) In this section "allowable loss" has the same meaning as in the 1979 Act; and in section 16 above and this section—

(a) "the 1979 Act" means the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979; and

(b) references to an interest in land include any right in, over or in relation to land.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Government amendments Nos. 27 and 28.

Amendment No. 47, in clause 16, page 12, line 21, leave out from 'be' to end of line 34 and insert

'charged at the rate of one hundred per cent. on the amount of the gain, and shall be payable by the chargeable company to the Secretary of State.'.

Government amendments Nos. 29 to 37.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments constitute a significant change to the arrangements envisaged in the Bill for the Government's levy on onward disposals of land. They take account of almost all of the concerns that were expressed about the arrangements by my hon. Friends in Committee. They do not, I surmise, take account of the views of the Opposition, because there was a total divide in Committee on the points. I do not wish to say anything further about what happened in Committee, but instead to deal with the heart of the matter.

The Government take the view that the sale of a port under the Bill will be carried out through a process of competitive tendering. Nevertheless, it is still possible that land which some of the ports hold will turn out to have a significantly higher value than was appreciated at the time of sale.

In such cases, the subsequent sale of such land would be subject to capital gains tax. But we consider that there should be a further levy on the enhanced value of such property to prevent excessive windfall gains for the purchaser of a port in the same way. As I explained a few minutes ago, we see the levy on the proceeds of disposal as preventing excessive windfall gains at the time of sale.

Of course, as I made clear in Committee, one of our objectives in seeking the privatisation of major trust ports is to make it easier for them to realise the value of their property holdings, so we need to strike a careful balance between preventing excessive windfall gains and deterring the port companies from turning their property to best account. The balance is difficult, and a number of my hon. Friends, who, I expect, are representative of opinion on this side of the House as a whole, made it clear during debates in Committee that they did not feel we were striking the right balance, but instead that the scales were too loaded against the ports.

[Mr. McLoughlin]

Amendment No. 27 clears the way, in drafting terms, for amendment No. 28. That amendment is designed to answer most of the points that my hon. Friends have made. First, it defines the disposal of land or an interest in land in terms of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979. That makes it clear that we are envisaging not a new tax, but rather a levy, or surcharge based on existing tax earnings. In particular, this responds to concern about the levy being charged for deemed disposal on the granting of planning permission. With the new formulation, that falls outside the scope of the levy, and, indeed, amendment No. 32 specifically deletes it from the Bill.

Secondly, although we continue to see the need for the levy to operate over 10 years, because a reduction to five years would encourage companies simply to defer disposals until they escaped levy altogether, we accept that, after the first five years, the rate should be tapered.

Thirdly, we have also taken account of the combined effect of the levy and of CGT on gains resulting from land disposals. This is the most obvious example of the need to strike a balance that I have just mentioned. Accordingly, the rate of levy is to be 25 per cent. for the first five years, reducing to 20 per cent. in years six and seven, and to 10 per cent. for the rest of the 10-year period.

If I may anticipate the provisions in new clause 9, the House will see that subsection 2 provides for the levy to be deductable against capital gains for the purpose of capital gains tax. That means that, for the first five years, the maximum combined effect of the levy and of CGT will be 49·75 per cent. of the chargeable gain, falling after five years to 46·4 per cent., and after seven years to just under 40 per cent. I pointed that out to Committee members in a letter that I wrote to them a few weeks ago, because I knew that they would want the full details of that important matter.

The remaining amendments on clause 16—Nos. 29 to 36—are drafting consequentials either of amendment No. 28, or simply of the need to move one or two of the existing provisions in clause 16 into new clause 9.

7.30 pm

Two other points of interest to my hon. Friends will be dealt with in due course by the order to be made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, under subsection (3). First, that order will provide that the base date for the valuation of land for the purpose of the levy will be the date on which the company ceases to be a wholly owned subsidiary of the former port authority, that is the date on which the disposal begins. The base value will be the market value at that date.

Secondly, there is clearly little point in applying the levy to minor disposals of land. Accordingly, a de minimis provision is needed, and the order will provide that individual disposals worth less than 2 per cent. of the proceeds of sale of a port, provided that they fall below £200,000, will be excluded from the levy. The order will also provide that the levy will be payable only on disposals of a value amounting cumulatively over the whole of the clawback period to more than 10 per cent. of the proceeds of sale of a port, provided that they do not exceed a cumulative total of £500,000.

Mr. Wallace: May I respond to the Minister's point that the base date for calculating the value and the increase will be the date of transfer to the new company, when the company will cease to be a subsidiary of the port? Does that mean that, if the value of transfer is fixed on, say, 1 January for a transfer that will take place on 1 May, and planning permission is obtained in March for land that, accordingly will increase substantially in value after the date on which the price was agreed, that increase will not be reflected if there is a subsequent sale at a much enhanced price?

Mr. Mcloughlin: I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman on that issue when I have thought more about his question. I shall try to answer him at some stage during the debate.

New clause 9 consists partly of provisions transferred from clause 16 and the provision to which I have already referrred, and makes the levy deductible against gains for the purpose of capital gains tax. It also includes provisions, in subsections (3) to (5), to ensure that the payment of a levy will not be allowed to create a loss for the purpose of capital gains tax. Finally, amendment No. 37 is a drafting consequential later in the Bill.

This is an important aspect of a privatisation of this sort, where unforeseen gains may arise on the subsequent sales of land. In drawing up these amendments, we have taken the views expressed in Committee carefully into account, and I hope that my hon. Friends, if not Opposition Members, feel that the package of measures that we now have extends the right balance of interests between the new port owners and the taxpayer beyond the disposal into the early years of privatisation. I therefore hope that the amendments will be acceptable to the House.

May I return to the question of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace)? The example that he gave might be the case, but I shall confirm that to him later. If necessary, I shall write to him in due course.

Mr. Leadbitter: I hope that the Minister will accept that the House needs to be quite clear about the meaning of new clauses 9 and 16 and the amendments under consideration.

New clause 9 states:

"The Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, by order substitute for any percentage for the time being specified in section 16(2)."

That is rather a dog's breakfast. It does not tell the House very much—we shall have to vote on it—about the impact that it may have on the ports. For example, the Tees and Hartlepool port authority had disposable assets of some £60 million. The Minister should recognise—we have often repeated the fact—that, when the levy under that Bill was 50 per cent. or nearly £30·5 million, we understood the extent to which the port authority would be denied half the value of the disposable assets and that the holding company would have the rest. That would go against the raising of moneys for the flotation. Moreover, we could measure the extent to which the subsidiary company—the port—would be disadvantaged.

The Minister is not listening to me. Hon. Members would be wise to consider the point that I am making. The new clause affects many ports and the employment prospects of those who work there. Although hon. Members may not have job security, we are much more privileged than those who must suffer the vicissitudes of economic recessions. The issue concerns jobs, men and management, and the extent to which the Government are

seeking, rather greedily, to accrue to the Treasury moneys which they have not helped to earn. That is the nub of the problem.

Will the Minister consider this serious matter objectively? Before the House votes, it is entitled to know the exact implications of this important new clause and the amount of money that we shall take from those ports, which will not have been earned by the Government. It will be a windfall for the Treasury, which will benefit in the same way as it has in every privatisation so far. The Government have done little for the economy but, by selling off the plate and silver, they have given the Treasury millions of pounds.

The Bill deals with small ports as well as large ones. To put it in perspective, the Tees and Hartlepool port authority is the third largest port in the United Kingdom in terms of volume of trade. However, the Bill deals with many other ports which come way down the scale, with assets of less than £60 million or even as low as £20 million.

If, under new clause 9, the Secretary of State is allowed, with the usual wording,

"with the consent of the Treasury"—

not of the House—to tinker with the provisions already in the Bill and change the circumstances in which the levy would be applied, thereby altering the percentages in the Bill, we should know beforehand what effect that will have on the ports that the Government seeks to privatise.

Anyone who runs a business would want to know his returns as a percentage of his turnover and the tax that he would have to pay. Somebody may buy into the business. If that somebody is not the House of Commons or those who draft legislation but the Government of the day with the consent of the Treasury, that is not an interesting business arrangement, because they are in the same pot together. The Prime Minister is the First Secretary to the Treasury. Naturally, the business wants to know the course that the Government will take in the absence of any democratic processes being put into effect.

The Bill provides that in the first year

"the levy shall be 40 per cent. of the corporation tax payable by the company."

In the second year, it will be 32 per cent.; in the third, 24 per cent.; in the fourth, 16 per cent.; and in the fifth, 8 per cent. How have the Government arrived at these percentages? Instead of 40 per cent. in the first year, why not 41 per cent. or 39 per cent? Instead of 32 per cent. in the second year, why not 28 per cent?

The term "corporation tax" does not present us with a specific figure. As we are taking money from other's pockets, the House is entitled to know by what tests, criteria or judgments the Government arrived at the percentages to which I have referred. We all know that, if there are no factors in an equation save X, the value of X can quickly be ascertained. Does the House know what "corporation tax" means in the sense of real money?

I am expected to vote on these issues this evening. Well, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, according to our procedures, the Government would welcome a decision by the Opposition not to vote on the new clauses and amendments to enable them, the Government, quickly to take the Bill through the House this evening. Of course no one wants to stop the Government taking their Bill through its various stages of consideration unless an important matter of principle is involved. Governments govern and Governments get their Bill, but all Administrations have a responsibility to explain to the House how they have arrived at their figures, bearing in mind the fact that the Treasury will be given consent to change the figures.

In effect, we are being asked to approve the new clause and then to go to the Strangers' Bar for a pint of beer, or the Tea Room for a cup of tea or coffee, and say to ourselves, "We have done a good job. A non-elected body called the Treasury will be able to change the figures in future." That is not a responsible way to deal with our ports. I hope that the Minister will respond to his natural inclination to honesty and explain why elected Members of this place are expected to agree to the Treasury being empowered to alter the figures in future.

Mr. Prescott: We are discussing a controversial issue, and in Committee certain Conservative and Opposition Members united to defeat the Government. There will certainly be a Division this evening. I hope that I can have the attention of the Minister. I feel that too many discussions took place in Committee between the hon. Gentleman and the Government Whip. That led to a motion being tabled that meant that the new clause would be discussed at a late stage during our consideration of the Bill on Report. It is the usual practice of the House to deal with new clauses, and especially those tabled by the Government, at an early stage on Report. It was argued, however, on the basis of tortuous reasoning, that new clause 9 could be dealt with at a late stage. It happens, of course, to be the most controversial new clause and one on which there will be a Division.

I say with all respect to the Minister that my hon. Friends have worked well with him in a spirit of co-operation despite our opposition to the Bill. The hon. Gentleman could have given some warning of the move which I have described instead of causing us to be heavy at this stage. We said that we did not agree with their proposal and would debate the issue in full. That, of course, would have delayed progress. I think that the Government indulged in shoddy practice, especially as the Minister wrote to inform me of the formula that had been adopted for the clause on 2 April, almost 21 days ago.

Mr. McLoughlin: Perhaps it would be appropriate for me to apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I am not trying to steamroller the Bill through the House. When it comes to any Divisions that might take place, he might then understand why we took the course to which he has referred.

7.45 pm

Mr. Prescott: I shall wait to see what happens. The Minister has given a generous apology and it is accepted. The reason behind the Government's actions is another matter, and one that could be debated all night, As I have said, I accept his apology.

Where will the money come from? That is the controversial issue. How will the Treasury get its share of the money that is in the land banks? Not all the trust ports are involved, and there are more than 100 of them. The controversy arises because of the criteria that are set out in the Bill. The relevant sum is £5 million for compulsion and only certain ports are candidates when it comes to the Treasury stepping in at some stage—that is, if the Treasury wants to take the opportunity of compulsory sale. In any event, the Government can exercise the relevant powers after two years. The present Government will not be in

[Mr. Prescott]

office at the end of that period and we, the next Labour Government, will be able to use the excessive powers that the Bill provides to achieve different objectives and to meet different ends. I hope that everyone is aware of that.

In debating the new clauses and amendments, we are dealing with asset stripping. How can the Government take powers to ensure that they have access to what are considered to be community assets that are locked into the special arrangements of trust ports? This is not the first Bill to deal with trusts. I recall, however, that the Treasury chose not to take any money from the Trustee Savings bank. It seems that it has changed its view, perhaps because it has seen a great deal of land value attaching to the trust ports. In effect, it is saying, "There is a great deal of land value and we could have access to the money."

That is part and parcel of the Government's privatisation policy. It has nothing to do with a ports policy or with securing a more effective arrangement for the ports. It has nothing to do with helping ports that have genuine difficulties. There are others, of course, that are more than prepared to continue as before because they have not experienced difficulties. At the same time, other ports have experienced difficulties because of trust agreements.

It has not been possible to gain access to land values for development purposes, because it is a requirement of the trust that development must be in the interest of the port. I well understand that, and it would have been possible to meet the difficulty without privatising trust ports. It would have been necessary only to introduce a harbour revision order—that has already been done in some instances. That meets the problems of gaining access to assets to enable ports to be developed in the interests of the ports. The Government have even assisted those who have chosen to take that way forward.

The Government could introduce legislation or accept that the private Bill procedure could be pursued. Perhaps our debate goes to the heart of the private Bill procedure. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) has talked, naturally, about Tees and Hartlepool, and one of the purposes of the debate is to discover how much money is available. There were some who were staggered when they learned how much money was available at my hon. Friend's port. They thought that that did not matter because of capital gains tax procedures, but some fancy dancing by some fancy tax lawyers showed that the Government would not get the money by means of the capital gains tax. It was then realised that a tighter procedure would have to be used, and that is what the clause is about.

The Government are not concerned with making it easier to raise capital. They are more concerned about the Treasury getting its take. It must be said that the Government have been clear about what they want to achieve. They say that they want to reduce obstacles to the development of ports and to enable other objectives to be pursued. If possible, they would like to give preference to a management-worker buy-out. That is the Government's declared aim, although some statements of late do not encourage one to believe that that is their purpose. I was doubtful about it from the beginning, but we are aware of the Government's declared aim. That being so, I feel that they would have adopted a different formula from the one that is before us and that which appears in the amendments to clause 16. We must consider how effective the formula will be in meeting the Government's objective of helping the ports to develop.

I cannot emphasise enough the fact that this is really about the Treasury getting more of the resources that are available. We have the declared aim to see the proper development of the ports, because of limits on asset development, but the port authorities could now face a problem in view of the formula with which they are faced.

In other words, if the local authorities or trust authorities could be sold to private companies without any money being removed, it is clear that the amount of money retained in the companies would be considerable, simply because the value of those companies would be considerable.

The consequence is that with such rich asset values, their market value would be high from the point of view of potential development, and other predators might be interested in them. That might lead those wishing to buy a port finding that the value is higher than the actual asset value. That would make it difficult for preference to be given to a management-worker buy-out, and there are many examples of cases where such proposed buy-outs have not been able to raise sufficient money to buy at the required price.

The Government wish to allow competitive tendering. In other words, it will be an auction, with those concerned making bids. The Government said in Committee that they would not necessarily accept the highest bid. Certainly there is no requirement on them to do so. Reports have appeared in various newspapers giving the view of the Secretary of State, and although I am not sure that it is the view of the Department of Transport—perhaps the Minister will make the position clear—*The Guardian* stated that the Department of Transport had indicated that the highest bids would almost certainly secure ownership of the ports.

Is that true? If so, have the Government changed their position on the matter? If it is true, it is important for us to delve into the issues raised by the new clause because we are speaking of the employee share ownership plan—the ESOP arrangements—and the fact that the management-employee buy-out could run into trouble trying to raise the necessary money. Others may think of higher sums, setting a higher market value than the management-worker buy-out could accomplish. Borrowing against assets is the way in which most management-employee buy-out operations work.

We are tonight discussing the question of obtaining a balance. The Government have constantly told us that we must secure a balance that will not prevent the proper development of the port. In other words, sufficient resources must remain to enable port assets to be developed, with the port developing into other spheres, having been freed from its trust requirements.

On the other hand, there is the problem of sufficient assets remaining in the port to attract others to put in a higher price, discouraging the management-worker buy-out. Unless the Government are prepared to intervene as a matter of policy to ensure that there is a management-worker buy-out, I cannot see how that balance will be achieved.

Mr. Wallace: I understood that part of the Government's objective was to try to avoid asset stripping.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if there were a provision which discouraged the port—albeit the privatised port—from selling off land to a speculator at a great price, the port might be encouraged to develop that land for port purposes, rather than it being sold and used for purposes which might be unrelated, it having been sold to a third party, to the port and its development?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. He will be aware that we spent a considerable time in Committee examining that issue. We are anxious to ensure that whatever development takes place, it is port related. We are concerned with asset development, but that does not come well from a Government whose primary purpose, as outlined in the clause, is to achieve asset stripping. They say that it is being done in the name of the community, and their first justification for that is the argument that they have already made many loans. Hon. Members on both sides will agree that the Port of London authority is an exceptional case in that respect, which is why the PLA is being dealt with separately in the Bill.

It is clear from the Minister's statements in Committee that the total sums paid in loans given under the various harbour revision instruments have been very small indeed. They have been nothing like the sums that are likely to be generated by the selling off of assets. In other words, this has nothing to do with getting our money back, which would be a reasonable argument for the Government to use.

This is really about getting access to the surplus value, and those are assets which the Government do not own and for which they have done nothing. This is simply a means of getting money for the Treasury. If anyone doubts that the new clause is part of a financial measure, it is clear from the drafting that we are in the realm of the tax lawyers, and in the new clause the Treasury makes that absolutely clear.

Mr. Leadbitter: The question of land, as my hon. Friend says, is important. The Bill would not protect the proposers of any buy-out from subsequently undertaking unrelated port activities, using the land to obtain quick returns and high profits, whereas port investment is long-term, gives a low rate of return and provides low profits.

Mr. Prescott: The history of port development proves that to be true. My hon. Friend knows from previous debates about ports and transport issues—and certainly from what I have said during my 21 years in the House—that we are greatly concerned about that problem. The same fears were raised during, for example, Tory Government inquiries about ports. It is clear that developments have worked to the disadvantage of ports. Indeed, one of the first debates that I attended concerned the Merseyside authority, and at that time the Selsdon man of the then Tory Government claimed we had allowed the port to go to the wall. The Government ceased saying that when they discovered that lots of old ladies had shares in pension funds invested in the Merseyside authority. So they decided that a rescue operation was necessary and that the full rigour of the market should no longer apply.

There is a legacy of problems with which we are now having to deal, and I was surprised to hear it suggested that only one shipping company had been involved in purchasing ports. In fact, there have been a number of such purchases. Sealink bought out a number of companies. Hon. Members may recall the celebrated occasion when P and O spent most of a night pouring champagne for Tory Members in the hope that they would stay and vote at the conclusion of the proceedings. They were led into the Lobby by the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

That shows how far people will go under the private Bill procedure. It need not be done under that procedure any longer. They will simply make a bid, and it is clear that many are interested in bidding, not simply for the development of the asset land but to eliminate competition. That makes one ask whether the Monopolies and Mergers Commission procedure will apply if, for example, an owner buys a port up the road and commences to close it down. Will the Government then intervene?

That shows how important it is to have the sort of national ports council that we seek, an issue that will arise when we debate later amendments. We must preserve the existing assets to enable port-related developments to take place. My hon. Friends and I intend no criticism when we say that an amendment that we tabled on the subject has not been chosen, but I am anxious to make it clear that the issue is of great concern to us.

What proportion will the Government take? It has been said that, apart from proceeds worth 50 per cent.—we shall debate that later—we are now talking simply about the disposal of the land. The Government's original position involved their taking 50 per cent., although they amended that in Committee.

Mr. McLoughlin *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I know the point the Minister has in mind. It was 50 per cent. over 10 years, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am not talking simply about corporation tax. I am referring to the Government taking 50 per cent. of the proceeds, although it comes to much more than that now. I am talking only about the first share of the value, so if it is £100 million, the Government are entitled to £50 million. With 35 per cent. corporation tax on the other half, we have the figure that concerned the Minister in Committee, representing the Government having 67 per cent. of the take.

Mr. McLoughlin: Really?

Mr. Prescott: The Minister will recall the argument adduced by the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and other Conservative Members in Committee on an amendment that was carried and included in the Bill. They argued legitimately that it should not be more than 50 per cent. and that to take more would be exorbitant. They put forward a tapered formula which would provide a lower proportion. The amendment of the hon. Member for Dover was accepted and is expressed in the Bill as a proportion of corporation tax.

The argument in Committee was to the effect that the figures provided a take of nearly 50 per cent. The Minister put forward the counter-argument that it was about 18 per cent. less than we had calculated.

Mr. McLoughlin *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I will give way to the Minister shortly. Having suggested that it was 18 per cent. less, he thought the matter over and said that 18 per cent. was not acceptable. In the event, it is 17·9 per cent. In other words,

[Mr. Prescott]

on the Minister's formula, to reduce it by 18 per cent. would not be acceptable but to reduce it by 17·9 per cent. makes it acceptable.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will the hon. Gentleman remind me how Opposition Members voted on the amendment that they are apparently now seeking to overturn?

Mr. Prescott: I do not want to complicate matters, especially as we have difficulty making sure that the Minister keeps to facts and figures. His concentration in these matters is not that great and his explanations are not always that clear. I have been re-reading the *Official Report* of our proceedings in Committee and have found myself utterly confused by his explanations.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are concerned with variable amounts, an issue to which I shall return. After all, the Minister is taking powers in the new clause to enable him to be variable. Is he not taking powers to vary the percentage, whatever it is? I do not know how much the figures can vary, but I do know that the Government can specify whatever percentage they want, as the Secretary of State decides. When I am Secretary of State I will be happy to exercise that judgment.

8 pm

Originally, as I said, a 67 per cent. take was envisaged. Then the hon. Members for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) and for Dover moved amendments that would have resulted in a take of just under 50 per cent. Interestingly, they argued that the Tory Government were adopting a socialist land value tax. I readily accepted that argument, thinking that I could see another use for this Bill when I get hold of it, when I will be able to vary the percentage myself. I will be able to stipulate or reject any scheme that I choose to. That is almost as good as what happened with an Industry Bill that the Tories brought in in 1974. It provided the incoming Labour Government with all sorts of powers, and I look forward to being able to use the powers given under this Bill.

I hope that those, such as the Waterfront partnership, who have advised the Government on this matter will not come and advise me—I do not want advice from them.

Now the Government have come along with another formula in which they accept that there should be a taper. The period involved is a compromise. The first part of the new clause takes the five-year period into account, but it then embraces longer periods. The percentages will vary as between the periods involved. I assume that these ideas are in line with what the industry wanted. The Opposition do not have the advantage—or disadvantage—of having the industry talk to us, a fact about which I have complained before and which I shall take into account in different cicumstances in times to come. We have had to rely on the figures before us.

Now the Government have decided that the take will be no more than 49·7 per cent., including the levy and the share of corporation tax. The British taxpayer is to be denied the extra 18 per cent. and the Government have given up their claims about returning the money to the community. I do not know what changed the Government's mind; I only know that the Minister could not carry through his ideas in Committee with the support of Conservative Members. After a few shots across their bows, the Government have given up on the 18 per cent. The Minister said in Committee that he could not see the Government giving up the difference of 18 per cent. It seems that he has been told to do so, although the Secretary of State has scuttled off now, so we cannot find out his thinking on the matter.

The Government have come round to 50 per cent., and one of our amendments argues for 100 per cent., with the period limited to five years. The rationale behind that is that we want to prevent predators coming in. We want to let them know that all a port's value has been removed so it is no longer an attractive proposition—unless the predator merely wants to buy it up so as to close it down and eliminate competition. If the Government leave 50 per cent. of the cash value in a company and that company is sold for £100 million, there will still be enough value in it to encourage predators to buy it.

The Opposition wish to eliminate this value, although we know about the problems of removing all the cash from a port company: that may prevent the port from developing. The idea is to give the port access to the extra value, and with the five-year limitation we could rule out this problem.

This is not our formula: it is the Government's idea. We would not do any of this in the first place, but given the choice between a P and O buy-out and a managers and workers buy-out I would put my money on the latter every time. Consortiums of property companies will not have the interests of port development at heart.

This will be a better formula and it is interesting that the Government have been forced to change their minds. I hope that the Minister will tell us something about his highest bid argument and about the ESOP arrangements. Was the report in *The Guardian* about selling to the highest bidder correct? It is important to know that; the trust ports need to know, and it is relevant to the possible development or selling off of the municipal port authorities, to which the local authority ratepayers have contributed. If the formula is used and the Government give the excess to the Treasury instead of keeping to a formula under which we could readily identify what goes to the local authorities, there will be real problems with these varying percentages.

In Committee, we supported the 10 per cent. amendment so as to defeat the Government—I admit that. And we did defeat them, because the Government could not justify the 50 per cent. take. We told the Government that we would give them the chance to return and justify the idea to the House, but the Minister has failed to do that. If that is because of political realities, he should admit as much. Perhaps, on the other hand, the Treasury thought that the take was too high. Or perhaps the Minister included the new formula to satisfy Conservative Members with the 50 per cent. idea, hoping later to operate the variable machinery in the new clause so that the Government could get what they wanted quietly and without controversy by order under the Bill. We need a better explanation of all these matters than we have had so far.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The Opposition are clearly wrong on this issue. They are obsessed with the idea of asset-strippers and speculators and do not understand the needs of modern ports facing the 21st century. Those ports want to develop their assets, especially in places such as Dover, and not only assets related to the ferry industry but

those which will broaden ports' development so as to promote tourism, for instance, to the benefit of local people.

Moreover, other ports might want to expand into non port-related activities, thereby benefiting their communities by increasing local employment. At present they are somewhat stymied in what they can do. This Bill is designed to free up assets, and over the years that will increase employment opportunities in those areas.

Those of us in Committee who tabled the amendment that I moved wanted to ensure a balance between the interests of the taxpayer—obtaining reasonable proceeds for the taxpayer—and the interests of the ports. We were worried that the original wording advanced by the Government made calculations of the levy complicated, and that the tax rate on some calculations could have exceeded 70 per cent. Moreover, the levy would have operated as a disincentive to reasonable land sales, whether in the form of management buy-outs by others who might acquire the ports later.

I congratulate the Minister on the difficult negotiations through which he has gone and on the way in which the Department of Transport has managed, under his skilful guidance, to negotiate with the Treasury a deal which, although perhaps not too beneficial to the ports, is certainly not as advantageous to the Treasury as was the original deal. The Treasury has managed to extract its pint of blood in the form of a little extra for the taxpayer. We are worried that the taxpayer might take too much out of the privatisation and that other possible acquirers of the ports might lack an incentive to buy them out. I realise that the Minister and the Treasury have a responsibility to ensure that the taxpayer receives a good share of these resources—and so he will.

My hon. Friend the Minister should be congratulated on taking our points on board. The calculation of the levy is now much easier. It is much closer to capital gains tax principles which are widely understood by business and industry. The tax rate, having been reduced below 50 per cent., is obviously acceptable and is much better than it was. The tapering principle ensures that, if management is fortunate enough to acquire the port, there will not be a massive disincentive to reasonable asset sales. If asset-strippers really do exist, which I doubt—there are more likely to be genuine operators who want to ensure that assets are properly utilised—they will suffer from the fact that, under the tapering system, the tax is higher in the earlier years and reduces in the later years.

All in all, my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government should be congratulated on getting the clause into a sensible format. We who want privatisations to be encouraged, which I think goes for all of my hon. Friends —as opposed to Opposition Members, who sought in Committee to discourage privatisation and to remove the incentives from those who work in the ports to bid for them—are pleased with what the Government have done.

Mr. Wallace: I thank the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for his kind comments earlier on events in my constituency and for the advice that he gave me.

When this matter was debated in Committee, I was occupied elsewhere and missed the vote. As I understand it, on a recount the Government lost the Division on the amendment and they had to table new clause 9 to ameliorate the effect of clause 16.

It is difficult to work out the Government's precise intentions. I agree with much of the analysis of the Bill by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and, in particular, of the objectionable parts of the Bill about the compulsory nature of privatisation and those parts which relate to the levy on the proceeds of sale. However, different considerations apply to the provisions relating to the levy on a subsequent sale of land.

Much has been made of how much the Treasury would like to get its hands on through particular provisions in the Bill. I do not doubt that that may be one of the motivating factors, but if it is to rely on the proceeds under clause 16 and new clause 9, no such economic planning could take place. There is no mention in the financial memorandum of any likely proceeds or revenue to the Treasury which might come from clause 16. That would depend on how many ports were privatised, on how many ports subsequently sold land and on whether the sale of that land would lead to a sizeable gain to which the levy would be applied. Therefore, I do not think that that is the primary concern of the new clause.

However, the new clause is an attempt to stave off the worse effects of land speculation. I well remember the privatisation of Scott Lithgow in Greenock and Port Glasgow and the Government arrangement which allowed the sale of additional land to, I think, Trafalgar House at a relatively low price. Subsequently, the land was sold at quite a premium. There was considerable outrage at the use of public funds to help the sale and at the great profits that the private sector reaped from the sale.

If the Government are trying to discourage such land speculation and the taking of land out of port development, that should be encouraged. If they are trying to achieve a balance so that at least some proceeds from the sale remain with the port, providing additional capital for port development, although that is clearly a difficult balance to strike, an honest effort has been made to strike it. I do not think that the arguments that we have heard so far from the Opposition, not least the 100 per cent. levy which at times seemed to contradict the points made earlier by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, persuade me that that would be a better balance than the one proposed in the new clause.

8.15 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) was right to say that the levy could be varied with the consent of the Treasury and by affirmative order of the House. Therefore, if it were to be changed, the House would have an opportunity to take a decision on it. It could not be done without the matter coming before the House.

Mr. Leadbitter: That usually happens late at night when everyone has gone home. Let me put a simple point to the Minister, who is always anxious to reply to points made. In March 1988, the Secretary of State for Transport made clear in an address to the British Ports Federation his disappointment at the ports' reluctance to respond to his invitation to privatise. The Bill comes in the light of that reluctance. Does the Minister suggest that, in the circumstances and having regard to the levy and the little bit that would be left to the ports, the Bill benefits the Treasury or the ports?

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no doubt that the Bill will be a tremendous benefit to the ports industry in the United Kingdom. It builds on a number of changes which have taken place over some years. However, that is probably more relevant for the debate on Third Reading.

I agree partly with the points made by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). The Opposition seem to want 100 per cent. for five years, although in Committee they voted for the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). That would seem to be the most damaging of all, because it would delay any development in the ports for five years.

Mr. Prescott: The only trouble with that statement is that it is not in line with the facts. The hon. Gentleman knows that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) wrote to all the ports concerned, and they wrote back saying exactly the opposite—they did not believe that this was helpful and they did not want to be forced into such a position. If the Minister believes that, why did he not leave it to the ports to make the decision instead of being forced into privatisation?

Mr. McLoughlin: We are dealing with the levy on disposals of property after the port has been privatised; we will come later to the compulsory element.

The Government have tried to take on board the concerns which were ventilated in Committee by my hon. Friends, and that is why the concession has been made. We have tried to make far clearer exactly how and on what criteria the money will be raised. There was confusion as to whether it was capital gains on top of the 50 per cent. That is why we have tabled new clause 9, about which I wrote to the Opposition and all members of the Committee before the Easter recess.

I have explained the reasons for what the Government have done. This represents a fair response to the criticisms made by my hon. Friends. I think that the Government have got it right. It is a fair balance for the ports industry to know exactly what kind of development would come under the windfall gains. We do not want to see huge windfall gains go: that is why, for 10 years, there will be some repayment to the Government, but on a tapering basis. That is fair.

Mr. Prescott: One of the amendments to clause 16 concerns a variable application. Is it possible that, by a new order, the Secretary of State could secure more than 50 per cent., or does new clause 9 set the limit? Might one end up with a levy of more than the 50 per cent. suggested by one amendment to clause 16?

Mr. McLoughlin: No. I made perfectly clear the procedure in respect of the amendments under consideration. A change could be made, but it would have to be done by affirmative order. However, I cannot help it if particular hon. Members are not present at the relevant stage. If they feel strongly enough, they will be certain to be present. On occasions, affirmative orders have attracted a very high attendance, depending on how controversial they are.

New clause 9 strikes a fair balance between the concerns that were expressed by my hon. Friends in Committee, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 224, Noes 164.

Division No. 120] **[8.20 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carr, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony (Cambs3W)
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick

Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 13

CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY

'(1) There shall be established, within twelve months of this section coming into effect, a National Ports Council, which shall consist of representatives of Government, port authorities or where appropriate their successor companies, local authorities covering the areas in which ports are located, and workers in ports, and of individuals with relevant experience and expertise in the industry, according to a scheme of appointment to be approved by the Secretary of State.

(2) The Council shall be consulted on the exercise by the appropriate Minister of his powers under sections 5, 7 and 8 of this Act, and by the Secretary of State on the exercise of his powers under sections 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23, 26 and 27 of this Act.—*[Ms. Walley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms. Walley: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 25, in clause 8, page 6, line 12, at end insert—

'(6A) The Minister shall not confirm a scheme under subsection (6) above unless he is satisfied that suitable provision has been made by the scheme for the establishment and maintenance of an advisory committee representative of users of and interests in the harbour to be consulted by the

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

company and empowered to advise the company upon matters apertaining to the use and management of the company's harbour undertaking.'.

No. 43, in clause 9, page 6, line 44, at end insert—

'local authority, representative trade unions and conservation bodies.'.

No. 44, in clause 11, page 8, line 25, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

'(2) The Secretary of State shall—

(i) give written reasons to the authority for rejecting the authority's scheme;

(ii) consult the authority and local authorities concerned before proposing the scheme;

(iii) allow a period of three months for modifications to be proposed to the scheme.'.

No. 69, in clause 19, page 15, line 43, at end insert—

'and users of that part of the Port to be designated as the Port of Tilbury'.

Ms. Walley: The important aspect of the new clause is that we feel that it is important that there should be a national ports council. The new clause provides that

"representatives of Government, port authorities . . . successor companies, local authorities . . . workers in ports, and . . . individuals with relevant experience and expertise in the industry"

would all be included in such a council, which would be there to be consulted by the Secretary of State and the Minister when they were carrying out various duties imposed on them by this legislation.

Amendment No. 43 also applies to schemes initiated by the Secretary of State. In effect, it means that, when the Secretary of State gives any direction to a relevant port authority under this section, he or she would have to consult the

"local authority, representative trade unions and conservation bodies"

as well as the authority. Our amendment allows for further modification of the compulsory powers contained in the legislation. Rather than the Secretary of State merely consulting the port authority concerned before preparing the scheme, we would require the authority to be sent written reasons for rejecting its scheme. We would also require full consultation, and a period of three months for modifications to be proposed.

I must express some anxiety that our amendment No. 40 has not been chosen for discussion, because that might have given us the opportunity to debate in more detail the issue of compulsion and the reserve powers that many ports are so concerned about. Judging by the comments that the Minister has just made, that will have to be an issue on Third Reading.

The House should realise that the new clause and the amendments tabled in our name get to the heart of the Bill. They set out our policies on ports, and we feel that it is important that the public should know where the Opposition stand on these issues. In case we have any further interventions similar to those at the beginning of this debate, I should add that those policies are clearly set out in our policy document.

The House should express some concern about the fact that we are told that we are dealing with a ports Bill, but, as those of us who have debated the so-called Bill in Committee realise, it is not a ports Bill but a Government con. It is all about making money for the Treasury—as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has already demonstrated to the House—so that it can take the proceeds of selling off more national and local assets. I hasten to add that the Government do not even own those assets.

The Bill is presented by the Secretary of State for Transport, yet, as we have already clarified, one has to search the print of the legislation thoroughly to pinpoint anything to do with transport. In stark contrast, our policy gives top priority to the development of an integrated transport system, in which ports policy would dovetail into national and local infrastructure and whereby national and local planning decisions could be made in accordance with it. It is our intention to ensure that ports, docks and waterways policies are incorporated into that. Our proposal for a national ports council, which would advise on ports policy, is a key way to bringing that about.

By contrast, the Government have introduced free market conditions of competition, with the abolition of the National Ports Council and the removal of regulations governing port development. This legislation takes us one step further down the road of determining transport policy by market forces alone.

Our national ports advisory body, as well as advising on the development of a national ports policy, would seek to reintroduce ways in which a port could be involved in investment and would require a port operating licensing system. We feel that we cannot leave important decisions about investment in our transport infrastructure to be made on the basis of market forces, and in the secrecy of commercial confidentiality. That is what is presented to us in this Bill.

Amendments Nos. 43 and 44 are just as important. Here we are dealing with a part of the Bill that seeks to compulsorily privatise trust ports that do business above the £5 million line. The intention is to privatise those ports whether or not that is what they want. That type of compulsion cannot be justified in any way. The Minister has attempted to convince the House that this is an enabling measure. If it really is an enabling measure, why is the Minister intent on forcing privatisation through the House, whether the trust ports want it or not? If he has failed to convince them that voluntary privatisation is a good thing, he should at least include further safeguards, as our amendments seeks to do.

Anybody who knows anything about trust ports, or anybody who has visited a trust port, or any hon. Member who has a trust port in his constituency knows that, while there is some support among the trust ports for enabling legislation, there is no support whatsoever for the compulsory element that is introduced in clause 9. Our amendments provide for consultation with the local authorities and for a means of giving real reasons after a period of three months. These are methods of modifying the compulsory elements of the Bill.

From discussions that I have had about Poole harbour, I understand that the Minister has said that he is giving very careful consideration to the question of compulsion, and has reiterated his view that this is an enabling measure. Will he tell us how he proposes to proceed? If this really is an enabling measure, he ought to be able to accept our amendments. Amendments Nos. 43 and 44 would provide for the inclusion of conservation bodies, as well as incorporating local authority and trade union representatives. In Committee, we heard that the trust ports had somehow managed to preserve the balance of interests of

all the organisations using them. Our amendments would ensure that, in the context of the compulsory aspect of privatisation, some regard had to be paid to those bodies.

By way of amendment No. 40, we could have sought to ensure that, on environmental and other grounds, certain trust ports would not be caught by the net of privatisation. That issue will now have to be dealt with on Third Reading. It is absolutely crucial that an authority whose scheme has been rejected be given written reasons. There should be proper consultation, not just with the port authority but with all local authorities, before a scheme is proposed. There should be a period for modifications to be proposed. In that regard, these are reasonable amendments.

I want to refer again to a point that was put to me very forcefully by representatives from Poole. The Minister has told them that this is an enabling measure, but it is not. I understand that there will shortly be a debate in Dorset —near Poole—and that many people will speak against privatisation. So far, however, it has not been possible —in Poole, of all places—to find one person to make the Government's case. If that is so, the Minister should at least see the virtue of these very reasonable amendments. They would provide for further consultation prior to compulsory privatisation. I commend them to the House.

8.45 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I should like to draw the attention of the House to amendment No. 25, which stands in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers). My hon. Friend tabled a number of amendments, the general purpose of which is to draw the attention of the House to the interests of the recreational users of harbours. He apologises sincerely for his absence tonight. He had a very long-standing engagement, and I am sure that hon. Members will understand his difficulty.

Perhaps I should declare an interest. First, I am a parliamentary adviser to the British Marine Industries Federation, which, in fact, has nothing to do with this amendment. Secondly, one of my more esoteric posts is Admiral of the House of Commons Yacht Club. We have a very close relationship with the Royal Yachting Association, which has been instrumental in requesting that the point of view of recreational users be taken into account. I accept that, in the trust ports concerned—with the possible exception of Poole—the interest of the recreational user is likely to be very modest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) will move amendments at a later stage. No doubt he will refer to this matter, so I will not dwell on it. At present, the recreational interests have a representative on the appropriate body, and in some cases the Royal Yachting Association actually nominates that person. Under this Bill, there is no provision for such interests to be given any consideration at all.

I am sure that the Minister, having considered our amendments, appreciates that it would be unreasonable to expect the ordinary person who simply wants to use the local waters for recreational purposes to be subjected to the totally material, although perfectly legitimate, interests of the commercial management of a new trust port. There was an unfortunate time when one harbourmaster took the view that all pleasure boats should be excluded. For that purpose, fees and machinery that were unreasonable, albeit within the law, were introduced. Happily, the matter has been resolved, but there is naturally concern that such a situation could arise again.

I realise that that is not the intention of this Bill, but I hope that the Minister will be able to assure the House that he will not forget the interests of the users of small boats. Their recreation provides massive employment, and many people at all levels derive much pleasure from it. The purpose of the amendment is simply to draw attention to this matter, and to ensure that the vast commercial machinery that is about to swing into operation will not result in the little local man being forgotten.

Mr. Wallace: These amendments give us another opportunity to explore the criteria that will underlie the Secretary of State's decision on which ports should be privatised. The Minister will recall that this matter was raised several times in Committee. At no time was he able to produce a list of criteria. At no time was he able to give the Committee any inkling as to the matters that would be taken into account—other than the threshold of £5 million, which is stated in the Bill.

But the amendments give us an opportunity to raise other matters too. Although the new clause does not refer specifically to port users, that point is covered by amendment No. 25, and will no doubt be referred to by those who have experience and expertise in the industry. That is important to port users.

Concern has been expressed that privatisation might mean that individual ports would fall into private hands and that that could result in the creation of a monopoly. If a shipping company that was a regular user of a port sought to become its owner, it could use its position to discriminate against other port users and further its own ends. It could exclude rather than promote competition, which is one of the objectives of the Bill. It could also lead to the concentration of an excessive number of ports in a limited number of hands. Associated British Ports may already be eyeing up some of the ports that may be privatised.

The Government ought to take account of the position of port users and of the fears that have been expressed about the threat to competition. How does the Minister intend to protect the interests of those who might be termed captive port users after privatisation? Has he managed to flesh out what he said in Committee—that he would look into the procedures to be followed when the proposed charges are thought to be unreasonably high? Objections can already be made under existing legislation, but in Committee the Minister said that he would re-examine the procedures. I hope that he will tell the House whether he has been able to do so and what he intends to do about them.

Privatisation could lead to takeovers and monopolies. The General Council of British Shipping says that an analogy could be drawn with the bus industry, where deregulation led to a spate of takeovers and mergers. Efforts were made to resist them, but the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's view was that, as takeovers and mergers had not taken place in a substantial part of the United Kingdom, it did not have the power to consider their possible consequences.

If it appears that a privatised port may be owned by a single large company, which would result in a monopoly and the restriction of competition, will either the Secretary of State for Transport or the Department of Trade and

[Mr. Wallace]

Industry be able to refer the matter to the Director General of Fair Trading or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? It is important that port users should have an answer to that question. The Government have not yet given them any assurances on how they intend to deal with potential monopolies. I therefore hope that the Minister will address their concerns.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I was disappointed not to be a member of the Committee that considered the Bill. Unfortunately, I was press-ganged on to a Standing Committee that considered the London Underground Bill. I should have loved to be a member of the Committee that considered this Bill; I take a great interest in ports, since my constituency contains Blyth port, which comes within the £5 million to £6 million bracket.

After the Bill was introduced, I met many people who said that they did not want Blyth port to be privatised. There was talk of a management buy-out, but that is another matter. The Minister has paid no attention to the amendments or to the pleas that have been made on behalf of the ports, and I do not think that we shall get very much out of him this evening.

Blyth port employs 2,000 people, but it is on the borderline when it comes to the £5 million or £6 million level. The Minister therefore ought to provide conciliation procedures for little ports before they are privatised. Larger ports may probably buy into little ports such as Blyth and Poole, strip them and take away all their facilities, such as their roll-on/roll-off vessels. That would result in the death of little ports such as Blyth and Poole. The jobs that they provide would die with them.

Blyth is unique in many senses. It has been run efficiently for many years. If, however, a successor company comes in after privatisation and takes away its facilities, its profitability will die. It costs £2 million each year just to dredge Blyth harbour. I have said before that I believe that Tees and Hartlepool port authority will want to buy Blyth and strip it of all its facilities. The port of Blyth owns a great deal of land, which would be sold off to the highest bidder—most probably to a development company that would build yuppie houses on the river banks. That would lead to the loss of 2,000 jobs. The port authority told me tonight that it will have to buy a new dredger; the old one is nearly kaput. A new dredger would cost about £1 million.

I beg the Minister to consult those port authorities that are on the borderline and give them the chance to run the harbours in the way they have always been run, rather than to rip them off. I ask him to let local people have a say in running Blyth harbour, which has created many jobs. Blyth has proved that. I hope that the Minister will consider ports such as Blyth, which are on the borderline and should not be privatised.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I support amendment No. 25. Especially in the Solent area, my experience has been that the main concern of yachtsmen is not whether there is an advisory committee. Most harbourmasters are mindful of the need to liaise with their local port users, whether commercial fishermen, yachtsmen or the shipping fraternity at large. Yachtsmen are concerned mainly about the high cost of mooring fees, especially in marinas that have been purchased by a company that has established a monopoly.

I want to follow the point made by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I suspect that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the House that those matters are not referable to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission because they do not come under the Fair Trading Act 1973. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) tabled new clause 7, which was not selected for debate this evening, and I added my name to it. I was not surprised that it was not selected for debate, because it goes beyond the ambit of the Bill.

We have a difficulty. Although amendment No. 25 makes a fair and reasonable attempt to deal with the problem in which not only yachtmen, but the pleasure boat industry and the marine industry generally have found themselves, the need for it would be removed if the Office of Fair Trading could look at such matters.

The Bill has a fairly narrow purpose. I hope that, with his shipping hat on, my hon. Friend the Minister, who effectively deals with all matters aquatic, may yet be persuaded to encourage our hon. Friends at the Department of Trade and Industry to extend legislation into the sensitive area because of the concern that is felt.

I believe that I am correct in saying that, in putting that point of view to the House, I have the full backing of all yachting interests, and especially of the Royal Yachting Association, which has grown increasingly concerned about the monopoly in the ownership of marinas, especially along the south coast.

9 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: A number of points have been raised in the debate. I shall respond briefly to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) in saying that I understand that it is possible for the matters that he raised to be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. However, they need to be referred by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, because they are part of his responsibility. I hope that that clarifies my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Barry Field: That is a helpful answer, which will be most useful.

Mr. McLoughlin: I hope that I have helped my hon. Friend in his search for clarification. My hon. Friend successfully helped the General Council of British Shipping, so he knows that there is a way in which a challenge can be made to harbour charges.

My answer also partly deals with the question raised by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I said in Committee that I wanted to consider his worry. To progress further, we may need additional legislation and I shall consider that in the light of events. If the problem is serious and there is a necessity to ease the procedure, I may need to consider the matter in due course. We want to keep it under close attention.

I know that the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) was unable to be a member of the Committee, and that he followed the Committee proceedings with interest and concern. I hope that I can give him some reassurance. The Bill does not say that the port of Blyth must be privatised. The Bill is specific. If the Government intended that all ports with a turnover of more than

£5 million were to be privatised, the Bill would say that; it does not. The Bill gives the Secretary of State for Transport the right after two years to compel ports with a turnover of more than £5 million to come forward with a scheme, and he will do that after consulting the local port authority.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley asked for consultation. I can assure him that a provision for consultation is included in the Bill and that consultation will happen. I do not expect him to say now that he welcomes the Bill, but I hope that I have allayed some of the fears that he rightly expressed on behalf of his harbour authority. That point is an important provision in the Bill. We should want discussions in great detail with all the harbour authorities that had not privatised their operations after two years on why they had not privatised them and whether privatisation might be the best course. I hope that with those words, I can give some reassurance to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Prescott: Is not the Minister telling the House that the Government are one of the main beneficiaries of what they judge to be the best scheme for that port? All he is actually saying is that the Government will spend a little time consulting the authority but, if the Government do not agree with the scheme brought before them, as required, within those two years, they can impose their own system. They have the main advantage and incentive because they want the money. How can there be any independent assessment in a consultation procedure of that kind?

Mr. McLoughlin: Try as I may to convince the Opposition, I do not expect to do so at this late stage. That is not the sole intention of the Bill. It is not intended to be a money-raising Bill for the Treasury. If that were the case, there would be a 100 per cent. levy and a 100 per cent. clawback levy on any period thereafter.

I must admit that I cannot find any agreement with new clause 13. It would provide for the establishment within one year of enactment of a national ports council consisting of representatives of the Government, port authorities or their successor companies, local authorities, port workers and what I can only describe as miscellaneous experts. It seems to me that the Opposition would want every single body to have representation. Opposition Members were attacking my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon for supposedly setting up quangos, yet they seem to be tabling new clauses that would do exactly that. There is little that I want or need to say about the so-called national ports council. I do not think that my hon. Friends will find very much to commend it and I hope that, if the Opposition seek to press the new clause to a vote, it will be rejected.

Some people seek to establish organisations or bodies to get things done. The Opposition, by contrast, seek to establish them to get things delayed. That is exactly what new clause 13 would do. That is the way to pay twice over to go nowhere—once the cost of the delays and once the cost of the body that caused them. That may seem acceptable to the Opposition but it does not seem acceptable to me, and I strongly urge the rejection of what we believe to be a very unconstructive amendment.

I must also ask hon. Members to reject amendment No. 43, as they rightly did when it first appeared in Committee. I think that it is unnecessary. I recognise, of course, that the bodies mentioned in the amendment may have views on the privatisation of the port. That is precisely why they will have an opportunity to make representations to the Secretary of State once the authority has submitted its scheme, quite apart from the fact that the Government have tabled amendments making the order confirming a scheme of this sort subject to affirmative resolution. That was one of the commitments that I gave in Committee and which was welcomed by the Opposition, the British Ports Federation and, generally, by the trust ports themselves.

Finally in this group, amendment No. 44, another old friend, covers much the same ground as amendment No. 43, except that it relates to the situation, which is likely to be rare, in which the Secretary of State is obliged to propose his own scheme of privatisation. This amendment adds relatively little to the provision in the subsection that it is designed to replace, and which provides for the Secretary of State to consult the port authority before preparing his own scheme. It is obvious that, in so doing, he would provide it with reasons why he was unable to accept its scheme and, if the authority was able to propose relevant modifications, the Secretary of State would clearly wish to consider those before starting the laborious task of preparing his own scheme. The amendment has little real purpose except to build in delay through requiring consultation with interests that will, in any event, be able to make representations to the Secretary of State once he has prepared the scheme.

It was interesting to hear what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) had to say about that policy, because she mentioned the Labour party candidate for Thurrock. On many occasions she has been very careful not to dissociate herself from the things that he says. I will quote from a recent article in *Tideway* when the hon. Lady went to Tilbury not so very long ago——

Mr. Prescott: Has the Minister been there?

Mr. McLoughlin: Yes, of course I have been there. I have been on a number of port visits, and I know that the hon. Lady has tried to do the same during the Bill's progress. When I went there, the people I met were very keen to see privatisation and to take part in it.

Ms. Walley: The Minister says that the workers favour privatisation, but is he confusing that idea with their approval for an employee-management share ownership scheme? Those two things are not the same. A work force may be wholly in favour of such a scheme in the event of privatisation, but may not otherwise favour privatisation.

Mr. McLoughlin: I disagree entirely. Work forces may want a management-employee buy-out, and I wish them success, but they are keen on privatisation per se, too. They have seen the advantages that it has brought to many other ports, and also the benefits that have resulted from the abolition of the dock labour scheme. That has put Tilbury in the happy position of being able to compete effectively with ports in neighbouring areas.

The Labour candidate for Thurrock said:

> "If, unhappily, the port is sold before the general election, the next Labour Government will introduce public control of Tilbury and other ports."

That is the idea behind the new clause.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Has my hon. Friend heard the story that, when the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) went round Tilbury, a senior docker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The new clause is about consultative machinery. I hope that we can return to discussing that subject.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have tried to show that the consultative machinery would be a way of delaying privatisation. The Opposition see it as a way of retaining control. I am sure that my hon. Friends will have no truck with it and will reject the new clause.

Mr. Prescott: The name of Mr. MacKinley has cropped up constantly throughout the debate. I do not wish to repeat the mistake of monitoring whether that person may be in the building, but he has probably spent more time here while we have been discussing the port than has the hon. Member whose constituency is involved. That is a matter of record.

The issue behind the amendments is the right of appeal. If one does not like the idea of a national ports council, one can dismiss it.

As for local or national representation, I thought that citizenship rights were the mode of the moment. The Tories insist left, right and centre on the individual's right to claim protection from excessive use of power by the state—or, as it would be in this case, the harbour authority. That is a proper argument, and through the amendments we suggest that there is a need for an independent body, which we have called the national ports council. Similar recommendations have emerged repeatedly from inquiries into the ports industry. Some have argued for a national ports authority, but we suggest a national ports council, because that was the last body that the Government abolished in the early stages of the development of their plans for the ports. We argued against that abolition, and the arguments that we used then are relevant to the present debate.

We have been talking about the problems of compulsion. Judgments have to be made, and there will be disagreements between the ports authorities—at present, those are the trust boards—and the Government. They may have different ideas of how the scheme should turn out, and it will be an area of dispute between them. We cannot rely on the Government to be independent in this matter. They are the main beneficiary of the scheme, so they have a vested interest in getting the best price. They cannot be the sort of independent body that one would wish to see in such circumstances. That was one of the reasons which led to a national ports council.

Different groups involved with a port may gain control of the port authority—for example, yachting interests in a marina or in the Merseyside port, where the users take control. Any user of the port has a vested interest in keeping the prices down and not spending a great deal of money to develop the port. There are many examples of that. Often, it is not in the interests of the port or the communities that depend on it to allow a single group to dominate. The amendment seeks to create the possibility of an appeal against a decision affecting a port.

Another possible dispute was mentioned in the debate. Charges are extremely controversial in a port. The fishing or yachting community may feel that the charges imposed exploit the position or are against their interest. They need a means to appeal against them. The National Ports Council was the original body to which appeals could be made. Now the appeal has to be made directly to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a vested interest in the disposal of the ports. That does not give me any confidence that the new body will be independent.

Mr. Barry Field: The hon. Gentleman has not done his homework. I was instrumental in persuading the General Council of British Shipping to take the first appeal to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State found in my favour. How could that not be an independent decision?

Mr. Prescott: Perhaps it has not dawned on the hon. Gentleman that the Secretary of State, in the name of the Government or in any case the Treasury, will take the proceeds of the sales. The Secretary of State clearly has an interest. In the matter to which the hon. Gentleman referred, the Secretary of State was clearly independent. He had no interest in it, whatever the final outcome. It was a dispute between two parties about charges. In the matters dealt with by the Bill, the Secretary of State will clearly have a vested interest in matters of controversy.

No one can be satisfied that a dispute about prices will be dealt with impartially. Prices at ports very much affect the asset value of a port, the estimated revenue and other matters that we have discussed. Without wishing to stray, a good example of that is that, if one has tough price controls, it is difficult to sell at a good price on the market. We saw that with gas and electricity. One has to create balances. The Secretary of State will make the judgments.

The National Ports Council would be relevant where there was an element of user-domination. There might be a dispute about proper representation on the port authority. There are hundreds of trust ports and the procedures that lead to the nomination of those who sit on the boards are medieval. It is impossible to change the procedures. Bridlington is not in my constituency, but I have had constant complaints that the people who use the port cannot get the majority interest on the board. Seats on the board are handed down from one person to another as in freemasonry. Those people then decide who shall have access to the port.

I remember a diving company complaining to me that it wanted to do salvage work off Bridlington but could not get access to the port. I had no interest whatever in the company. The port had made a judgment that it wanted yachts in the port because they were more in keeping with the port. But it was a commercial port with fishing, yachting, diving and other activities. Perhaps the harbour could not take all the ships and could not cope with the demand on it. A dispute arose. In such disputes there should be a body to which such disputes can be referred for a judgment to be made. That is a legitimate argument. Such a body could function at either the local or national level. There is an argument for it to operate at local level. However, a national body could link infrastructure investment between ports.

Ports are an important part of our investment and development. The Government can have a view. Both Labour and Tory Governments pursued the arguments about roads to the ports. Often, they built the roads to the ports and the shipowner decided to move to some other area, where roads had not been built to the port. The ports

with the roads did not have the traffic and the ports without roads demanded that we invest in road infrastructure again. That is a duplication of investment.

Ports are often played by the shipowners. The port of Bristol is a classic example. It demanded and required more and more investment in containerisation. Shipowners then did not offer the port contracts. Shipowners have mobile assets and can play one port off against another. The result is that the facilities are duplicated. That is an expensive way of dealing with port development. There is a great deal of evidence of that.

In all other European countries there is some form of national ports council or authority. Whether the Government are on the left or the right, they see the need to ensure that the communities' interests are guarded in one way or another. The matter cannot simply be left to market forces. We have a similar argument about competition. The Minister said that we should be reassured that any monopolistic tendencies or uncompetitive practices would be referred by the Department of Trade and Industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. That is the case under the monopoly legislation at present.

I recall the case of the buses in either Portsmouth or Southampton, which the Department of Trade and Industry referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Association. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission considered whether the company, having purchased another company, could provide a service in the public interest, because that is at the heart of the monopoly legislation. The MMC found that it could, but the then Secretary of State ruled against the MMC because he wanted more competition. That issue involving transport was decided not by the Secretary of State for Transport but by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That is not right. Transport issues should be judged by the Department of Transport and not by another Department.

The Minister talked about user representatives making recommendations. People who use the ports, whether they be fishermen or yachtsmen, have a right to representation. The Minister should remember that he, as Minister for Shipping, and Lord Sterling told us all what we should do about the shipping industry. No one else was involved apart from the Government and the industry, through Lord Sterling.

When the Minister made recommendations about the fishing industry, he thought it right to leave out the representatives of all the bodies that should have been involved, so I find his arguments today rather odd. There has been talk about the corporate state argument. That is a good example of it.

There are many good examples. To cite a further important one, when the Government did away with the National Ports Council in legislation, we made the point that if responsibility was passed over to port authorities they might not give the Government the independent information needed for an assessment of the productivity of ports. Governments should be able to make judgments about whether ports can reach certain levels of efficiency.

Through the National Ports Council, the Government could get confidential information to enable them to judge whether ports could do better. When the private ports came together in the British Ports Federation, they did not want to give the information to the Government because it was commercial. They do not want to give information to the community, and the Minister cannot get access to it.

Any advice that could be given to the Department of Transport would be welcome. If the Minister had had more advice on the dock labour scheme, he might have been more successful in dealing with the problem of compensation, when the Government had to pay £120 million instead of the £20 million that they had estimated. Good professional advice might have been useful to those dealing with the dismantling of the dock labour scheme.

For many reasons, it would be good to have a body to advise the Government. We think that there should be such a body and that people should have representation. It would be good for the user and it would certainly be good for the country. It would result in better decisions. Therefore, I hope that the House will accept the new clause.

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not think that we will come to a meeting of minds on the new clause. No doubt the House will reflect its view shortly.

I inadvertently omitted the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) when I was summing up earlier. His point about facilities for small boats and yachts is very important. I am sure that the trust ports consult users about various aspects of their operations. No doubt the successor companies will do the same. I think that it is right that the companies should be allowed to decide on their own means of consulting their customers and others with a legitimate interest in the ports. I understand the concern expressed by my hon. Friend on various occasions. Obviously, we shall want to keep a close eye on what goes on to see if there are problems such as my hon. Friend has referred to. If problems arise, we may have to address them by other means.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 166, Noes 210.

Division No. 121] **[9.23 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*	Cleiland, David
Allen, Graham	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Anderson, Donald	Cohen, Harry
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Corbett, Robin
Armstrong, Hilary	Cousins, Jim
Ashton, Joe	Crowther, Stan
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Cryer, Bob
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Cummings, John
Barron, Kevin	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Battle, John	Dalyell, Tam
Beckett, Margaret	Darling, Alistair
Beith, A. J.	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Bell, Stuart	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Bellotti, David	Dixon, Don
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Duffy, A. E. P.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Eadie, Alexander
Benton, Joseph	Fatchett, Derek
Bidwell, Sydney	Faulds, Andrew
Blunkett, David	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Bradley, Keith	Fisher, Mark
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Flannery, Martin
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Flynn, Paul
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Buckley, George J.	Foster, Derek
Caborn, Richard	Foulkes, George
Callaghan, Jim	Fraser, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Fyfe, Maria
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Galloway, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Canavan, Dennis	George, Bruce
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Golding, Mrs Llin
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Gordon, Mildred

Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ilsley, Eric
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thorne, Neil
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

FORMATION OF COMPANIES FOR PURPOSES OF TRANSFER OF CERTAIN STATUTORY PORT UNDERTAKINGS

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 6, at end insert—

'(f) any harbour authority which has not received any grant from public funds other than any grants under the Enterprise Scheme during a period of five years ending with the passing of this Act.'.

The amendment would exempt from compulsory privatisation any port that had not received subsidy from the taxpayer during the past five years. The House will know by now that my constituents are satisfied with the present arrangements for the management of Poole port and harbour. They do not wish to have a change of management forced on them by Government.

Apart from satisfying local people, the present harbour commissioners have not received a penny piece in direct subsidy from the Government in over 20 years. It seems wrong that they should be under threat from an action by a future Minister which would place at risk the good relationships and control of environmental conditions which are in place.

I have so far been unable to persuade the Government that the compulsion element should be removed from the Bill. The amendment would mean that only ports that have needed public subsidy in the recent past could be privatised by compulsion. The amendment would exempt ports such as Poole from compulsory privatisation, and I hope that hon. Members will support it.

Several Hon Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr.——

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I rise to support my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Not calling the hon. Member by name was a temporary lapse on my part. He and I have known each other for many years. Mr. Adley.

Mr. Adley: I am sure that it is permissible, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for us to forget each other's names momentarily once every 21 years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole is a fellow Dorset Member who may be too modest to say that he never misses an opportunity to protect, as he sees it, the interests of his constituents and his constituency.

I should, by way of declaration of interest, point out that in a few days' time the company with which I am connected, Holiday Inn, will be signing a contract with Poole borough council to build a hotel. I say that lest any mischievous journalist thinks that I am speaking for any reason other than in support of my hon. Friend.

We Dorset Members like to stick together. Poole is undoubtedly one of the most efficient, well-run ports in Britain, and my hon. Friend made the valid point that a port which has not been in receipt of any central Government financial assistance should be entitled to have some control over its own destiny. Even my hon. Friend, who perhaps occasionally shades his politics slightly differently from me, will not object to my saying in supporting him that the presumption in favour of privatisation regardless should always be tempered by local and national circumstances. On that basis, I hope that the Minister will pay heed to the pleas of my hon. Friend, who, I reiterate, always does so much to protect the interests of his constituents.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand the concerns of my hon. Friends the Members for Poole (Mr. Ward) and for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who takes a great interest in all transport matters, not least in those that we are considering tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole has made many approaches to me on the subject. I visited Poole harbour with him on a day when the weather was not wonderful and was given a noisy welcome.

I have listened to the arguments put by my hon. Friend, but I am afraid that I cannot accept the amendment. My hon. Friend has shown understandable concern during the earlier stages of this Bill for the well-being of Poole harbour and its users and his views, as well as those of the harbour commissioners, about the proposed reserve power of compulsion are well known. Nevertheless, I am sure that he is at one with the Government in supporting the main purpose of the Bill, which is to enable those trust ports that wish to do so to transfer themselves to the private sector.

Unfortunately, the amendment that he has tabled to clause 1 would deny this benefit to a very large number of ports, simply because, for whatever reason, they are not among those that benefited from public money during the recent past. Indeed, some of the ports excluded by the provision would be precisely those that have shown the most enthusiasm for privatisation, and it would make no sense to penalise them because they have not received any grant from Government in recent years.

Mr. Spearing: I can see why, for technical reasons, the Minister feels that the amendment goes too wide. Has he any response to the excellent document sent to various hon. Members on both sides of the House? Does he agree that returning power to the people, in line with the announcements that we heard earlier today, is one of the Government's objectives? Why cannot he undertake to move, in another place, an amendment stipulating that trust ports that do not wish to be privatised will have the freedom to decline?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman has perhaps missed some of our earlier deliberations on the enabling powers in the Bill, under which trust ports can propose themselves for privatisation. The Government believe that the larger trust ports should be in the private sector, but the Bill includes only a reserve power. It does not say that all trust ports will necessarily be privatised—an important distinction. As I have often said, if the Government intended to privatise all the trust ports, the Bill would say so. But the Bill recognises the differences among the many trust ports. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole speaks for Poole; the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) would, I am sure, make a good case, as he saw it, for Lerwick. We cannot judge all the trust ports in the same way, which is why the Bill is drafted as it is.

[Mr. McLoughlin]

For the reasons that I have explained, I cannot accept the amendment, and I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to withdraw it.

Ms. Walley: The amendment has a great deal to commend it. We have just heard from the Minister another example of the back-pedalling that seems to be taking place on this Bill. He seems to be saying that all trust ports are equal, provided that they have a turnover of more than £5 million and regardless of what some of that £5 million has to be spent on—important dredging work, and so on. However, quite apart from the attempts that we have made to create exemptions for environmental protection or on grounds such as those offered in this amendment, the message seems to be that some ports are not as equal as others in the matter of compulsory privatisation. It seems that, if an hon. Member can make a strong enough political case and bend the ear of the Minister, he can gain assurances that the Secretary of State will not use these draconian powers in his constituency.

I am sorry that the Minister dismissed the amendment out of hand. We believe that it would clarify the issue and remove some of the trust ports from the net of compulsory privatisation by which they do not want to be caught. Sooner or later, we will be able to see exactly what the Minister's proposals are.

Like the Minister, I visited the port of Poole. It was a fine day and I suspect that my welcome was probably warmer than his. He at least had the grace to tell the House that he had a noisy welcome. It was a noisy welcome because everybody in Poole is united in the view that, however much this may be a piece of enabling legislation, they do not want is forced upon them.

9.45 pm

I understand that the chief executive, Hamish Green, will be speaking against compulsory privatisation at the debate on 15 May at Bournemouth polytechnic. I suspect that many, quite apart from the chief executive, the harbour commissioners and Poole and District Fishermen's Association and its secretary, Ray Knight, whom I met yesterday, including the environmentalists, agree wholeheartedly with the amendment.

If the Minister is not prepared to take on board, openly and honestly, the ideas behind the amendment, he should face the fact that the Government have not been able to convince the trust ports of the merits of privatisation. If he does not choose to apply the compulsory parts of the Act to them, he should at least be able to tell the House on what grounds he will be excluding certain ports. For that reason, the amendment has our support.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2

TRANSFER OF UNDERTAKINGS

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 2, leave out line 28.

No. 6, in page 2, line 30, at end insert

'; or

(c) to any liability of the authority incurred by virtue of section *(Financial assistance for proposals to maximise employee participation in equity of successor companies)* below in connection with any proposal for maximising participation by employees of the successor company in ownership of its equity share capital.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 5

CONTROL BY APPROPRIATE MINISTER OVER EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY'S FUNCTIONS UNDER SECTIONS 3 AND 4

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 4, line 10, at end insert—

'( ) In exercising his powers under subsection (2) above the appropriate Minister shall have particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal to managers or other persons employed by the successor company of the whole or a substantial part of its equity share capital.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 8

SCHEMES MADE BY A RELEVANT PORT AUTHORITY

Ms. Walley: I beg to move amendment No. 60, in page 6, line 12, at end insert—

'(c) he shall require the memorandum and articles of the company to determine port activities as the main activity of that company.'.

The amendment speaks for itself. After the transfer of functions, the governing documents will be the memorandum and articles of association of the company. The Secretary of State will ultimately have power to determine the contents of the memorandum and articles. They will presumably be framed in such a way as to be attractive to people who might want to buy the shares. The objects clause in the memorandum of association determines the activities in which the company can lawfully engage and that could provide for diversification or for other activities besides port activities.

The Bill should be about transport. It should be committed to making sure that our ports can properly fit into Britain's transport infrastructure. Therefore, it is incomprehensible that, as happens now, plcs taking over the trust ports will be able to diversify to such an extent that port activities will not be the main activities at the heart of the new company. That is why we have tabled the amendment and seek to deter corporate raiders.

The Bill may free financial constraints on the ports, as the Government claim, but we believe that the ports should then be free to maintain activities and not to diversify into property development and all the worst examples of property speculation that we have seen.

The amendment would keep the essence of trust ports after privatisation. That is an issue on which we had considerable discussion in Committee. I remind the Minister that, in commenting on the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, and on the proposals that did not complete their course in this House, the House of Lords Select Committee reported on 21 February 1991:

"It is envisaged that the new company would enjoy unlimited freedom to expand its business activities into any sector and geographical area it chooses."

I emphasise the word "geographical" because right hon. and hon. Members expressed concern that a new company need not even be based in the area of the trust port that it took over.

The report went on:

"It would thus be possible for the privatised authority to undertake commercial activities of which it has no experience and which are far removed from the business it knows well; namely, running a port and conserving a river. We accept that the authority intends at present only to expand into transport, distribution and warehousing services and into property development, and it has recruited expert managers in these areas. But nothing in the Bill would prevent even further diversification in the future."

The report added:

"Exposing the holding company to such risks could endanger a successor company's ability to fulfil its statutory obligations and to carry on its core business of running the port. That could have a detrimental impact on local industry and the local community."

Those few sentences make the case. Whatever may be the Government's intentions, and regardless of whether they will force privatisation on trust ports that do not want it, unless we can write into the memorandum and articles of association the direction that the port should be the company's main activity, the Bill will have even less to do with transport than it currently masquerades as having. For those reasons, I press the Minister to say whether port activities should continue to be the function of the new companies, or whether we may expect total diversification and an abandonment of ports throughout the country.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I wish to establish how the Government will use the powers contained in subsection (6), as amended by amendment No. 60, which would give the Secretary of State the authority to direct that a company's memorandum and articles of association could be changed, pending certain representations when a scheme is produced. I should like to hear the Minister's views in the context of recreational users such as yachtsmen and the owners of other pleasure boats.

From the Minister's comments in respect of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and representations and consultations between various users and the company, I fear that everything will be left to market forces. If there is to be a change of powers and responsibilities, the fear among yachtsmen and other pleasure boat users is that there could be a serious loss of facilities.

We must rid ourselves of the misconception that all people who sail boats are rich, because that is not the case. Boating is one of the most popular sports in Britain. It is enjoyed by millions of people and millions of boat owners. *[Laughter.]* The Minister laughs. That is one good reason why I hope that he will be able to answer my question.

I am worried about people on low incomes, who have boats, but who cannot afford to put them in the larger marinas and use all the facilities offered to boats moored on the fingers there. Often their boats are on loose moorings in an estuary or a large harbour. I believe that such people feel threatened by this legislation.

When a scheme is submitted by a port authority, what will be the Minister's attitude if representations are made to him about it by the Royal Yachting Association? Would he say that it was a matter for market forces, or would he use his powers to direct that the memorandum and articles of the company can be amended? Those powers do exist.

Yachtsmen and pleasure boat users want to know what the Government's attitude will be towards their sport. Will the Minister leave it to market forces or will he have sympathy?

I am not asking the Minister to refer to specific schemes, but yachtsmen and British boat users will want to know exactly what the Government's attitude will be towards using those powers.

Mr. Barry Field: As it was a Labour Chancellor who put value added tax on yachts, and in view of the hon. Gentleman's concern, will he tell us whether it would be Labour party policy to abolish VAT on yachts and pleasure boats?

Mr. Randall: What a silly question. I am sure that you would rule me out of order if I answered it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have genuine concern for people who enjoy sailing and boating, which is a healthy sport, especially for young people, and the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) is insulting them. I am trying to find out whether a large number of those people will be threatened by the Government's policy. If the Government are going to leave ports to market forces, one can conclude that millions of pleasure boat users will be threatened.

When the Minister responds to the debate I look forward to hearing whether he will have sympathy or whether he will leave the matter to market forces and not use his powers to preserve an important sport and recreation.

Mr. Spearing: Although I happen to be a member of the RYA and therefore understand the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), I do not speak as a member but because I want to probe the Minister more closely. I fancy that he may reject the amendment because of the words "main activity" or because of the use of the adjective "main" in relation to the word "activity". I foresee a lawyers' field day discussing that.

If the Minister rejects the amendment I shall ask him to concede that hon. Members on both sides of the House are genuinely concerned about the ambit of the activities of the companies that he wishes to come into existence. If he declines the invitation of my hon. Friend the member for Kingston upon Hull, West, will he agree that some sort of clause—it may be too late for this House, but it could be included elsewhere—should be included in the Bill? It could run something like this: "It shall be a requirement of the memorandum and articles of the company that the activities of the company shall be principally those which are closely associated or closely related to port, haven or marine activities", although I admit that that is not a good immediate draft.

Surely that is what the House would expect such a company to be. One does not expect a port and harbour company suddenly to become an office organisation or to sell off land so that a marina is left as a tiny pool in the middle, even if commercial activity stops. That is a matter about which many people are concerned. We have seen how market forces operate along the Thames. Pressure is in their very nature. If the Minister is unable to accept this amendment, will he at least consider the introduction of some such provision as I have just rather badly outlined?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman was right to suggest that I was unlikely to accept the amendment. The Opposition have overlooked one of the main purposes of the Bill, which is to allow trust ports to privatise themselves. They may wish to do so partly for the purpose of gaining the freedom to diversify their activities. Not long ago, I visited one of the trust ports. I shall not say which one.

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ports Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have just been referring to a visit that I paid to one of the trust ports. As we were passing a hanger, I was told that it had been rented out to a company. I said, "No doubt the company's activities are port-related." In fact, I did not realise that the charter requires such activities to be port-related, but there were a number of red faces around when I was told, "Possibly it ships in one or two things each year, but I do not think we could claim that its activities are totally port-related." I do not want to put such a restriction on the activities of trust ports.

Sale objectives will be agreed between the port and the appropriate Minister before the privatisation process gets under way. The Bill provides for a period of consultation. If the Royal Yachting Association, for which the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, West (Mr. Randall) spoke, has representations to make, it will want to put them forward at the appropriate time. *[Interruption.]* I did not intend to indicate that the hon. Gentleman was speaking for the RYA. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) made a similar point earlier.

I am somewhat surprised that the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, West (Mr. Randall) rejected as nonsense the very telling point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field). This amendment is too restrictive, and I hope that the House will reject it.

Ms. Walley: It may have escaped the Minister's notice, while he has been so busy with this Bill, that VAT has been increased to 17 per cent. Amendment No. 60 refers to the determination of port activities as the main activities of a company. Our intention is to ensure that ports that are operating effectively at present are enabled to continue to carry out their responsibilities. That should not be prevented by the takeover activities of predators. I am disappointed that the Minister has not taken on board the spirit of the amendment. I can assure him that the matter will be pursued with vigour in another place. If he has any regard for the genuine concern of people throughout the country about the state of ports in 10 years' time, the sentiments that are expressed in this amendment will have to be taken into consideration during the period of consultation to which he has referred.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 9

SCHEMES INITIATED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr. Ward: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 6, line 44, at end insert:

'(6A) If, after consulting an authority as provided in subsection (6) above it appears to the Secretary of State that a direction under subsections (2) and (3) above ought not to be given to that authority, he shall not give the authority such a direction at any time within a period of five years commencing with the date on which he first so consulted the authority.'.

I had hoped that the Minister would be convinced by the strength of the argument put to him by many of my constituents that the element of compulsion should be removed completely from the Bill. That has not happened so far. As the Bill stands, should the Minister agree with local representatives not to use his compulsory powers to require them to prepare privatisation schemes, there is nothing to prevent the hon. Gentleman, or his successor, from returning to the question within weeks or months, having had a change of mind, and requiring privatisation to proceed. With such a sword of Damocles hanging over any organisation, it would be impossible for it to take sensible planning or commercial decisions, or to negotiate with financial institutions the financial arrangements that they have been prepared to make available in the past to trust ports, which would be under a continuing blight, due to the threat of such a decision being made by the Minister.

For many years the Poole harbour commissioners have successfully managed their own financial affairs. They have financed the development and improvement of the harbour without any call on Government funds. If financial institutions have no guarantee that harbour managers will continue to hold their present responsibilities, such sensible financial arrangements could come to a halt overnight. Surely no hon. Member can envisage any commercial institution working under such conditions. I hope, therefore, that the House will accept this modest amendment. It would enable at least some long-term planning—for five years—following the Minister's acceptance that privatisation is not immediately required.

Mr. Wallace: I support the amendment. I attempted to introduced a similar amendment by means of a new clause that was not selected for debate. Under my scheme a trust port could have attempted to maintain the status quo. Its effect would have been very much the same as the amendment moved so eloquently by the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward). I visited Poole last week. The weather was exceptionally good. No political significance can be read into the weather that greeted me and that which greeted the Minister. One could not help but be impressed by the work of the harbour commissioners over a number of years and by the way in which they have developed Poole harbour. They have tried to maintain its special characteristics, including its environmental characteristics. That alone makes Poole a special case. I hope that the Minister will take that into account if he ever decides to exercise the powers that new clause 9 gives to him.

All the trust ports have their own characteristics. I argued on many occasions in Committee that the Lerwick harbour trust has its own particular characteristics. I refer to the way in which it has responded to the challenge of the oil industry. During the last 20 years, its income has grown from £40,000 to well over £5·5 million. It has diversified its activities and has invested in farming, a town centre car park, an industrial estate, a state-of-the-art fish processing factory and a four-star hotel that was opened by the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) when he was Secretary of State for Scotland.

The success of the efforts of many harbour trusts ought to be recognised. Moreover, if the Minister decides that a harbour trust need not be privatised, it should be free from the threat of privatisation for a number of years, or a brake could be applied to much-needed developments.

This is a sensible amendment. Both the hon. Member for Poole and I agree that the compulsory element is

unacceptable, but the amendment does not preclude the Government's option to go down that road. However, having decided against such a course, the Government should allow the harbour trusts to get on with the job which in many places, such as Poole and Lerwick—two ports of which I am aware—they have been doing well for the past 20 or more years.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I want to speak on the amendment because of the threat that privatisation poses to the fishing fleets around our coast, of which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) will be aware. I understand that there is a fishing fleet in Poole which is concerned about the threat from the potential privatisation of the trust ports.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward). Successful ports such as Lerwick and Poole, which have put a great deal of finance into the infrastructure, and have run themselves extremely well and successfully, need reassurance such as he suggested.

I am especially concerned to put the view of the many fishermen who have written to me because they are concerned about the steps that the Government are taking. As a result of the distinct lack of a Government fishing policy, fishing fleets are under threat. They have been declining and they are often forced into corners of ports. In some cases, they are no longer the major financial contributors to the ports. They fear that, if the ports were privatised, there would be a more lucrative source of income from marinas and developers which would force traditional fishermen out of their livelihood and their traditional facilities. They support the amendment, and I ask the Minister to take their needs into account. I assure him that the fishing fleet do not support him or the Bill.

Mr. McLoughlin: I recognise the purpose behind the amendment. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred to the weather that I encountered in Poole. It was fairly lousy when I arrived, but it improved as the day went on.

It is important that the enactment of the Bill does not result in ports being kept in a constant state of uncertainty about possible privatisation. If, two years or more after enactment, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State enters into consultations with a port authority about possible privatisation, but decides not to direct that authority to submit a scheme of transfer, it will clearly be helpful for him to tell the port when he next proposes to review the situation, or he may decide that the circumstances of a particular port are such that the need for further consideration will not arise.

When we had a meeting yesterday with fishermen from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward), I was struck by a point which they made vociferously. My hon. Friend has consistently pressed the Government to make various amendments to the Bill and he has made his point effectively, as I will explain. The issue is whether we should build such a proposal into the Bill. I and my right hon. and learned Friend have given a good deal of thought to this, and we have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said. My conclusion is that his proposal would help ports which we decide should not be pressed into privatisation when we consider their arguments and that we should incorporate such a provision into the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole is probably used to hearing my next words. I am told that the wording of the amendment is not entirely satisfactory, but, if he will withdraw it, I will undertake that an amendment that will have the same effect will be tabled in another place.

Mr. Ward: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has said. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 10

THE ANNUAL TURNOVER REQUIREMENT FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 9

Mr. Wallace: I beg to move amendment No. 54, in page 7, line 41, leave out '£5 million' and insert '£13 million'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 55, in page 8, line 1, leave out '£5 million' and insert '£13 million'.

No. 56, in page 8, line 3, at end insert—

'(7A) In calculating the turnover limit, for the purpose of subsections (6) and (7) above, no account shall be taken of income of the port authority which has been derived from charges for cargo handling.'.

Mr. Wallace: The amendment would replace the figure of £5 million with the figure of £13 million as the threshold beyond which the Government may exercise the powers in clauses 9, 10 and 11 to compel a privatisation. I must make it clear that the amendment does not imply that I and my right hon. and hon. Friends accept the case for compulsory privatisation, although we accept that if trust ports wish of their own free will to privatise themselves, that should be permissible. The Bill makes that far easier than a private Bill would because the private Bill procedure is cumbersome and can often thwart the intentions of the trust ports.

We object to the compulsory element in this, but, accepting that it is the Government's intention, it is only right that we probe it and find out why in the world they have put the cut-off point at £5 million. I raised the question in Committee and did not receive a proper answer. I will come on in a moment to review the one answer that the Minister gave in Committee.

10.15 pm

The reason why I have chosen £13 million as opposed to the £10 million that I mentioned in Committee is that, quite apart from the fact that it takes in a number of other ports, not least Aberdeen, it has the merit of being consistent with the point that I was trying to make in Committee. I chose £10 million and then increased it to £13 million because I was picking up the point made by the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) when he was Secretary of State for Transport. On that occasion, attending a lunch at the British Ports Federation, he is reported in the federation review for April 1988 as saying the following:

"We see privatisation as relevant primarily for the larger ports. We would not force the smaller ports down that road, though privatisation would not be ruled out if they wished."

Basically, that is the general intention of the Bill: that the smaller ports should not be forced down the road if they do not so wish, but that, if they do so wish, the procedure should be simplified and they should be able to do it.

On that occasion the then Secretary of State for Transport mentioned a figure of £10 million as the cut-off,

or threshold. *[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) says from a sedentary position, I have increased that figure to take account of inflation, particularly the rampant inflation that we have had under the Conservative Government over the past three years.

We therefore have a position consistent with that taken in 1988 by the then Secretary of State for Transport and we have not yet heard from the Government why they have chosen a much lower figure. They have not given us any other indication of the criteria which they applied and we have not had any real indication of why the figure for the threshold has been pitched at £5 million rather than at £13 million.

The one possible explanation which the Minister offered the Committee was this:

"The Government felt that a £5 million turnover demonstrated a level of activity at which the Secretary of State could use his reserve powers to introduce an element of compulsion."—[*Official Report*, Standing Committee D, 28 February 1991; c. 209.]

That does not answer the point at all; it restates in a different way what is already in the Bill.

I believe that the Minister owes it to the House and, in particular, to those trust ports that would be affected by the £5 million turnover cut-off, to say why he picked on that figure. Clearly, it is a figure of some significance; it means that ports with a turnover above £5 million become subject to central direction by the Secretary of State which would not be there if a different figure had been chosen. The ports that would be affected by this—I believe that Dundee comes into the £5 million category—are Blyth, Lerwick, Poole, Milford Haven, Aberdeen, Harwich haven and Clyde.

I ask the Minister to try to give a better explanation than he has up to now or, better still, to accept the logic and the consistency of the previous Secretary of State for Transport and apply the £10 million, allowing an element for inflation.

The other amendment in this group is No. 56, which would mean that in calculating the turnover limit no account would be taken of the income of the port authority derived from charges for cargo handling. This is the result of many of the representations made, particularly to my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), by the Blyth harbour commissioners. They point out that the Government have said on many occasions during the passage of the Bill that their aim is to create a so-called level playing field. I think that there must be more level playing fields now than there are acres of grass. We are always being told about creating level playing fields.

Many port authorities have not traditionally undertaken any cargo-handling operations. Shipping companies reserved any cargo handling activities for themselves or for private stevedoring companies. At the inception of the trust ports, many shipping companies managed to ensure that they had a continuing legal right to discharge and load their vessels, and trust port authorities therefore had different functions, many of which involved improving and managing the ports, primarily by way of river conservancy and by developing port facilities.

In time, however—not least because of the financial effect of the massive reductions in labour required, but also because of other developments in the ports—a number of ports developed handling capability, although that was not true of all of them. The port of Blyth has an annual turnover of £5·5 million, about half of which—£2·8 million—represents cargo handling activities. Yet other ports that do not have cargo-handling functions may not reach the £5 million threshold and will therefore escape the central direction of the Secretary of State for which the Bill allows. In terms of harbour activity, and the activities to which the Minister referred in Committee, however, such ports will not be caught, whereas Blyth, a substantial 50 per cent. of whose turnover is attributable to cargo handling, will be caught. There is an important distinction to be drawn.

That is yet another example of how different harbours and different harbour trusts may wish to apply different criteria and in the absence of an alternative criterion from the Government, it is not unreasonable that the harbour trusts should draw the attention of the House to particular factors affecting their operations.

I hope that the Minister will be persuaded by my arguments and that common sense will prevail. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept the amendments so reasonably suggested by my hon. Friends and me.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I support the amendment. Like other hon. Members who represent constituencies in the north of Scotland, I have received sustained representations about the Bill, particularly from representatives of Aberdeen harbour.

I am sorry to see that the Secretary of State has left his place. To some extent, he has spoken with forked tongue on the matter. On one hand, he says that the Bill is not directly targeted at ports such as Aberdeen and that the Government have bigger ports in mind, while on the other, it has been widely reported that the Conservatives propose to include in their Scottish manifesto a pledge to sell off local authority ports in the north of Scotland. In those circumstances, assurances to the effect that Aberdeen will not face compulsory privatisation ring somewhat hollow. If tiny fishing ports are to be sold off—one wonders who will buy them—it seems unlikely that, in the long run, the Government will hang back when it comes to Aberdeen.

Whatever happens, I have no qualms about the future of Aberdeen as a port, because it provides an essential service and operates in the interests of the local community. It is a matter of considerable concern to me that the Government seem to believe that commercial accountability is the only criterion by which ports should be judged. The ports provide an essential community service. The Minister will know that the dispute affecting the fishing harbour in Aberdeen was the trigger for the legislation under which the dock labour scheme was abolished and I supported—indeed, had called for—such legislation at the time, because I felt that the port of Aberdeen was being killed off.

I do not approach the matter in a dogmatic or purely ideological manner. I am merely interested to ensure that Aberdeen has a port that best serves the interests of the local community. The Secretary of State should not be able to determine on a whim—at the stroke of a pen, and for ideological reasons—that the ownership and management of a port should be fundamentally changed. That is not a satisfactory situation. There is no guarantee that the views of the trustees or representatives of the local community will be taken into account.

Naturally, I support the amendment, because it removes such uncertainty from Aberdeen harbour authority.

Mr. Loyden: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the basic faults of the Bill is that it takes no account of the long-term location and activities of the ports and that it is based on current economic judgments which may change considerably in the years that lie ahead? No one can forecast with any certainty where trade will grow and where it will decline. Therefore, it is essential that there is a body that overlooks port location, so that such difficulties can be overcome.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman has a point. I do not wish to detain the House, but I should stress that it is desirable to have ports with different structures of ownership and management—a diversity that creates genuine choice. I have no problem with that. However, I object to the idea that a port should be forced to change its status, not because it seems in the best interests of the long-term development of the port—that may be an appropriate decision for some local authorities—but because, for ideological reasons, the Secretary of State has decided that he does not like the way in which the port is being run, even though the port users and the local community are entirely satisfied.

Mr. Wallace: The Secretary of State appoints the members of the boards.

Mr. Bruce: As my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) says, we are increasingly being run by boards appointed by the Secretary of State specifically to implement the wishes of the Secretary of State and the Government, who cannot get a political mandate in Scotland for the changes that they seek to bring about.

One is left with an unanswered question. If the Scottish Conservatives put in their manifesto a pledge to privatise all local authority ports and, as I predict, lose every parliamentary seat in which the ports are situated, will they still regard that as a mandate and disregard the clearly expressed wishes of the local community? The answer is, of course, that they will. They are not interested in local democracy or local communities. The Government are being as dogmatic as they have accused the Labour Government of being in the past. They are trying to impose an idelogical decision on a body which is currently constituted to serve the interests of the local community. Unless the Government can justify that change of use and explain why they believe that it is necessary, the House should accept the amendment. Indeed, the main thrust of the Bill should not be there in the first place.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I do not wish to detain the House long. I do not disagree with much of what the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said. However, I am unaware—I admit that I have been otherwise engaged for part of the debate this evening—of any promise by the Secretary of State not to use the powers in the Bill to compel Aberdeen harbour board to seek full commercial status in the market. If he has given such a promise, it is not worth anything.

In Committee I got into trouble for quoting American presidents and vice-presidents. It was once said about the vice-presidency of the United States that it was not worth a bucket of warm spit. Any promise from this Government has exactly the same credibility. The whole thing is nonsense. There is no point in taking a reserve power to compel a port to be privatised when it does not enter the private sector of its own volition, if one does not intend to use that power.

Without going into too much detail—given the time of the evening—the Secretary of State knows perfectly well that, apart from the local authority representatives, every member of Aberdeen harbour board is appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland after discussion with the various user interests in the port of Aberdeen, such as the fishing industry, the oil industry, general commercial industry and general users of the port. They are all consulted and have representatives on the board nominated by the Secretary of State.

If the members of the board are unanimous about anything, it is that they do not wish the harbour to be privatised by the diktat of the Secretary of State. The members have said that they see no reason why the harbour should go into the private sector. It is doing extremely well. Its turnover is holding up. It has invested in the port out of its own revenues. Development plans for the next few years show that there is to be another £10 million of development at the port, all of which will be generated from its own income.

People may sometimes say that the arrangement between the users of the port and the harbour board is too cosy and that the revenues are used for the benefit of the users of the port. Who else should have the benefit of the money that is coming in if not the people who use the port? They are saying that they are perfectly happy to pay such reasonable harbour dues as the board may decide, provided the decisions on how the money is spent are made locally.

I have had several representations from private companies, including one only a couple of days ago, about the fact that Aberdeen harbour board might be thrust, against its will, into the private sector. They view that prospect with abhorrence and have asked me to do what I can to ensure that the good arrangements which they have at Aberdeen are not disturbed. I understand that the Minister will not withdraw the reserve clause, and that he will not drive that coach and horses through his Bill. We should disturb the trust ports as little as possible.

10.30 pm

As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has said, the idea that the local authority ports may shortly be privatised has been widely floated. I shall not attempt to go through every port north and south of Aberdeen, but we know that Aberdeen is a trust port and would be caught as the Bill stands. Fraserburgh and Peterhead are both trust ports. As I recall, they are well below the current limit and are unlikely even through inflation or by changes in trade to come up to the limit. Further round the coast are Buckie and Lossiemouth, which I understand are local authority ports. It would be nonsense for the Government to privatise Aberdeen harbour board compulsorily because it is caught by the legislation, leave Fraserburgh and Peterhead out for the moment, and sell the local authority ports.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman should not give them ideas.

Mr. Hughes: The idea is already there. We know what the hidden agenda is. The intention is to sell everything that moves and everything that does not move because they need the money for other nefarious purposes.

Mr. Bell: I apologise for intervening in a fine speech so late in the evening, but the turnover at Peterhead is £1·5 million. We know that the Treasury is not interested in such a small sum.

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is far too generous. We have to act on the supposition that the Government have a shelf life at least until June 1992. On that basis, as they scrabble around to try to get money to meet the magical figure of 20p in the pound for income tax or to find some way to bolster up the poll tax, which will still be in existence, and as they scrabble around for every financial inducement that they can use to buy votes, even a port with a turnover of £1·5 million will not escape the net, especially if they proceed to sell the local authority ports.

It does not make sense to have a patchwork of different activities along the same coastline. I know what the Government are up to. I join the hon. Members for Gordon and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) in an appeal for the limit to be raised. The higher it is, the better. I shall certainly support the amendment.

Mr. McLoughlin: In some ways, this has been one of the more interesting debates, if we look back at what was said in Committee. I was taken by what the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said tonight. It would probably have been better if the amendment had been moved by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). In Committee, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said:

"The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) would reduce, through amendments Nos. 8 and 9, the threshold to £1 million. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and his hon. Friends would increase it, through amendments Nos. 120 and 98, to £50 million."

Then he said:

"I may be adopting the classic Liberal position in opting for £10 million."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 26 February, 1991; c. 200.]

What has happened to that classic Liberal position? The classic Liberal position just happened not to take account of Aberdeen. What the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland probably did not know was that his hon. Friend the Member for Gordon had written to the Secretary of State to complain about the fact that Aberdeen would be included in the forced privatisation. The classic Liberal position was that one hand did not know what the other hand was doing.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister will know, if he reads a little further, that if he had accepted my amendments Nos. 105 and 199, Aberdeen would not have been affected anyway. He ignores the fact that my hon. Friend and I object, as a matter of principle, to the compulsory privatisation of Aberdeen or any threshold being inserted in the Bill. Has not the £10 million classic Liberal position been overtaken by rampant Tory inflation?

Mr. McLoughlin: That was a nice try, but I still think that we smoked out where the classic Liberal position was in that case.

A number of points have been made, but I cannot be held responsible for all the speculation that may appear in newspapers about what may be in future Conservative party manifestos. The fact that the press are more interested in Conservative party manifestos but share little interest in the Liberal party's manifesto may be because they know that we are more likely to be in a position to carry out our manifesto commitments.

This is not the first attempt to raise the threshold to £5 million. In Committee, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland sought to take it up to £10 million, but that could have got him into trouble with the hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), as Aberdeen would still have been included in the original amendment. At least the figure of £10 million would have had the virtue of being a round figure, whereas £13 million has, despite the Opposition's arguments, nothing to commend it and no rationale.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen North asked how we reached our decision of £5 million. As I said earlier today, and in Committee, that figure relates to the company's turnover and the likely prospects of its being successful in the private sector. The hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out that the Secretary of State, in consultation with various bodies, appoints all the members of that harbour authority. If we intended to privatise come what may, we would have another way to achieve our aims.

The clause requires companies to find out whether they would be better off in the private sector. We have accepted that there will be an affirmative resolution where we force a scheme to come forward.

Mr. Robert Hughes: As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said, we should not give the Minister ideas. However, it was always at the back of my mind that he would use the precedent that the Secretary of State for Transport used when he was Secretary of State for Scotland—he brought his cronies to the health board to do his dirty work. I would not put it past the Minister to do the same when it comes to appointing members of the harbour board.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have made it clear that the Government would like the larger trust ports to go into the private sector. When I visited Aberdeen, I was struck by the way in which the port operates and by the fact that it has characteristics that other trust ports throughout the country do not have. Trust ports are diverse.

Mr. Loyden: Is the Minister aware that the snapshot judgments that are being made purely on the question of ports' present financial positions would, two decades ago, have excluded Felixstowe from any development. How can the Government base their assessment of the future of the port transport industry on snapshot pictures taken at this stage, without having full regard to consequences that may occur in the future? I repeat that many successful ports in the United Kingdom, by the Government's criteria, would not exist today.

Mr. McLoughlin: Many successful ports are already in the private sector and have done well through being in it. Indeed, one of the reasons why Felixstowe did so well was that it was out of the constraints of the national dock labour scheme.

When we abolished the national dock labour scheme, Aberdeen was a great beneficiary. It was not opposed to it, and managed to secure much Government money via the abolition of that scheme.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland has urged me to accept amendment No. 56. Ever since hon. Members have discovered that the Bill contained a turnover limit, they have been thinking of items to leave in the scheme and of others to remove from it. That comment applies especially to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland.

In Committee, we heard about dredging, conservation charges and fishery operations. We have been told about cargo handling receipts this evening, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman's noble Friend in another place will suggest pilotage fees at a later date. That is another part of the operation that can be tried on. They may go on to argue that every aspect of turnover should be removed from the statement of turnover.

Despite the arguments that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland has advanced, I see no reason why cargo handling receipts and the other normal commercial activities of many ports should not be considered elements of turnover, if the ports carry out the work themselves. We are seeking a broad measure of port authorities' operations, and it does not make sense to seek to exclude the areas of activity to which I have referred. I ask the House to reject the amendment.

Ms. Walley: I put on record the Opposition's total resistance to the compulsion provisions in the clause. There is no substitute for removing the reserve powers. If the Minister understood that, we would not be considering amendments that represent an attempt to change the formula so that we have an exclusion zone based on a turnover of £13 million rather than one of £5 million. The compulsion provisions are wrong, and they should be removed.

When the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) was speaking to amendment No. 1 on Poole and the five years during which there would be no further consideration of privatisation, I attempted to intervene. As the hon. Member for Poole probably had an inkling that the Minister would take on board the terms of the amendment, I think that it would have been helpful if I had had the opportunity to express our real concerns about Poole and British Petroleum's proposals for Hook island, which show that at least five years are needed if a balanced view is to be reached of what is happening, and if the concerns of the fishermen and the environmentalists are to be properly taken on board. It must be understood clearly why such important changes are going ahead.

If the Bill did not contain the element of compulsion, we would not need to start playing about with figures. The Opposition have received many representations from the trust ports to the effect that it should be left to them, the ports, to decide whether to proceed. No playing around with figures can alter those representations. The £13 million formula would clearly be preferable if it were to take some of the trust ports out of the net of compulsory privatisation. The arguments on behalf of Aberdeen have been well advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). Anything that removes the compulsion provisions should be supported.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) is right: if the compulsory element were removed from the Bill, there would be no need to table amendments such as those that are before the House. Equally, there would be no need to try to devise criteria if the Government would only put before us some of their criteria. It was the opposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that prompted him to write to the Secretary of State to make out the case of Aberdeen, with which I entirely agree. There is no dispute between us. We are entirely opposed to the compulsion.

There is a split, however, in the Tory ranks, between a Tory Secretary of State for Transport in 1988, who said that he would not force smaller ports down the road to privatisation, and a Tory Secretary of State for Transport in 1991 who is forcing the smaller ports down that road. That is a fundamental split in Government ranks. The Minister has not explained why the figures of the former Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) have not been accepted, so we shall divide on the issue.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 95, Noes 176.

Division No. 122] **[10.44 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Hara, Edward
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Malcolm Bruce and
Mr. Alex Carlile

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia

Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Speller, Tony
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Clause 11

SCHEMES MADE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr. Bell: I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 9, line 26, after 'order', insert

'which shall not come into effect until it has been laid before and approved by both Houses of Parliament.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment No. 63, in clause 22, page 18, line 17, after 'State' insert 'by order'.

Amendment No. 59, in clause 32, in page 23, line 28, after 'section', insert '8(7), 11(8)'.

Government amendment No. 19, in page 23, line 30, at end insert

'(2A) No order to which this subsection applies shall be made unless a draft of the instrument containing the order has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament.

Amendment (a), in line 10, leave out '; or'.

Amendment (b), in line 11, at end add

'; or

(e) under section 22(2) above.'.

Amendment No. 75, in page 23, line 31, leave out subsection (3).

Government amendment No. 20, in page 23, line 31, leave out from 'containing' to end of line 34 and insert—

'(a) an order under section 8(7) or 19(7) above other than one within paragraph (a) or (c) of subsection (2B) above; or

(b) regulations under section 24 above;'.

Amendment (d), in line 3, leave out '8(7) or'.

Amendment (e), in line 4, leave out '(a) or'.

Government amendment No. 21.

Amendment No. 76, in page 23, line 39, at end insert—

'( ) If, apart from the provisions of this subsection, the draft of an order to which subsection (2A) above applies would be treated for the purposes of the Standing Orders of either House of Parliament as a hybrid instrument it shall proceed in that House as if it were not such an instrument.'.

Mr. Bell: Amendment No. 42 reflects our concern that affirmative resolutions should be debated on the Floor of the House when we deal with the privatisation of trust ports under the Bill.

I am aware that amendment No. 42 is subsumed in Government amendment No. 19, which calls for a draft instrument containing any order to be laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament. This was discussed in a fine and constructive debate in Committee. The Government listened to the Opposition's points and agreed that it would not be right for an order to be made simply on the fiat of a Secretary of State for Transport or a Minister.

I was amused earlier when the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) whether the Labour party would renationalise the ports. The ports are trust ports and therefore are not nationalised, but in any event the powers in the Bill could, if they became law, be used by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) if there were a Labour Government, and I doubt whether many ports would be privatised. Therefore, the question whether the Labour party would nationalise such ports does not require a great deal of reflection.

However, the Government listened to the arguments and accepted that they should not have an administrative fiat over the ports, and certainly not over those ports which are compulsorily privatised. Whatever the Government say, there is no great will among British ports to be privatised. There may have been such a will when the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) began the process some three years ago. He turns his head with great alacrity at the mention of his name, and I am glad that he is here because he was the Secretary of State who invited the trust ports to take the private Bill procedure of the House of Commons. Tees and Hartlepool was the first port to do so. But the actual procedure, as he envisaged it, has changed drastically in the past three years, and certainly since he left office.

11 pm

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said that, at that time, the former Secretary of State for Transport said that there was no question of trust ports being privatised against their will. However, the right hon. Gentleman is in his place tonight to support the Government, despite the fact that they are contradicting the policy upon which he embarked three years ago. It is one of the Opposition's jobs to highlight the little ironies that arise in the Government's actions over the years.

Some ports may have seen some merit in privatisation when it was first suggested by the right hon. Member for Southend, West, as they could perceive a form of management buy-out that would keep their ports in local hands. That would—as my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said—benefit the local community and users and put the existing management's expertise to good effect.

A different Bill is now before the House, and it is clear that the competitive tendering element will mean that many ports will be found not in the hands of their existing management but in those of predators of the kind that Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), do not believe exist. If ports anticipate that they will be taken over by outside bodies, they will not take the voluntary privatisation route, and there will be coercion of the type for which the Bill makes provision. That shows the importance of this House and the other place having placed before them orders that can be the subject of debate.

In Committee, the Minister rejected at every turn our proposals for proper consultation with local authorities and trade unions, so it is proper that the House should be given an opportunity to debate affirmative resolutions. Earlier, in the debate on the levy, the Minister pointed out that such debates, which need not be held late in the evening, can be well attended.

We hope that the Government's amendment, which is supported by ours, will allow for proper debate and make the Minister accountable. However, if there is an election and a change of Government, the entire procedure will fall by the wayside. Meanwhile, the House wants an assurance that there will be proper debates on affirmative resolutions covering the variety of interests to which the Bill refers.

I commend amendment No. 42, while acknowledging that it is subsumed in Government amendment No. 19. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has tabled amendments to amendment No. 19, and no doubt we shall hear from him on them, and from the Minister as to whether he is prepared to accept it.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I declare my interest, as I shall be a parliamentary adviser to Port Enterprises Ltd. with effect from 1 May.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) addressed a concern that I share, and, perhaps surprisingly, his conclusions are not wholly dissimilar from my own. Amendment Nos. 75 and 76, with amendments (d) and (e) to Government amendment No. 20, are in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field). They can best be explained in this way. The Bill makes provision for a compulsory 42-day consultation period in respect of individual port privatisation schemes, with the intention of an order being tabled bringing a scheme into effect, using the negative resolution procedure. For that to happen, the order must lay for 40 parliamentary days before it is confirmed. At any time during that period it can be prayed against, which would occasion a debate in the usual way. During that process no privatisation can take place.

At first, that sounds perfectly innocuous, but on closer examination it seems clear that that would create an inordinate and unnecessary delay for those major trust ports which wish to privatise, which is an important point.

The effect of the laying of the order having to be measured in parliamentary days means, as far as I can tell, that the earliest time in which a scheme could be approved would be by 19 December 1991, and if one makes the not unreasonable assumption that a general election might intervene, it would be the end of January 1992. Obviously that would create a disturbing and damaging period of uncertainty for each of the trust ports which wanted to privatise, especially bearing in mind competitive tendering, which is quite rightly the process preferred by the Government.

Therefore, the amendments give those ports privatising themselves, using the enabling powers in clause 8 of the Bill, the ability to have the order approved by the Secretary of State without recourse to further parliamentary procedure.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough referred to the fact that the Government will accept an amendment to clause 32 to give those ports that are being privatised compulsorily the right to an affirmative resolution procedure. I shall entirely understand if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary chooses to make that concession. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough and I are talking about ports proceeding in different ways—on the one hand compulsorily and on the other, willingly. I do not know whether my hon. Friend will make that concession, and I could well understand the contrary argument.

As for those ports acting directly in accordance with the policy in the Bill—doing precisely what the Government want, by bringing themselves forward for privatisation—it does not seem necessary for them to have to go through that parliamentary procedure.

In short, my amendments would enable those ports that want to privatise to get on with it, without even more parliamentary procedure. I hope that the Government will accept that they are within the spirit of the Bill and that the idea behind them, if not their wording, will commend them to my hon. Friends.

Mr. Spearing: I support amendment No. 42, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). I have tabled another set of amendments to the Minister's amendments that would include in this rather dense and convoluted legislation the requirement for an affirmative resolution instrument to come before the House in regard to those parts of the Bill dealing with the port of Tilbury. I support amendment No. 42 and I hope that the Minister will accept the amendments, because I do not think that amendment No. 19, which he will no doubt press, requires an affirmative resolution instrument for the port of Tilbury.

Tilbury docks remain perhaps the most important, or the only substantial, docks in the port of London. The relationship between Parliament and the law in the development of the port of London over the ages has been significant. Therefore, it is not for the House to have the power to approve a major change—or something more than a change—in the structure of what remains of the port of London. It would be totally inappropriate.

There used to be a law which permitted cargoes to be discharged only on the legal quays, upstream and downstream of London bridge. That was opposed by dock interests, and the House passed dock Bills approving the construction of docks. The port of Tilbury is the modern name for Tilbury docks, which were excavated and made operational in 1886 by the then East and West India dock company. They turned out to be white elephants. Dock companies in London were competing with one another in bankruptcy, so the privatisation of any docks in London would be a 19th-century step, to some extent.

If the Government have their way, there will not be more than one dock company in London. However, there will be other wharves with which there will be direct competition. Then there is the question of competition from continental ports. There is no doubt that the port of Tilbury, although it is the nearest to London, will not be the only one serving London and the south-east. Dunkirk, Antwerp and others will be rivals, especially with the opening of the channel tunnel.

The creation by the House of the Port of London authority, together with the voting in of the administration in 1906, was a momentous step. In effect, the port of London was the pioneer trust port. Constitutional books throughout the world indicate that the Port of London authority, which was introduced by the Government of Mr. Asquith, was a model. It was set up to create a river highway by means of dredging; to be a navigation and safety authority; to take over the functions of the dock companies; to be a warehousing body; to provide specialist services; and to plan expansion. I did not always agree with it in its later stages, but, as a public authority, it fulfilled those purposes.

The King George V dock, which is in my constituency, was opened as a public facility. Indeed, the expansion of the rather small Tilbury docks into what we have today was accomplished by way of post-war development under public enterprise. Some hon. Members may remember hearing Dudley Perkins on the radio. His talents as a dock and port manager were much appreciated. He created what today, for PR purposes, is the port of Tilbury.

I come now to the question of competition. The ports of the near continent—particularly Dunkirk—have received a tremendous amount of public support. This is one area of European Community harmonisation that does not yet seem to have been explored. I am not saying that there should be such harmonisation; I am saying simply that it has not been introduced. With the opening of the channel tunnel, the ports of the near continent will be in direct competition with the Thames. Any

installations on the Thames—public, private, or of mixed ownership; dock, river, pier, wharf, pontoon, or whatever —will be aware of this. Here, the Government's optimism may be somewhat misplaced. Capital for the ports of France has been provided by public subscription and Government grants, and the system has worked very well. Alas, successive Governments on this side of the channel have not done likewise for the port of London.

The Port of London authority is not like any of the port trusts about which we heard in earlier debates. It was established as a sort of co-operative involving port users, municipal authorities, representatives of labour, and the lighterage companies. There never was an election, but that was the concept. However, gradually the port authority fell into the the hands of the Government. Now, every member of the board is appointed by the Secretary of State. Schemes that the PLA puts to the Minister have to be in line with what he wants. It is therefore very important that Parliament have the power to approve or reject.

The Minister may say, "We have a majority anyway, so why come to Parliament?" The reason is the need for public visibility, for scrutiny. PLA capital development, particularly that at Tilbury, was undertaken with public money. In the early 1900s the House took action in response to the failure of private enterprise. That is a strong case for the principle of trust ports to be extended to the Port of London authority and Tilbury.

When the docks were built the lighterage industry succeeded in ensuring that a free water clause was included in the docks Bills. It was resented by the wharfingers but welcomed by the dock companies. The result was that transport by water in London was made flexible. A large amount of cargo was discharged into barges and taken up river. It became a very finely balanced transport system. If the port of Tilbury becomes a separate private enterprise —I hope that it does not—the free water lighterage provision ought to be maintained. The Minister may not be able to answer that point now, but if the relevant statutory instrument were to be considered by the House, the matter would be discussed then.

That is another reason why the Minister ought to accept these modest amendments. They would result in the port of Tilbury having the same conditions applied to it as I hope will be applied to all other United Kingdom trust ports.

11.15 pm

Mr. Wallace: In Committee I dealt in detail with the arguments in favour of affirmative resolutions. I welcome the fact that the Minister has kept his word and introduced his amendments. A minor difference in detail between my amendment No. 59 and the Government amendment is that my amendment would also apply, where orders were made under clause 8(7), to schemes where a port had been privatised voluntarily.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) seems to regard Parliament as somewhat of an inconvenience; he does not appear to believe that Parliament should have anything to do with the matter. He overlooks the fact that assets currently administered by trustees for the public good are to be transferred into private hands. The trustees may do that willingly and voluntarily, but such a transfer requires scrutiny. Parliament should not be bypassed.

The Government amendments meet the spirit of what the Minister promised in Committee. He is therefore to be congratulated.

Mr. McLoughlin: This has been a useful debate. I am not sure, however, that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) will agree with everything that I am about to say.

Amendments Nos. 19, 20 and 21 reflect the concern expressed by a number of hon. Members in Committee. They felt that, where my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State confirms by means of an order a scheme that he himself has initiated through a direction to a port that has not submitted its own scheme within two years of enactment, or where he has made the scheme himself by order under clause 11 or clause 19, that order shall be subject to affirmative resolution, thus enabling a full debate to take place in both this House and another place. I know, too, that the British Ports Federation places considerable importance on the matter.

Hon. Members have, however, drawn attention to a further aspect of the order-making process to confirm schemes of transfer where schemes are brought forward voluntarily by ports. If an order is made to confirm such a scheme, and it is subject to the negative resolution procedures, it may be prayed against at any time within 40 days after it has been made, during which Parliament is sitting. It is very unlikely that the Bill will be enacted in time for schemes to be made before the summer recess. That means that the 40-day period would not begin to run until Parliament resumes after the summer recess and, depending on when Parliament resumes, would continue until the second half of December or even mid-January. It is argued that it would be unrealistic for prospective purchasers of a port to consider making serious bids until there was absolute certainty that an order confirming a scheme of transfer could not be annulled. The ports that are anxious to reap the full benefits of privatisation as early as possible are naturally concerned about the delay, and about the disruption and uncertainty that it would cause.

It would be wrong, when ports are anxious to achieve privatisation as rapidly as they can, that they should be held back in this way. That applies to the PLA's sale of Tilbury and to other ports under part I. I hope, therefore, that the House will accept the amendments which will apply the affirmative resolution procedure when orders are made following my right hon. and learned Friend's exercise of his power of compulsion and of removing any parliamentary process from orders that are made, whether under part I or under part II, to confirm schemes brought forward voluntarily by ports.

I am advised that certain of the amendments tabled by my hon. Friends are technically defective. However, the House would achieve the objectives that I have stated by accepting Government amendment No. 19 and amendments Nos. 75 and 76 tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who made an important point.

I appreciate the comments of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. If I understand him aright, there was no concern about the ports that wish to come forward. A number are waiting for the enactment of the Bill so that they can follow through the process of opening up to privatisation.

[Mr. McLoughlin]

As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) rightly said, the amendments would oblige the Secretary of State to make an order, with affirmative resolution procedure, to confirm any exercise by the PLA of its powers to dispose of Tilbury. That would be a quite impractical method. I accept, as the hon. Gentleman said, that Tilbury is different, partly because its privatisation is contained in the Bill. For the other trust ports, the Bill is an enabling measure, apart from the reserve powers. The privatisation of Tilbury is on the face of the Bill unless the PLA decided not to privatise, in which case the affirmative order and compulsion could be exercised by the Secretary of State after two years. That is not likely to be the case.

In one respect, the hon. Member for Newham, South was slightly unfair to the PLA. He said that it acted solely as an agent for the Secretary of State. That is wrong, because it acts under its own statute, under which it has responsibilities. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman accepts that clarification.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, the PLA acts under both private and public statutes. However, the point is that to divest itself of the operations at Tilbury, it would use the Bill, which the Minister has proposed.

Mr. McLoughlin: I think that we could split hairs on the argument on many occasions.

We have had an interesting debate. I hope that the House will accept the reasoning behind my remarks, and will accept Government amendment No. 19 and amendments Nos. 75 and 76.

Mr. Bell: I agree with the Minister that this has been an interesting and constructive debate. I agree with the point made by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that the Minister has kept his word in Committee to table an amendment on Report. It broadens the provisions on the affirmative resolution, and on that basis, I beg to ask leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 12

LEVY ON INITIAL DISPOSALS OF SECURITIES OF SUCCESSOR COMPANIES

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 9, line 36, leave out 'ten' and insert 'fifty'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 46, in page 9, line 36, leave out 'ten' and insert 'one hundred'.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendment rectifies a slight mishap that occurred when the Bill was in Committee. In the main, the Opposition brought it on themselves. They tabled an amendment to increase the rate of levy on the proceeds of the port sales to 100 per cent., and spoke vehemently in favour of it. They then somehow managed to vote for a probing amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) to reduce the rate of the levy to 10 per cent. They got the result they deserved.

We in the Conservative party are in the familiar position of having to rescue the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and his colleagues from their embarrassment. The hon. Member was quite open in Committee when he said that he saw himself on the bridge and saw the possibility of causing a disaster——

Mr. Prescott: I said "a revolt in the engine room".

Mr. McLoughlin: I apologise—he saw a revolt in the engine room and took advantage of it. However, he did say that he would not be surprised if the Government returned to this on Report, and that is exactly what we are doing.

The issue of the levy has been discussed at great length, but it is an important matter and I make no apology for returning to it.

The lack of any owner of the trust ports, except the state, means that there is no vendor to receive the proceeds of sale when one of them is privatised. Hon. Members have argued that some or all of the proceeds should go to the nearest local authority, but many of these ports are national rather than local assets, and their relationship with their local authorities varies considerably from one port to the next. Without any levy, the entire proceeds of sale would revert in the form of a windfall gain to the purchaser. That seems clearly wrong, and one side effect is that in theory there would be no limit on the price which a purchaser would be prepared to pay for a port, because he would get the purchase price back as well as becoming the owner of the port. We believe that it is right that the taxpayer should have a share of the proceeds by means of a Government levy.

The question is, how much should this share be? Let us look at the two extremes. At 10 per cent., the figure currently in the Bill, the purchaser of a newly privatised trust port gets back virtually all the money that he has paid. In a situation of competitive bidding, this would drive the price of the port up to ridiculous levels—a result which could, incidentally, seriously disadvantage a managment-employee buy-out team, which might be ill-equipped to raise the amount of finance necessary to mount a successful bid. An example should illustrate this point. If the value of a port is generally accepted to be about £10 million, a bidder might be prepared to pay as much as £50 million for it. The Government would take £5 million as their 10 per cent. levy, but the bidder, if he were successful, would get back £45 million together with the port, worth £5 million. I think everybody would agree that that would be a fairly good deal.

From the standpoint of simplicity, a 100 per cent. levy has more to recommend it, since it does not drive up the price of the port; the Government simply take the whole of the proceeds. But this would put the sale of the trust ports on the same basis as that of nationalised industries and would ignore the very significant differences that in fact exist between them. Hon. Members will not be surprised to learn that the idea is not at all popular with all the ports themselves, not least because it appears to ignore the fact that the trust ports are independent of Government. By allowing nothing back to the purchaser, it would not allow them to plough any extra capital back into the industry.

With the levy at 50 per cent.—the rate of levy originally in the Bill—a balance is maintained between the interests of the taxpayer and of the new port owner. The Government could indeed, as has been pointed out, stand

to get something like 100 per cent. rather than 50 per cent. of the actual value of the port by way of levy, since setting the rate at 50 per cent. is likely to cause the price of the port to rise above its market value, although not so much as to distort the bidding process as seriously as a 10 per cent. levy would. But 50 per cent. of the price will revert to the purchaser of the port, and that will be a further incentive for a port to privatise itself, on top of the benefits of privatisation itself. That is because of the extra capital which the sale will generate for the port, which it may need for investment in the port or to use as seems best in its commercial judgment.

For these reasons, I make no apology for bringing this amendment back to the House. I believe that 50 per cent. is the right level for the Government's levy, and I accordingly commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Prescott: The reason we voted for the 10 per cent., as the Minister knows, is that we wanted to hear from him an explanation that we did not hear in Committee, and which I think we have just heard from him, of how they arrived at the figure of 50 per cent. Our amendment for 100 per cent. tonight gives us a chance to reiterate our committee amendment, although we were not provided with the opportunity to vote for it.

We voted for the 10 per cent. of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), who I see is not here this evening. Is the Select Committee still sitting, or is it on a visit? There are precedents. Those who vote against the Government are often sent to the most attractive places in the world. I do not know whether that is what has happened to the hon. Member for Thurrock, although I note that the amendment relates to precisely the clause about which he was concerned. He said that it entailed exploitation, and that the Government were not entitled to take the money, which belonged to the ports themselves.

11.30 pm

The Minister has already conceded part of the argument. His illustration based on everyone operating on the £10 million figure appears to have come from the interesting document made available to the conference held by the Waterfront organisation and produced by Mark Seligman, of the consultants Warburg and Co. Ltd. which dealt with getting the capital structure right. That is a very important point, and the matter is highly complex.

Any hon. Member reading through the passages about how one gets the capital structure of the companies right in such circumstances will realise that the judgment of Solomon needs to be exercised. Presumably that also applies to commercial judgments as to whether one makes a profit or not. The heart of the matter is the question that we are dealing with here: would the Government's take affect that balance? Presumably, not only the share price will be affected by that judgment. Presumably it also affects the possibility of people bidding for a buy-out.

The Minister made clear what would happen to the value of the company if the figure were 10 per cent.—the figure stipulated in the Bill as drafted following amendments accepted in Committee. I shall not go through all the details. Hon. Members can see from the document how the example is arrived at. It refers to a model company worth £10 million—with a turnover of £10 million—and a profit of 15 per cent. A judgment is made about how the price-earnings ratio is arrived at, and the document gives a net asset value of £5·3 million. The figures are there in the document should hon. Members wish to read them. As the Minister said, if the Government took 50 per cent., it would be equivalent to the £5·3 million net asset value. It would then be argued that the Government were getting 100 per cent., as some hon. Members said in Committee.

The question that is important to this debate is whether the purchase price for a management-worker buy-out will be affected. I hope that the Minister will now answer a question that he did not answer before. I do not intend that as a criticism, as he had a number of questions to answer, but he now has another opportunity to answer it. The statement in *The Guardian* said that the Department was making it clear that it would be bound to accept the highest figure. As has been said, that is not necessarily the case under competitive tendering arrangements; they can accept less. But presumably there is a limit to how much less they can accept.

Mr. McLoughlin: I confirm that the story in this morning's edition of *The Guardian* is inaccurate and that our original statements to the effect that we may not necessarily go for the highest bidder still hold good.

Mr. Prescott: That statement will be welcomed by those who want a move in that direction. We have made our position clear. In the main, however, the Government say that it is one of their objectives to do that, and I think that they will have to do it. The interesting question is to what extent the Government are prepared to discount the highest bid in order to accept an employee-management buy-out. That is the importance of the judgments made about the net asset value of the companies and the price that is arrived at.

The Minister has conceded that, even under his own formula, the 10 per cent. figure would produce a £45 million windfall. Clearly that would be an advantage to the purchaser, who will have no legitimate claim to that money. At least the Government can say that they have a more legitimate claim. That is their argument for the 50 per cent. levy. Unlike the individual who purchases a company with its assets and either makes a killing or not, depending on the Government's levy, the Government will take the money in the name of the community.

The other side of the coin is the Opposition amendment, which provides for the 100 per cent. figure. The Minister rightly pointed out that that would take out the excess money that can be made. He then said—curiously, in my view—that the company would be like a nationalised industry, because it would not be left money with which to expand. I do not understand that. A public limited company cannot be like a nationalised industry in that sense. The company would have its own debt and equity structure.

Presumably, before making a bid, the prospective purchasers would make judgments about the distribution of the company's equity, its value and its debts. The judgment whether sufficient resources will be available to meet the investments that might be required to allow the company to expand will depend on the circumstances. In the case of a port such as Dover, for example, the problem is not a shortage of money for use in developing the port; Dover has already done as much as it can in that direction.

There is a strong argument for gold-plating port investment. We say that the assets could be used for investment in activities other than port-related activity

[Mr. Prescott]

which may be beneficial to the port. That is a legitimate argument. It is about using the extra land that becomes available. There is not necessarily a shortage of money, as the Minister suggested. That is a side issue. We are expected to vote on whether to change the levy from 10 per cent. to 50 per cent., as the Government require, or to 100 per cent.

As we are agreed that to give the whole windfall to the taxpayer, we should opt for the full 100 per cent. levy in this manoeuvre, and our amendment does so, we can be said to be the taxpayer's champions on this occasion. We are taking the 100 per cent. option. The Minister says that a 50 per cent. levy is better because it will allow some money to go back into the coffers. That is where the formula produced by the expert comes in. He says that, if one does that and buys a company for £10 million, of which the net asset value is less than the market value, one could purchase the company, pay £10 million for it and put £5 million of it—50 per cent.—back in the books.

It is argued that, somehow, a corporate raider may then decide that it wants to take out that £5 million and put it in some other part of its operation outside port activity. There is nothing to stop it doing that. The important point for the debate is that the job of the people who want to form a management-worker buy-out—that is one of the objectives of the Government—is made much more difficult with a 50 per cent. levy than with a 100 per cent. levy. That is the case by virtue of the Minister's own argument. The 10 per cent. levy is one extreme. The 100 per cent. levy is the other. With a 50 per cent. levy, hey diddle diddle, he thinks he is down the middle, he has landed with the Liberals and he is happy. Fine. But he cannot ignore the fact that that is likely to be less attractive to the buy-out consortium than the 100 per cent. levy.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): No, it is not.

Mr. Prescott: I am simply using the Minister's arguments. I believe that they are reasonable, but the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) may have a different view. We even argued it out in Committee. But the point is that the 100 per cent. levy is a better deal. If the hon. Gentleman cannot accept my view, I suggest —even the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary may get around to reading things—that he reads an article in *The Financial Times* on 6 January 1991 which dealt with the point. It said:

> "There is little rationale for the proposed 50 per cent. levy. Whatever money a port receives from its sale will revert to the person who buys it . . . the result will be to drive up the bidding, perhaps beyond the reach of a management-employee consortium."

The Government cannot have it both ways. If they want to get money out of sales, that is fine: they can take the full 100 per cent. If they want to go halfway, they can take 50 per cent. But that will affect the price, and it is likely to be a disincentive to management and employees to buy out the port, or to make it more difficult for them to do so.

We started the debate on the point that the Government came along with a generous offer to pay some of the expenses of preparation for an management-employee buyout. That is a helpful move to those who want to be involved in that process. It is all right providing the money to work out the bid, but it is much more important to provide the capital to make the bid. Otherwise, it is just an exercise. Indeed, it is likely to be just that. If the Government stick to the 50 per cent. levy, they will get the worst of all worlds. They could take the full money—the 100 per cent. Or they could take the 10 per cent. Then someone would get a large windfall. I agree with the Government that that is not an attractive way of dealing with the matter. But given the circumstances, the 50 per cent. levy is not the best.

If we want to give a definite preference to the management-employee buyout, it would be better to vote for the 100 per cent. levy. *The Financial Times* says so, and it follows from the logic of the argument. It is absolutely right. The Minister has already said that he will not accept the highest bid. He has not said by how much he would discount it. Would it be as much as 50 per cent? I doubt it. Under those circumstances, the Minister has convinced me more than ever to vote for the 100 per cent. levy in order to assist those who wish to take part in a management-employee buy-out.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I accept the Committee's decision. I regard it as a mishap—even if the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and his friends voted with my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman), who I am sure is detained on important business. He has not been sent anywhere. No one offered me the opportunity to go anywhere else. Had they done so, I should have gone to Great Yarmouth, of course. But here I am and I have not changed the view that I expressed in this Chamber on Second Reading.

It is wrong for the Government to take 50 per cent. of the disposal of the securities of the successor companies of trust ports. I shall not vote for the 50 per cent. which my hon. Friend the Minister is seeking to restore to the Bill. Up to now, he has a good Bill. Even the 50 per cent. clawback on the sale of land I was not too worried about. Here he is spoiling a six-hour day with his attempt to reverse an excellent decision in Committee.

I object to the 50 per cent. levy for two principal reasons. First, I see no reason why the Government should get a share of the proceeds when they have contributed nothing. We have had much talk about windfall. In the Tory party where I was brought up that was called legitimate profit motive. What is all this nonsense about windfall? Since when has purchasing shares and selling them at a profit, or investing in an enterprise and making money out of it, been a windfall? That is what the Conservative party exists to promote.

A Minister in a Conservative Government, even in the post-Thatcherite era, should not talk in such contemptuous terms about "windfall", when he knows very well that even under this Government the tax regime will enable profits to be taxed and some money to go back to the community. The Government have given nothing to the trust ports and, in setting them up as private companies, have no business taking any share of the proceeds. That is my first reason for objecting. It offends my concept of the Conservative party's devotion to the profit motive as a proper and legitimate exercise for business people to engage in when purchasing an enterprise.

My second reason is more local. My port of Great Yarmouth is under the turnover limit of £5 million above which the legislation will operate the compulsory privatisation provision. People in Great Yarmouth will be

in the fortunate position of the people of Poole, in the sense that they can or cannot, as they please, go ahead with privatisation.

The second and far more important reason for my opposing the Government amendment to restore the 50 per cent. levy that they had in the Bill originally is that it will act as a disincentive for the port of Great Yarmouth to go down the path towards privatisation that the Government would surely wish to encourage, and which I have been doing my utmost to persuade the authority and the port users to do. There is no way that I am going back to Yarmouth tonight if the amendment goes through—*[Interruption.]* Well, at the end of the week or whenever it is. If I lose the argument I might go home and not come back for a week or two.

There is no reason for my arguing any further in Great Yarmouth for the privatisation of the port if 50 per cent. of the money from the disposal of the shares is to go to the Government. The Government are a successor of many Governments who have contributed not a penny piece to the port of Yarmouth, and they will not get a penny piece except through the proper taxation procedures, which naturally I support.

I hope that the House will wholeheartedly oppose this ill-conceived amendment.

Mr. Wallace: As in Committee, I find myself in great sympathy with the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss). He chides the Government for trying to impose a tax where no tax existed, which ill becomes a Government who have set themselves the standard of being a tax-cutting one. Here we have them introducing a new tax. At least tonight the Minister gave a slightly better justification for the levy than we have heard before.

When the matter was first introduced as part of the Finance Act 1990, the reason given by the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, was that it reflected the fact that Governments had contributed so much to the ports over the years through grants and loans that it was time they got something back. As the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth has just pointed out, there are ports to which the Government have not contributed a penny piece, yet they want to take money from them.

My main objection is that the Government are seizing money because it belongs to no one else. They are doing so because of the decision in the case of the Trustee Savings bank, when the House of Lords took the view that, although a property may not belong to the Government, because it belongs to no one else it must belong to the state. This country has never developed the concept that such property might belong to the people. Many of the trusts were set up to serve the local communities and those who trade in them and the Government are taking money away from those communities.

11.45 pm

If the Minister had proposed a levy and said that its proceeds would be reinvested in the communities in which the ports are situated, many of us would have supported it enthusiastically. As the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth said, the ports cannot exist in a vacuum. In Committee, we heard the details of the long-awaited dual carriageway or flyover in Great Yarmouth. If such transport provision were made there, it would greatly benefit the port. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to expect that any proceeds from the sale of the port to the private sector should be used to finance the infrastructure to support the port. If the Government had adopted such an approach, it would have been supported by the House, but they are pocketing the proceeds of the sale of ports for themselves. I did not think that that was what the Conservative party was about, so I have no enthusiasm for the increased amount that it will put into its coffers.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman thinks the Government do with the money they raise. It goes neither to my right hon. Friends nor to myself; it goes to the people. It goes straight into the Consolidated Fund to provide various services. Some of the hon. Gentleman's arguments are strange, to say the least.

Mr. Wallace: What objection does the Minister have to that money being reinvested in the communities from which it comes?

Mr. McLoughlin: The ports are not necessarily local assets but can also be national assets. They may have obtained their wealth from people from other parts of the country. Nobody would argue, for instance, that Dover has obtained its wealth because people from throughout the country use the port. It would be hard to say that the proceeds of the sale of that port should go into the Dover area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth made a vociferous speech, as he did in Committee, and I respect his position. However, the Government decided the best way to proceed. Although I accept some of the arguments that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East put on record, I have outlined the reasons why the Government decided to take 50 per cent.

Question put, that the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 140, Noes 52.

Division No. 123] **[11.48 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Colvin, Michael
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Amess, David	Cope, Rt Hon John
Amos, Alan	Cran, James
Arbuthnot, James	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Day, Stephen
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bellingham, Henry	Dover, Den
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Dunn, Bob
Benyon, W.	Durant, Sir Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy	Dykes, Hugh
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Evennett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Fallon, Michael
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Boswell, Tim	Forman, Nigel
Bottomley, Peter	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Freeman, Roger
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	French, Douglas
Bowis, John	Gale, Roger
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Gill, Christopher
Brazier, Julian	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Bright, Graham	Goodlad, Alastair
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Buck, Sir Antony	Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Burns, Simon	Gregory, Conal
Burt, Alistair	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Butterfill, John	Ground, Patrick
Carrington, Matthew	Hague, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Chapman, Sydney	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Chope, Christopher	Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*

Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Morrison, Sir Charles
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Speller, Tony
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Greg Knight and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clelland, David
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fearn, Ronald
Foster, Derek
Galloway, George
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hain, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Eddie
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Robertson, George
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 9, line 43, at end insert—

'( ) costs incurred in pursuance of section *(Financial assistance for proposals to maximise employee participation in equity or successor companies)* below in connection with any proposal for maximising participation by employees of the company whose securities are the subject of the disposal in ownership of its equity share capital (whether or not the disposal is made for the purposes of implementing any such proposal);'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 16

LEVY ON DISPOSALS OF LAND, ETC

Amendments made: No. 27, in page 12, line 15, leave out from 'company"),' to 'a' in line 18.

No. 28, in page 12, line 19, leave out from 'section' to end of line 34 and insert

'shall be chargeable in respect of any gain accruing to the company on a chargeable disposal—

(a) of that land or interest; or

(b) of an interest of any specified description in the land so transferred or in the land in which the interest so transferred subsists at the time of the transfer under that section;

made within the period of ten years beginning with the date on which the company ceases to be a wholly-owned subsidiary of the body which immediately before the transfer was the relevant port authority in question.

(2) The levy shall be charged—

(a) at the rate of twenty-five per cent. on the amount of the gain, in the case of a disposal made within the first five years of the period mentioned in subsection (1) above;

(b) at the rate of twenty per cent. on the amount of the gain, in the case of a disposal made within the sixth or seventh year of that period; and

(c) at the rate of ten per cent. on the amount of the gain, in the case of a disposal made during the remainder of that period.

(2A) The levy shall be paid by the chargeable company to the appropriate Minister.

(2B) There is a disposal of land or an interest in land for the purposes of this section and section *(Supplementary and consequential provisions relating to levy under section 16)* below if there would be such a disposal for the purposes of the 1979 Act.'.

No. 29, in page 12, line 36, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

'(a) for determining when and by whom any disposal of land or an interest in land is to be regarded for the purposes of this section as being made;'.

No. 30, in page 12, line 40, leave out 'those purposes' and insert

'the purposes of this section;'.

No. 31, in page 12, line 42, leave out 'those purposes' and insert

'the purposes of this section'.

No. 32, in page 13 line 4, leave out paragraph (a).

No. 33, in page 13, line 29, leave out from 'to' to second 'with' in line 30 and insert

'corporation tax on chargeable gains'.

No. 34, in page 13, line 32, leave out 'subsection (3) above' and insert 'this section'.

No. 35, in page 13, leave out lines 35 to 43.

No. 36, in page 13, line 45, leave out from first 'specified' to end of line 48 and insert

'means specified in an order under this section.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 18

POWER OF PORT OF LONDON AUTHORITY TO FORM A COMPANY TO OPERATE THE PORT OF TILBURY

12 midnight

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 65, in page 15, line 19, after 'activities', insert
'within the curtilage of the Port of Tilbury.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 66, in page 15, line 20, at end insert
'not otherwise provided by the Port Authority'.

Mr. Spearing: Clause 18(1) reads:

"The Port of London Authority (referred to below in this Part as 'the Port Authority') shall have power to form a company for the purpose of carrying on—

(a) that part of their undertaking which consists in operating the port of Tilbury; and

(b) any activities which appear to them to be incidental to or connected with operating the port of Tilbury."

My amendments would effect the changes implied by their wording.

This brief debate continues our discussion of the definition and description of the port of Tilbury. At the ninth sitting of the Standing Committee, the Minister said:

"the Government's intentions about Tilbury are clear on the face of the Bill. The document in question"—

referring to the application from the PLA, I think—

"which is technical, will determine which properties and functions are transferred to the Tilbury company."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 7 March 1991; c. 305.]

The question is: what properties and what functions? Hitherto the Minister has been coy about that. His phrase, on the "face of the Bill", was factually incorrect. These aspects are not on the face of the Bill—but they are in the document referred to. The long title of the Bill in part runs as follows:

"to provide for the transfer of certain property, rights, liabilities and functions of the Port of London Authority to a company formed by that authority."

Certain properties, however, are not defined. They could almost be called uncertain properties and uncertain functions.

I am grateful for the earlier ruling that it is perfectly in order for the House to discuss these matters without knowing what is likely to be transferred. The Minister should tell us a little more about this public relations phrase, the port of Tilbury.

In an earlier speech, I outlined the development of Tilbury docks. What will be involved in this change? Will the land adjacent to the operational area be included? What about the rail container depot? Or the dock itself? The dock has value: barges and ships, laid up or carrying cargo, can moor there—it can be used as a mobile warehouse. There are stacking and storage areas. There are workshops leased out to operators and used by the port itself. There are berths in the port. There is a grading dock and associated workshops. There is the lock. There is the passenger terminal, which has a landing stage on the river and an adjacent station. There are wharves which can be adapted for various uses—roll-on/roll-off, for instance—and there is the grain terminal. The annual report of the PLA implies that it is part of the so-called port of Tilbury.

In addition to all that, there are the employees, who are perhaps some of the most valuable assets, although the current managers do not appear to manage them thus. I have been told that many of the tug crew have recently been made redundant, that anybody over 50 working a lock has been shown the door, or rather the river, and that pay has been reduced recently by up to 30 per cent. That may only be a report. I do not know whether the Minister can confirm all those things. But that is not a good advertisement for the port of Tilbury even if people have it slightly wrong, which I do not think they have. As we know, industrial relations there have not been of the best and there is a case at the moment which is sub judice and on which I shall not comment. The Achilles heel of the port of London in the past has been bad industrial relations.

In the end it would be for the courts to decide what Parliament meant by "certain property". But it is wrong for the House to pass the Bill without a schedule of that property and those functions on the "face of the Bill"—a phrase which the Minister used in Committee. That is not on the face of the Bill and it is not even on the face of *Hansard*, unless we hear some wise words to the contrary in a moment. The courts cannot look to *Hansard*, they can only look to the Bill, but at least the House and the public should have something on the face of *Hansard*.

As I understand it, the Bill refers to the functions as they appear to the PLA and as the Secretary of State agrees. But the PLA covers a great deal more than the so-called port of Tilbury. It operates in three divisions—the river division, which is navigational, Tilbury division, which is largely cargo, and, surprise, surprise, the property division. The Port of London Authority has no fewer than 16 property subsidiaries, some of them with property in the developing area of the upper pool. They are listed in the annual report. There is an income of £13 million a year from rent and sale of land. Much of it may have been sale of land in 1989, but it is quite a lot. It has 25 acres in what was called Thurrock park, immediately adjacent to the so-called port of Tilbury, and now, I believe, renamed the Capstan centre. In addition, as was said earlier, many cliff marshes further down river are still owned by the PLA. It is as much, alas, a property company these days, as it is a cargo-handling company.

I understand from the wording of the Bill that any part of those undertakings in operating the port of Tilbury or any activities that appear to be incidental or connected with operating the port of Tilbury could be transferred. The operators could claim that for almost any one of those features. So it would be possible for the PLA to privatise itself—I have heard it described thus—along with any of its assets, which are not subject to parliamentary approval, as we have, alas, decided, and for which the Secretary of State thought that privatisation was justified.

I have a rather uncharitable feeling that the Minister and the PLA together could more or less disintegrate the PLA as we know it today. The port of Tilbury could have all sorts of subsidiaries up and down the river. Theoretically, it could land cargo on the Terrace of the House of Commons. If Conservative Members continue to vote away the powers of the House of Commons, it might turn into a wharf and that may be related to the port of Tilbury. That may be far-fetched, but what property upstream in London could not necessarily be connected with the port of Tilbury? Any cargo landed there or any cargo transferred there from any wharf on any part of the tidal Thames could be and is connected by water to the port of Tilbury.

A legal judgment on those matters would probably be made in favour of the Minister and the PLA. Therefore,

[Mr. Spearing]

this provides a channel for the port of Tilbury to expand up and down the river in almost any way that the PLA and the Minister wish.

Amendment No. 66 would confine activities to those "not otherwise provided by the Port Authority". The authority provides navigation and other aids, but if the Minister has his way, and if the general election goes his way—which I do not think it will—I suspect that there would not be much of the port authority left, because Tilbury would gobble it all up.

The Minister may deny everything that I have said. I hope that he does, and that I am wrong. I often put points in the House that I hope are wrong. I am giving the Minister an opportunity to deny the wild scenario that he may think I have painted, and to say what he has in mind. I hope also that he will give an undertaking to table amendments to be considered in another place that will define what are the certain properties and certain functions in question.

Earlier, in opposing another of my amendments to allow the House to have the final say, the Minister said that the Bill already included such a provision. It does not, and until it does, we should not rest content.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to learn that I cannot recommend his amendments to the House because they would be too restrictive of the activities that could be transferred to the new Tilbury company. It could be entirely sensible to transfer activities that are currently undertaken outside the geographical limits of the port of Tilbury.

In Committee, I mentioned the example of an inland clearance depot that might not relate entirely to the port of Tilbury, and which might lie outside the port itself. The hon. Gentleman's amendments would exclude such a depot from the transfer. The effect of amendment No. 66 is less clear, but it might exclude activities that relate almost but not quite to Tilbury, but which in all logic should be transferred to the new company. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but his amendments are not the best way to proceed.

When I said earlier that privatisation is on the face of the Bill, I was referring to Tilbury being a specific part of the Bill, as opposed to the other trust ports, which will require an enabling measure.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister's brevity emphasises the wild scenario that I painted. He did not take the opportunity to deny, other than in the case of a wharf on the Terrace of the House of Commons, the principle that I outlined, which confirms my worst fears.

The Minister made reference to an inland clearance depot. He may recall that the PLA once had such a facility, at Orsett. I believe that it failed a few years ago, or that it was sold. More likely, it is still the property of one of the PLA's many subsidiaries, and might be reactivated.

Definitions can perhaps best be dealt with in another place, and I hope that my points will be taken up there. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 15, line 23, leave out subsection (3).—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 19

TRANSFER TO THE COMPANY OF RELEVANT PROPERTY, ETC., OF THE PORT AUTHORITY.

Amendment proposed: No. 11, in page 15, line 38, at end insert—

'( ) Together with a scheme submitted under subsection (1) above the Port Authority shall submit to the Secretary of State a copy of the memorandum and articles of the company.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 12 and 13.

Mr. Barry Field: This amendment is the result of an undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee, at column 302 of *Hansard* for 7 March 1991, in response to an amendment in my name, but moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) with his characteristic generosity and kindness, as I was unfortunately absent.

That amendment stemmed from representations by the London General Shipowners Society, and despite the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister conceded the point with which it dealt, the society continued to be concerned that Tilbury was not to be subject to advertising in part II of the Bill, in the same way as the other ports are, in part I.

My hon. Friend tackled that issue in Committee by saying that Tilbury will effectively be privatised when the Bill goes on to the statute book, whereas other ports have yet to come forward.

12.15 am

Donald Chard, the secretary of the London General Shipowners Society, which is quite an ancient society, as my hon. Friend knows, is still worried about that aspect of part II. Perhaps my hon. Friend might consider writing to him to try to reassure him about it. He continues to believe that by not advertising that aspect of the Bill in the same way as for ports covered in part I, something may be missed from the future consultation process.

My hon. Friend answered questions in Committee. I hope that he will be able to meet the concerns of the London General Shipowners Society.

Mr. McLoughlin: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall write to the gentleman he mentioned to set out the Government's position.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 12, in page 15, line 39, leave out 'submitted under subsection (1) above' and insert 'so submitted'.

No. 13, in page 16, line 6, at end insert—

'( ) Before—

(a) confirming a scheme so submitted (with or without modifications); or

(b) making a scheme of his own under subsection (4)(b) above;

the Secretary of State may first (if he thinks fit) give the Port Authority a direction requiring them, before such date as may be specified in the direction, to secure that such alterations are made to the memorandum and articles of the company as may be specified in the direction.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 20

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE TRANSFER UNDER SECTION 19

Amendments made: No. 4, in page 16, line 39, at end insert—

'(1A) The scheme shall contain the required provision for the protection of pension rights described in section (*The required provision for the protection of pension rights*) below.'

No. 14, in page 16, line 44, after 'Authority', insert

'(or, where the scheme is made by the Secretary of State, to the Secretary of State)'—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Schedule 2

GENERAL SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSFER UNDER SECTION 19

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 30, line 28, leave out 'Port Authority or the company (as the case may be)' and insert 'company;'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 72, in page 17, line 33, leave out subsection (4).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 71, in page 17, line 34, after 'property', insert

'owned by the Port Authority which is wholly and exclusively devoted to purposes relating to the operation of the said port of Tilbury'.

Mr. Spearing: Amendment No. 71 relates to the deletion of clause 20(4), which states:

"The granting by the scheme to the company of a lease of any property shall be regarded for the purposes of—

(a) section 19 above and this section; and

(b) Schedule 2 below;

as a transfer of that property to the company by the scheme."

I would like the Minister to tell us why the clause is there and why he would reject my amendment No. 71 which adds

"exclusively devoted to purposes relating to the . . . port of Tilbury."

He does not say that it is a 500-year lease. As I understand it, this is not a measure of leasehold reform. Otherwise, the transfer of leased property would encourage the company to enter into a lease and to transfer leasehold property to freehold by a statute that appears to be transferring property—public property at that—at controversial compensation.

This is a brief probing amendment. I hope that the Minister will tell us why the provision is there, how it will be used, and why it should not be restricted soley to the functions of the so-called port of Tilbury.

Mr. McLoughlin: I fear that the amendments could result in the transfer of some of the property to the new Tilbury company not being handled in the most sensible way. I see nothing objectionable in the property being leased to the new company and it seems to be quite wrong to exclude the leasing of property that is not exclusively used in connection with the operation of the port of Tilbury. That is the reason why we cannot accept the amendments and I hope that the explanation that I have given is sufficient.

Mr. Spearing: I think that the Minister's explanation is comprehensive and efficient, but again perhaps this is a matter that might be probed at greater leisure in a more appropriate place. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 22

POWERS OF DISPOSAL IN RELATION TO THE COMPANY

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 18, line 40, at end insert—

'( ) In exercising his powers under subsection (4) above the Secretary of State shall have particular regard to the desirability of encouraging the disposal to managers or other persons employed by the company of the whole or a substantial part of its equity share capital.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 25

INTERPRETATION OF PART II

Amendments made: No. 16, in page 19, line 46, leave out 'and'.

No. 17 in page 19, line 47, at end insert '; and

"the port of Tilbury" means the Port Authority's docks and landing places (both within the meaning given by section 2(1) of the Port of London Act 1968) at Tilbury in the borough of Thurrock in the county of Essex.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 29

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SECTIONS 26 TO 28

Amendment proposed: No. 18, in page 22, line 32, leave out from 'areas' to end of line 33 and insert

'inside the limts within which the authority's statutory powers and duties as a harbour authority are exercisable'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Mr. Wallace: This amendment is the Minister's response to an undertaking that he gave in Committee to return to the House with an amendment that would clarify the extent of the harbour authorities' areas with regard to matters contained in this clause.

The potential problem arises because, under the Pilotage Act 1987 there are some matters that come within the ambit of the harbour authority, but only for the purposes of pilotage. In Committee, I tabled an amendment to clarify the point that for the purposes of this provision we should concern ourselves only with traditional harbour areas, not those covered by pilotage. Does the Minister think that this amendment clarifies that matter? It seems that the situation is left open, at least to some extent. Perhaps I should reverse the tables and suggest that he go away, consider the matter, and have the amendment that I tabled originally introduced in another place. I think that it clarified the situation more successfully than would any words from him. The Secretary of State will be actively involved in any decision under this provision. If the Minister can give the House an assurance that the legislation covers only the harbour area, not the area relating to pilotage, it may suffice.

Mr. McLoughlin: I can confirm that this amendment arises from the undertaking given in Committee to consider an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. The hon. Member's concern was to clarify whether the transfer provisions of part III of the Bill would apply to navigational aids in areas where a harbour authority had pilotage jurisdiction extending beyond its limits for other harbour purposes.

[Mr. McLoughlin]

This question has raised unexpectedly complex legal issues. They have been discussed with advisers of the British Ports Federation, which originally raised the matter. I shall not attempt to burden the House with the legal arguments involved. The amendment is intended to reassure the British Ports Federation that the provisions of part III are aimed only at navigational aids currently provided by the general lighthouse authorities within—for want of a better term—normal harbour limits. I can also give an assurance that, quite apart from this amendment, there is no intention that any transfers of aids to harbour authorities will be made in areas where such authorities have pilotage-only functions. We accept that, as a general rule, navigational aids in pilotage-only areas will have some recognisable element of general navigational usage. In those circumstances, such aids should continue to be the responsibility of the general lighthouse authority.

I hope that that assurance satisfies the hon. Gentleman. If there is a problem, I shall be happy to look into it in greater depth.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 32

ORDERS AND REGULATIONS

Amendments made: No. 37, in page 23, line 28, leave out 'or 16' and insert

'16 or (*Supplementary and consequential provisions relating to levy under section 16*)(1)'.

No.19, in page 23, line 30, at end insert—

'(2A) No order to which this subsection applies shall be made unless a draft of the instrument containing the order has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament.

(2B) Subsection (2A) above applies to an order which is made—

(a) under subsection (7) of section 8 above as that subsection applies in relation to a scheme submitted under section 9 above;

(b) under section 11(8) above;

(c) under subsection (7) of section 19 above confirming a scheme submitted under subsection (1) of that section in pursuance of a direction under section 23(3) above; or

(d) under section 19(8) above.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

No. 75, in page 23, line 31, leave out subsection (3). —*[Mr. Barry Field.]*

No. 76, in page 23, line 39, at end insert—

'( ) If, apart from the provisions of the subsection, the draft of an order to which subsection (2A) above applies would be treated for the purposes of the Standing Orders of either House of Parliament as a hybrid instrument it shall proceed in that House as if it were not such an instrument.'. —*[Mr. Barry Field.]*

Clause 35

GENERAL INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 22, in page 24, line 5, at end insert—

' "equity share capital" has the meaning given by section 744 of the Companies Act 1985;'.

No. 23, in page 24, line 20, leave out 'References in this Act' and insert

'In this Act—

(a) references, in relation to any company, to maximising participation by employees of the company in ownership of its equity share capital are references to—

(i) securing the disposal to managers or other persons employed by the company of the whole or a substantial part of its equity share capital; and

(ii) securing that the persons to whom any such disposal is made comprise the greatest possible number of managers or other persons so employed; and

(b) references'.—*[Mr. Loughton.]*

Schedule 1

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSFERS UNDER SECTION 2

Ms. Walley: I beg to move amendment No. 48, in page 26, line 19, at end insert:

'The scheme of transfer under section (2) of this Act shall contain provisions for the setting up of mirror image pension schemes identical in all ways to any scheme operated by or funded in whole or in part by that authority. The amount being transferred in bulk from one scheme to another is to be the amount held in respect of each member's accrued pension benefits, allowing for expected future pay increases. Any existing accrued benefit in the scheme prior to transfer must be retained in the new scheme for the lifetime of that scheme. Bulk transfers without consent should be conditional upon the actuary to the transferring scheme supplying a certificate of broad equivalence. Pensionable service shall be regarded as not having terminated in any change of scheme.'

As it is very late, and as the House has further business to dispose of, I shall be brief.

It is always easy to be wise after the event. I should like to draw to the Minister's attention the situation that arose from previous privatisations and the concern that was expressed about pension rights.

The Minister said in Committee that all the rights and liabilities of the authority and of the employees would be transferred and would continue after privatisation. He also said that that would not need to be spelt out specifically in the Bill. Our amendment seeks the assurance that the principle of safeguarding pension rights will be adhered to; it is important to obtain that assurance from the Minister.

Current good practice, outlined by the Department of Social Security in "Protecting Pensions", must be endorsed by the Minister. There must be a Government commitment for the purposes of the Ports Bill. That is the intention of amendment No. 48. In principle, the amount evaluated for the past service reserve should be the sum that the trustees of any necessary identical scheme require to cover the cost of setting up, for the members concerned, pension credits for past pensionable service equal to each member's past pensionable service benefits in the paying scheme, allowing for rights and expectations based on eventual pay.

Any existing surplus funds in a pension scheme should be used solely for pensions to the workers. It is important that they should not be seen as a spare asset base to induce privatisation; nor should they be used by a port authority before transfer to the company.

I should welcome the Minister's reassurance that a watertight provision in any transfer will effectively be included in the Bill.

Mr. McLoughlin: I accept that the amendment is well intentioned, but it is unnecessary. As some hon. Members will be aware, the transfer of undertakings regulations do not apply to occupational pension schemes. The rights and liabilities of the port authority in relation to pension schemes would, however, be transferred to the successor company, along with other rights and liabilities, by virtue of clause 2(2) of the Bill. This would include, for example, any liability of the company to its employees or to the trustees of a pension scheme to make contributions to the scheme, and in any case where a pension was payable by the port authority itself out of revenue, as distinct from payment out of a funded pension scheme, the transfer of liabilities to the company under clause 2(2) would include a transfer of liability to pay the pension.

In short, after the transfer date, employees would have the same rights in relation to pensions against the successor company and any pension scheme as they have against the port authority and any pension scheme immediately before the transfer date. There will be no need to set up new pension schemes or to provide for bulk transfer from old schemes to new schemes. That sort of thing may happen where a predecessor undertaking is split up into two or more undertakings, but it is quite unnecessary in cases where the whole of an undertaking and its employees are transferred from one predecessor body to one successor body.

I understand the hon. Lady's concern. We have, however, dealt in the Bill with the difficulty over Tilbury. I can therefore reassure her that there is no need to pursue the amendment.

Ms. Walley: I have listened carefully to the Minister and I note his reassurance. I must, however, reiterate how important this issue was in previous legislation. It remains an important issue. If such a provision is not to be written on to the face of the Bill, we shall have to make sure that the Minister honours the commitment that he has just given the House on this most important issue of pensions. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule 2

GENERAL SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSFER UNDER SECTION 19

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 30, line 28, leave out 'Port Authority or the company (as the case may be)' and insert 'company;'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

12.28 am

Mr. Bell: I am glad that there is to be a short Third Reading debate on this important Bill. It has been in the offing for about three years—from the time that the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) was Secretary of State for Transport. He asked the ports to take the private Bill route, thus corrupting the entire private Bill route in the House of Commons. He brought it into disrepute and, no doubt, into abandonment after the charade we witnessed with the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill and the Clyde Port Authority Bill.

We welcome the day's work because the Report stage has been constructive. We have seen realised many of the Minister's promises in Committee, which were not forced out of him, but brought out of him by persuasion. He listened to the arguments of Labour and Liberal Democrat Members. The Bill has been enlarged tonight to extend to the management buy-out concept. When the right hon. Member for Southend, West raised the issue of privatisation, it was not privatisation through a management buy-out that included worker participation.

The original scheme for Tees and Hartlepool was a glorified management buy-out which had nothing to do with worker participation. There was no original scheme for employee participation at a time when the dock labour scheme had been abolished and the Tees and Hartlepool authority could not get rid of its staff quickly enough, though they had invested their lives in the docks. As a result of parliamentary pressure in the Chamber and in Committee, the Government increasingly accepted the principle that if there was to be a management buy-out of our trust ports as a result of the Bill, it had to extend to the workers who had invested their lives in the docks. This has been a good day's work.

The levy provisions have also been disentangled. They caused great anxiety and embarrassment to the Government in Committee. We have missed from our proceedings the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). He is engaged on a Select Committee that has sat until 12.30 am and may not even be sitting in this country. We have missed the hon. Gentleman's pure Thatcherite views of what a port should be. I am sure that his, no doubt inevitable, absence, which may not be astonishing to his voters, will be a source of embarrassment to him when it comes to the attention of his constituents.

The affirmative resolution procedure has been brought into play throughout the Bill. Again, that came from pressure in Committee, which was welcomed by the Opposition. On a variety of occasions, we had sought to extend the Bill to cover local democracy and local trade unions. We now have provision for an affirmative resolution in the House.

We know about the massive assets. The Government have consistently underplayed the money that will come to the state. There is the 50 per cent. about which we talked, then the 17·5 per cent. capital gain and the land tax—the levy—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) referred, in which the Treasury, with its eyes lighting up, has seen the pot of gold. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) warned the House that the Bill will not stop at ports with a turnover of more than £5 million, but will continue with ports such as Peterhead which has a turnover of £1·5 million.

Clearly, the Bill is an ideological measure, although not in the pure Thatcherite sense. If it were, the ports would have been privatised in one fell swoop. The principles of the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr Carttiss) would also have been brought into effect. We have seen the dilution of the ideological concept of privatisation, with the extension over two years and the coercion principle. The Treasury will then get its hands on the assets—the pots of gold—which it has found in our ports.

It is not a dignified exercise for a Conservative Government. The House and the country would have accepted a straightforward ideological commitment to privatisation, but the grubby hands of the Treasury extending into the pots of gold, getting money for the

[Mr. Bell]

Treasury to lull us, possibly in terms of income tax as has been suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, is an unseemly exercise.

The original concept of the right hon. Member for Southend, West was the privatisation of ports that wished to be privatised. In the Bill, there are the principles of coercion and compulsion. We are a long way from the idea that ports can be privatised in the national interest and in the interests of the ports themselves. The exercise began as privatisation with the support of management in ports throughout the country. We now see anxiety and quivers of fear in those management boards that they will be privatised, that they will go to the largest bidder on a competitive tender and that, eventually, the local community and the management of the ports will lose out.

The Bill does not extend to Northern Ireland, although it will do so eventually through other provisions. The port of Belfast will be a candidate for privatisation. Having visited that port and seen the work force, the docks, the turnover and the work that is done, I know also the anxiety that some third party not related to docks works will come along.

While the Opposition have much improved the Bill by our constructive work in Committee and while the Government have accepted our suggestions, it is nevertheless a shoddy piece of legislation. It is not dignified for a Government who believe in privatisation to introduce a Bill which is essentially a Finance Bill by another name and which does not privatise the ports as the Government might have wished. The Government, in short, should be ashamed of themselves for this piece of legislation and that is why the Opposition will oppose it.

12.36 am

Mr. Ward: I wish briefly to explain why I feel obliged to vote against Third Reading.

I object to clause 9, which introduces the compulsion element. I have said before, and I make no apology for doing so again, that I fully appreciate the need for privatisation in many cases, but here the principles of local democracy and freedom of choice are being overridden. All the constituents who have spoken or written to me about the Ports Bill have expressed their opposition to it. Poole harbour is unique; my constituents feel, quite rightly, that the Government have failed to recognise this in the preparation of the Bill and that every means should be used to maintain the present regime, which has been so successful.

I should explain the range of people who have expressed their concern about the Bill. The list includes local authorities, dockers, fishermen, conservationists, wildfowlers, yachtsmen and, perhaps most important, ordinary people who are concerned about the future of the greatest natural asset that a town like Poole could have. There is particular concern that, if the harbour were to be privatised, commercial operations or asset strippers would not leave it as it is today. There has been one well-publicised approach already.

Perhaps local feelings are best summed up in the words written to me by a constituent who is a former Poole harbourmaster:

"During 40 years in port administration, I have held a senior post in ports of all sizes and peculiarities, but none so complex as Poole. Here the activities and interests stretch from highly concentrated commercial traffic to bird sanctuaries and nature conservation areas and every conceivable activity and sport in between, each requiring a different understanding and approach, but all ultimately coming under the umbrella of the harbour Commissioners.

The pressures arising from the desire for profitability and share-holding dividends, expenditure and cash flow would almost certainly result in some activities and usages being developed at the expense of others and once the present situation is upset it would be impossible to restore it."

The House will also know that the largest onshore oilfield in the United Kingdom lies under Poole harbour and the House will shortly be asked to consider a Bill to allow the construction of an island in Poole bay to act as a platform for oil recovery. This project will need careful control, especially during the construction period, to ensure that the local environment is protected and that there is a minimum risk of interference with fishing grounds. At present, it is envisaged that the harbour commissioners will play a significant role in the control of these activities, and their role is written into the private Bill. Local people have confidence in the harbour commissioners' ability to carry out this function on their behalf. They are less convinced that any private operator would protect local interests as well as the harbour commissioners, who are all local people responsible to local organisations.

I know that the Minister will say that the Ports Bill is an enabling measure and that the Secretary of State might not require a privatisation scheme to be put forward after local consultation. It is all very well for the present Ministers to say that, but we do not know, and they do not know, what their successors' views might be.

I have made every effort to persuade the Government to make changes to the Bill. I spoke at length on Second Reading and I have had discussions with Ministers, including the Prime Minister, to impress on them the strength of opposition in Poole to the idea of privatising the harbour.

The Minister for Shipping visited Poole on 20 March and saw the situation there for himself. I am sure that he would acknowledge that he left for London in no doubt whatsoever of the views of the people that he met that day. The Minister was also kind enough to agree to a meeting with representatives of local fishermen in London yesterday, and again they expressed their views forcefully and clearly.

I have appealed to the Secretary of State for the Environment because of local concern about the environment. He has recently called in a decision to allow house building on 17 acres of land in Poole. I have explained to him that people in my constituency cannot understand why he is not just as concerned about the possible privatisation of Poole harbour, which comprises 10,000 acres of natural harbour and only 50 acres of commercial port.

I have also tabled amendments in an attempt to remove from the Bill the element of compulsion. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for his acceptance of one of my amendments, which proposed that, if Ministers have considered the case for compelling a port to privatise and have decided against doing so, there should be a five-year moratorium before they can return to the question of compulsion. Nevertheless, the compulsion element remains. That is unacceptable to my constituents, and I shall be forced to vote against the Bill.

12.41 am

Mr. Loyden: From the outset, those of us who understand the port transport industry have regarded the Bill as a retrograde step. I worked for 28 years in port transport, and I suggest that that gives me some understanding of the industry whose fate will eventually be decided by the Government.

I do not think that the Government have got it right. Their intervention in this matter defies all the laws of the industry's development. One need only look at the ports that will be affected. I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward), whose remarks showed how people feel about the way in which the Government are proceeding on purely ideological and doctrinaire grounds.

The Government have given us no evidence, in Committee or on Report, to suggest that they understand the present or future position of the ports industry. Communities will express grave concern about the Bill and the Government will reap the whirlwind following the decisions that they have made.

In Committee, the Government conceded a number of points, and their concessions may well make the Bill more acceptable. Nevertheless, the basic principle behind the Bill is doctrinaire. The Bill is not about the ports industry but about the Government's insistence, on ideological grounds, on proceeding with the privatisation of all those industries whose nationalised status they believe stands in the way of their political ideas.

That is a condemnation of the Government. They have not taken into account the interests of an industry that has been responsible for the development of the nation's economy. We are an island nation and we depend on the ports industry and on the industries linked to it. It is extraordinary that the Government should now see fit to treat the ports industry in such a cavalier fashion. I believe that they will pay the price for that, and that if they were prepared to put the proposals to the electorate, they would be roundly rejected.

There is no evidence to suggest that the Government have had regard to the present or future of the ports industry. It is clear that the Government's doctrinaire attitude has superseded all other considerations in the port industry. They have already made grave mistakes on the port industry. As an island nation, we are dependent now and shall be in the longer term on the ports of this country. A grave error has been made. Realisation of that will quickly come about. If the Government cared about the ports industry, they would listen to the voice of the people who work in the industry and those who have managed our ports to the benefit of the economy over the years. If they had done that, they certainly would not have introduced this Bill.

12.44 am

Mr. Nicholls: As my right hon. and hon. Friends know, on Second Reading I expressed several worries about the Bill, although I said that I fully supported the policy behind it—as I still do. It would be wrong, in the minute or so for which I intend to detain the House, if I did not say how grateful I am to my hon. Friend the Minister for Shipping and Public Transport for the hearings that he gave me throughout the proceedings on the Bill and the courtesy with which he treated me when I put various points to him. I am extremely grateful to him for addressing all the points, even if at times he did not address them in exactly the way that I had in mind.

There was never a Bill that was not improved by the processes of discussion with colleagues and consideration in Committee. It is all too easy in such proceedings for Ministers merely to stick to the position that they have adopted throughout and not to be prepared to listen. My hon. Friend the Minister has made it clear throughout that he was prepared to listen. Sometimes he was prepared to agree and sometimes he disagreed. The point is that he was prepared to enter into a dialogue with hon. Members on both sides of the House. He deserves my gratitude and that of the whole House.

12.46 am

Mr. Spearing: When I came to the House as the Member for my present constituency, there were 10 miles of deep water quays in the royal docks. There have been no ships for the past few years. The last ship left with a cargo of 20,000 tonnes, and now aeroplanes fly where ships were moored.

The best thing that I can say about the Bill and those who have promoted it is that the three Ministers involved had the courtesy to be here tonight to listen to what we have to say. The Bill marks the nadir of the Government's record of smashing the combination of public ownership and private enterprise that was initiated by the House as long ago as 1909, when the Port of London authority was founded. It was a public framework within which private enterprise and competition could work. It represented the coming together of London in the civic sense that was highly appreciated at the time.

Differing economic views and practicalities are such that the authority is being taken apart by the Bill. It is perhaps no coincidence that the motto of the Port of London authority was "Floreat imperii portus", which means "Let the imperial port flourish." But there is no imperialism now. There is only a sense—and hardly that—of pride in our citizenship of the United Kingdom. As I said in my speech, I do not see any way in which the port of London can be sustained against the ports of northern Europe once the channel tunnel is opened, at least, not within the framework of the Bill.

The Port of London authority had its bad side. It was a lineal descendant of the East India Company, and had all the defects of that company. But its public enterprise, during both the inter-war and the immediate post-war periods, were the authority's high spots, particularly when the scheme worked well.

The House, indeed the public, and still less the Government, does not understand the difficulties of labour in the port industry. In the words of Mr. Churchill when he spoke in the House on wages councils:

> "The good employer will be driven out by the bad, and the bad employer will be driven out by the worst."

That is true of port labour. It is almost impossible to understand the feelings of some of my constituents who went to the royal docks only about five years ago on a Monday morning to find that their firm had disappeared. Yes, the offices were locked and the firm had gone into liquidation overnight. Alas, that happens in industry today, but it was not the sort of thing that was endemic in the port industry even a few years ago.

The docks and the port of London, as Britain's greatest port, have seen dramas of labour relations and of feeding

[Mr. Spearing]

our great city. The number of workers in the port is probably down to 2,000 or 2,500 at most. It is difficult to compile figures now that the port worker classification has disappeared.

The river highway remains. I hope that the port of Tilbury will not advance up and down stream, as I fear part of the Bill will encourage it to do. If anybody wishes to buy it in these competitive days, and if it ever comes into being, I hope that it will not be bought or controlled from abroad. It would be bad if the port installation of London, or what remains of it, was controlled from another part of the world.

I fear that the Bill has arisen because the Government have no civic sense, or no sense of the fact that public ownership has a part to play and is not to be derided just for the sake of it. Above all, if the provisions of the Bill are carried out, we in London who prized our port authority, which was established by legislation enacted in 1909, will mourn its passing.

12.50 am

Mr. Richard Holt: As the sponsor of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, I have deliberately refrained from participation in the debate on this Bill until now. I have only been prompted to speak by the contribution of the hon. Member for Middlesbrougth (Mr. Bell).

Perhaps it is worth recalling for the House that we are four days short of the 20th anniversary of the first occasion that I can find when a trust port was privatised. The port of Liverpool was bankrupt and the Government of the day had to privatise it to keep the jobs and to keep the port open. The *Hansard* records of the debate are available but, because of the late hour, I will not go into them. What we have today is only a continuation of a policy first enacted 20 years ago.

The Ports Bill is not a shoddy Bill, as it was called, but a very good Bill, because it will enable our ports, at long last, to compete on all fours and fairly with ports on the continent which are privately owned and which move ahead, to their advantage and to our disadvantage.

In regard to the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill, the chief executive of that authority, Mr. John Hackney, came in for a great deal of unfair and unwarranted criticism by hon. Members who ought to have known better and who are not here for the Third Reading. Mr. Hackney is a man of great integrity. An apology is long overdue to him from Opposition Members who criticised him for the crime of wanting to make his port the biggest, the best and the first in the country. If that is a crime for a chief executive, would that more chief executives were guilty of that crime.

The Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill would have been the first privatisation measure on the statute book, had it not been for the capriciousness of the way in which our legislation is enacted. Five Members of the other House were allowed to throw out a Bill which had been successfuly through five Divisions in this House and which was supported in the Division Lobby by the Prime Minister. It would be almost unbelievable to people in legislatures all over the world that five capricious Lords can make a decision against the will of the House of Commons.

I have heard Opposition Members talk about privatisation of ports being dogma of the Conservative party. Surely nationalisation was dogma of the Labour party. In that context, all political parties have dogma; that is why we are in political parties.

Tees and Hartlepool port authority was cheated out of its advantage by the actions of the other place. As soon as the Ports Bill is on the statute book, Tees and Hartlepool port authority will be proud once again to be first in line for privatisation.

12.55 am

Mr. Wallace: This evening's debates have been useful, and the Bill that will leave the House for another place this evening is better than the one that was introduced and given a Second Reading in January.

The three improvements that have been made are: first, the assistance given to enable management and employer buy-outs; secondly, the affirmative orders that the Minister has added to the Bill; and thirdly, the concession that he made to the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on the stabilising of trust ports, which he has agreed not to privatise for five years so that there is no blight on further development.

Nevertheless, my right hon. and hon. Friends will have a fundamental objection to the compulsory element of the Bill that empowers the Secretary of State to compel trust ports, against their will, to undertake measures to enter the private sector when such a move is against the collective view of the ports' management. It will necessarily also be against the interests of the community.

I do not object to the part of the Bill that enables those trust ports who so wish to be privatised. The experience of the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill and the Clyde Port Authority Bill suggests that the private bill procedure is cumbersome and does not allow promoters readily to do as they wish. The blockage is often caused by another Bill in the pipeline that has nothing to do with that private Bill.

Hon. Members have made numerous attempts to highlight the problems in particular ports. The hon. Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Poole (Mr. Ward) spoke about the problems of the ports in their areas, and the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) spoke about the problems of the port of Aberdeen. I have often tried to persuade the Minister that Lerwick harbour trust, because of circumstances there, should not be compelled to be privatised if the trustees do not wish. At present, neither the trustees nor the community want it to be privatised.

The Minister asks us to accept that he will consider all those ports. By now, he recognises that they all have different qualities and facets and that he cannot treat them in a blanket fashion. I welcome the fact that he will visit Lerwick in June. I am sure that he will be impressed by what he sees and will accept that there are compelling arguments why it should not be privatised.

The Minister has asked us to trust him to make that judgment; he has responded positively and followed up the commitments that he made in Committee. That may cause us to believe that he will approach the matter in good faith. Nevertheless, that can be no substitute for not having those provisions in the Bill. The hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) expressed that point well, and there is no need

to duplicate his argument. For the reasons he gave, my right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against Third Reading.

Mr. Barry Field: The Bill is a modernising measure and will enable the management structure of trust ports, their general structure and their competitiveness to move into the 1990s.

I agree with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), as he and I shared responsibility for the Tees and Hartlepool Bill. It was a matter of great regret that it did not succeed in the other place.

I regret that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not take the opportunity to turn up the wick under municipal ports and encouraging them to be privatised, but I perceive among the small ports a stirring of interest in the Bill and the fact that it will enable them to pursue privatisation, although they originally set their caps against it. There is a flood tide of interest in the Bill by ports throughout the United Kingdom.

The Bill will bode well for us in the future as we approach 1992. Taken together with the recent recommendations for the modernisation of bills of lading, I am sure that our maritime heritage will once again be competitive in Europe. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Shipping will ensure that his name is permanently etched on the maritime history of our great nation by putting forward one more measure: the abolition of light dues. That is a necessary procedure to ensure that we have the most competitive port authorities in Europe.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to the General Council of British Shipping and modernise the appeal procedure, which he referred to on Report. He will know that I initiated the first inquiry when the liberalising measure that passed through the House was misinterpreted by the Portsmouth port authority, when it endeavoured to charge the Isle of Wight ferries for pilotage exemption certificates. It was the first time in the history of our nation that an offshore island was charged for setting foot on the mainland of its native kingdom.

We were successful because of the decision of the Secretary of State for Transport, but the procedure is cumbersome. I hope that a binding arbitration system will be introduced that will be more agreeable and more easily used by small shipowners. The experience in Portsmouth and in the Humber of the General Council of British Shipping is that the present systems are arcane and tilted towards the lawyers.

The Bill has taken a tortuous but enjoyable route because of the responses of my hon. Friend the Minister for Shipping to the many arguments that have been advanced. He has listened to all the arguments and responded to many of them in a most agreeable way.

1.1 am

Ms. Walley: The Bill's passage through the House has been tortuous. On Second Reading, we were as opposed to clause 9 and all the elements of compulsion that have been referred to this evening as we are now. Some gains have been made, however. For example, the Minister has given assurances on the affirmative resolution procedure, but he has done nothing to allay the genuine fears of the small ports. I only wish that he would visit them all and talk to those who represent them.

It is clear that the Minister is concerned with the money that the Treasury will receive following the Bill's enactment. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) summed up what the Bill is about when he said at the outset that it is a Finance Bill by another name. That is exactly what it is. The guns are coming out, but it is clear that there are some Conservative Members who have close associations with trust ports in their constituencies who know only too well that the Bill will destroy the trust that has been built up in the ports over many years. I congratulate the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on making a statement that caused the debate to come alive. It is clear that he is concerned about the abandonment of local democracy and the consequences that the Bill will have for Poole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) talked about the Government's doctrinaire attitude. Unlike the Government, we are committed to taking on board the views of all those in the industry. I give a firm commitment to the House and to all those who have been reading the reports of our debates on the Bill as it follows its stormy passage through the House that we shall undertake full consultations and listen to what those in the industry have to say.

Some amendments on employee share ownership plans were tabled, but was only lip service paid to them? Will it be possible for all the ports that wish to go ahead with ESOPs to take that course? Will that be possible when we do not have a 100 per cent. levy? I am sad that we did not have an opportunity to discuss on Report the amendments bearing on the environment which we debated in detail in Committee. Other privatisation measures have created precedents for key issues of environmental protection to be weaved into the Bill. Unfortunately, that has not happened in this instance.

It is extraordinary that, only a month after the now dismembered Nature Conservancy Council produced a major report on estuaries and spelt out the damage that is being done—we heard graphically about what is happening in Poole, for example—the Government have ruled out the idea of conducting an environmental assessment with a view to providing the environmental protection that is urgently needed.

The Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill suffered a stormy passage in the other place, and the references to that measure today have shown the inconsistencies in the Government's policies, especially in their proposed methods of sale and their avowed intention to go ahead with competitive tendering. Indeed, there are inconsistencies and double standards throughout their legislation. As I saw the Minister for Health seated on the Government Front Bench, I thought of the way in which trust ports are being privatised and compulsorily sold off, in tandem with hospital trusts being set up, in, so the Government say, the best interests of the NHS.

The Ports Bill does not provide the nation with a transport strategy which links port and other investment within the national infrastructure. For what kind of transport policy can we hope? It was made clear at Question Time yesterday that there is a transport crisis in London. Added to the crisis on the roads and rail, we shall have a crisis in the ports once the Bill is in operation. At the same time as going full steam ahead with selling off our ports, the Government should come clean and admit that they have abandoned all intentions of having a transport

[Ms. Walley]

policy. They are putting the dogma of the marketplace and short-term financial gain in the place of an integrated transport policy.

1.7 am

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) highlighted the difference of philosophy that exists between hon. Members on the Government and Opposition Benches. We view this as an important Bill for the ports in view of the contribution that they make to the economy and the nation as a whole. The measure marks a further stage in the Government's long-term strategy of progressively opening up the ports industry to market forces. It builds on the obvious benefits to the ports industry and the nation at large of the abolition of the dock labour scheme, which was opposed by the Opposition in 1989.

We look forward to many trust ports coming forward to become private companies. We also look forward to many of those who work in the trust ports playing a part in the success and future of those ports. Opposition Members would not give them that opportunity. We shall. I hope that Tees and Hartlepool will take advantage of the Bill.

I pay tribute, and express my thanks, to my officials for the help that they have given me during the passage of the Bill. I commend the measure to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 123, Noes 30.

Division No. 124] **[1.08 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Morrison, Sir Charles
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Speller, Tony
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Ward, and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bell, Stuart
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Fearn, Ronald
Foster, Derek
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Henderson, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lamond, James
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michael, Alun
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Ward, John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Engineering Industry Training Board

1.19 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): I beg to move,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 21st March, be approved.

The proposals before the House seek authority for the engineering industry training board to raise a levy on employers in the engineering construction and steel erection industries, to finance the running costs of the board and to fund a range of training initiatives, including a grants scheme. The proposals do not relate to engineering manufacturing, as that part of the engineering industry will move to independent training arrangements around the middle of this year.

The basis of the proposals is a levy of 1·5 per cent. on the payroll of site employers in the industry, although no levy will be paid on the first £50,000. Additionally, there is a levy of 2 per cent. on all payments made by employers for sub-contract labour, and 1 per cent. on the payroll of head office establishments with more than 30 employees. Those head offices that train satisfactorily, however, will be exempt from all but a small, non-exemptible levy. Because of those provisions, 40 per cent. of firms will pay no levy at all, and a further 8 per cent. only a small amount towards the board's operating costs. The proposals have the support of the employers, as required by the Industrial Training Act 1982, and the full support of the board.

The House will know that the Government thought long and hard about their decision to retain statutory arrangements for those sectors of the EITB. In principle, we believe that independent, employer-led arrangements that have the full support of employers, offer the best way forward for industrial training. In general, the track record of compulsion through statutory levies in raising the quality and quantity of training is not a good one. The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and I debated that aspect extensively some time ago, in connection with the construction industry training board, so I hope that it will not be necessary to go over that same ground this evening.

We have retained the statutory principle in the case of this part of the industry because of strong support from employers. The engineering construction industry has particular characteristics that create peculiar training problems. The mobile nature of its work force, both geographically and between employers, together with the large-scale use of sub-contracted and self-employed labour, produce a unique set of circumstances in this sector of the engineering industry. Let me explain and emphasise that we consulted widely with the industry about the EITB. There was a widespread and strongly held view that independent arrangements should be set up for engineering manufacturing, but that statutory arrangements needed to be retained for engineering construction.

We were persuaded to accept those proposals, and we intend laying an order before Parliament around the middle of the year that will remove engineering manufacturing from the scope of the EITB and define the boundaries of engineering construction. At the same time, the board will be renamed the engineering construction ITB to reflect that change.

We are concerned to ensure that statutory burdens on firms are kept to a minimum, and that firms that train appropriately are rewarded. To that end, we asked the new board to replace its head office exemption scheme by a voluntary code of practice based on the "investors in people" initiative, to raise the exclusion level for small firms and to review the effects of its grant scheme on employers' training. I am looking to the board to address these issues in 1991-92.

We intend to keep a close watching brief on the new board. Its powers to raise a levy will be exceptional, and the Government, like the House, must be convinced that they are absolutely necessary to preserve the basis of training in the engineering construction industry. The Government have decided, because of the peculiar nature of the industry, to continue with a statutory board for the time being.

The Government continue to believe, as we argued in the 1989 White Paper, that the most effective incentive for companies to train is a knowledge and understanding of the skill needs, not centralised regulation based on statutory powers.

I believe that it is right for 1991 that the House should approve the proposals before it, and I commend them.

1.23 am

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am conscious that Ministers would like to depart early, so we are considering the possibility of being reasonable this evening and providing that accommodation. However, it is only a tentative proposal at this stage.

I want to discuss the political impact of Prince Charles's speech on the Conservative party, but being a moderate and reasonable man, I will resist. Suffice it to say that I want to put on the record the fact that, while we may agree with his attack on the educational and curriculum aspects of what the Government have been doing, as a Scot and as a cynic, I take some exception to all of our children being exposed to both Shakespeare and Dickens, without a wider literary menu to select from. However, we should get down to this evening's business.

This order is important for a variety of reasons. The Minister has highlighted the technical and procedural elements that we are discussing. One important addition is that, for the first time, steel erectors will be included in the arc of the construction industry engineering board, which will be established later this year, when it takes up its formal responsibilities.

There are three other reasons why this order is important. First, the engineering industry training board, as we know it, will change and is changing. Only 40,000 employees will be covered, in relation to the statutory levy, by this order. Secondly, we have some worries about the effectiveness of the replacement organisations which will be established: the engineering training authority and the engineering construction industry training board.

Thirdly, the order almost brings to an end the dismantling of part of Britain's training infrastructure. We started with 23 training boards, which were reduced to seven. Then the construction industry put up a formidable fight, due to its influence within the Conservative party, to retain the construction industry training board. Now we are in the sad situation where, because of Government pressure and diktat, and bowing to the marketplace, the

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

engineering industry training board is being dismembered into two organisations to take up responsibility in different sectors.

I reiterate that this order goes well beyond being merely technical and procedural as regards the skills issue, which is climbing to the top of the political agenda. Far be it from me simply to accuse the Government of playing politics with the future of the engineering industry, but there are sceptics and cynics who believe that a Government so wedded to the idea of the market can at times be oblivious of the views of the industry, as was the case with the engineering industry training board, when views were offered and some were rejected. We now find that the engineering industry training board has put forwards its proposals, and there is great uncertainty about the two components that are being left to carry on the work.

As we are in the early hours, I shall put it succinctly. This order will result in a 50 per cent. cut in the budget of the new engineering training authority because, with the abolition of the levy, it will mean that its income will drop from about £15·7 million to £8 million, at a time when there is a debate in the United Kingdom about the volume of money that is being spent, the quality of it, and the qualifications that result from that spending.

There is a possibility that a large number of the supply-side initiatives documented in the recent engineering industry annual report will be abandoned. Sadly, where the statutory levy is dropped, the engineering training authority will no longer be able to budget for youth training.

It is remarkable to realise that, in 1968, there were 445,000 apprentices and other trainees in manufacturing industry. After 12 years of this Government, by 1990, the figure had dropped to 87,000. As a proportion of all employees in manufacturing, it has dropped from 5·6 per cent. in 1968 to about 1·7 per cent. These figures are shocking. They are a damning indictment of the Government's policies in relation to youth training. This is an implication of the order that should be treated very seriously.

I want to make a few points, to which I hope the Minister will respond. This order will apply only to the construction sector of the engineering industry training board. By July, we shall have two fully functioning alternative organisations. One is the engineering training authority, to which the Minister has referred; the other is the engineering construction industry training board. The ETA will be responsible for the training of 2 million employees in nearly 22,000 companies; the engineering construction industry training board will be responsible for 40,000 employees. The latter will have a statutory basis; the former will be subject to a voluntary regime.

The matters that concern us are easy to state. First, with regard to the future of the engineering construction industry training board, the levy is necessary. The board feels apprehensive. It is menaced, threatened, by the review that is to take place in 1992. The Minister could dispel its fears by agreeing with us that the review should be positive and that there should be certainty as to the board's future. But, more important, the Minister should underline the fact that training is a partnership between the training organisations and the Government. There is no room for diktat or dogma. The Government should listen to the key experts who run the industry, and allow those people to judge what is best for them.

Secondly, there is the question of stability. The industry wants an assurance for the period beyond 1992. That could be secured by way of a statutory levy or a voluntary regime. We are fighting to close the skills gap between Britain and its European competitors, and stability in key sectors of our training infrastructure is crucial. This is a demand to which the Government should accede.

The third issue is that of assets. I hope that the Minister will assure the House that, with the demise of the engineering industry training board, there will be a coherent policy on assets. These should be distributed fairly between the two remaining authorities, and the most effective use should be made of what is a very substantial amount of money.

Fourthly, there is a relationship with the training and enterprise councils, which have become the flagship of the Government's training policy. We support the idea of local delivery and the work of the TECs. However, the engineering industry has expressed concern about the councils. The geographical balance can cut across the work of sectors. The Minister ought to reassure the sectors, including the engineering industry, that the role of the TECs will be complementary, that sector initiatives will have equal status, and that there must be dialogue, not only there but also with the Government. It is felt that no such assurance has yet been given.

Finally, I want to make yet again a point that has been made repeatedly by the Opposition. The Government seem to be obsessed with the idea that a levy must be bad if it is statutory, and that all these organisations must be intimidated into accepting a voluntary way forward. When we lag so far behind our competitors, when there are such skills gaps between the regions of Britain, and when there are such gaps between various sectors of industry, is it right to continue to dictate from the centre? The industry wants to be assured that the Government will not be dogmatic. That will take some doing.

In the engineering industry, we have the way to Britain's future. The matter cannot be taken lightly. The problems that the industry faces are immense. The issue which dominates its concern is how the Government, if they are still in power in two or three years' time, will respond to the view that the voluntary way, which has been tried for about 150 years, is not working.

The Opposition do not intend to oppose the order, however, we have welcomed this opportunity to highlight some of our concerns. I hope that the Minister will respond to them.

1.34 am

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I welcome the order. The engineering construction industry training board will have an important role to play. I welcome the fact that the Government accepted the recommendation that such a training board should be retained. Both employers and clients recognise the need, due to the peculiar nature of the industry, for a central organisation that can provide training for those working both on and offshore and for those involved in building power generation, oil, chemical and most other major processing plants.

An apprenticeship scheme already exists and is soundly based. Provision must also be made for the training of

supervisors and senior managers. An important point that is frequently overlooked is the need for the continuing education of senior engineers and management.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) referred to the training and enterprise councils. The national skills development scheme that is used by the industry has many advantages. People, either skilled or unskilled, can enter the industry at any age and receive training in particular trades. However, the TECs do not cater for this industry's needs; people cannot be drawn from wide areas and trained to cater for specific needs.

Unemployed people who require training could enter the engineering industry if money were ring-fenced specifically for people on ET in specific trades. There will also be a need for people to learn new skills. Refineries and offshore installations will have to be dismantled. Nuclear plants will also have to be decommissioned and dismantled. Specialist skills will be required and few people possess them. They will have to update their skills.

We shall also have to cope with demographic changes and with the need to compete for those leaving school and for graduates. The new board will, I believe, adopt the right approach and provide the necessary training so that the industry can cater for specific needs. As the Minister said, the work force is more mobile than is normally associated with engineering activities. When the industry is involved with large installations, a rapid growth in a particular skill is demanded. That means that there needs to be an ability to train many peope in a relatively short time to the level of competence that is required.

The House set up a structure that will perform that task. The order will provide a training system for the clients and for the people in the industry which will take them beyond the two years that they have at present well into the future. The order will ensure a basis of training that will make a great contribution to industries that are vital to those involved.

1.40 am

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for not being here at the beginning of his speech.

I want to make a point about the number of apprentices today. The decline in the number of apprentices began when there was a pincer movement with the raising of the school leaving age and the reduction of the age at which full pay was given. When the industry had young people for five years from the ages of 14 or 15 to 18 and 19, it had long enough to give proper apprenticeship and training. Today, when people cannot leave school until 16 and have to be paid full wages at 18, there is only 18 months in which to try to bring people into the industry.

I smiled to myself when I heard the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) talk about not wanting centralisation. That is what existed when we had a plethora of training boards. We had centralisation by the Government, which caused industry a great deal of wasted expenditure and which trained few people. The number of apprentices has declined and will continue to decline because that is the nature of things today.

The country could help to reverse the trend if it could get away from the position that I have been trying to bring to Ministers' attention for almost two decades. We should stop the artificial divide between education and training. The sooner we adopt the system in vogue on the continent the better. We must recognise that people are different—that they have different aspirations, skills and abilities. We should cultivate education and training for them and we might then find ourselves in a position like that in France.

In France today, people can start an apprenticeship at 14. Some 12 per cent. of all youngsters in France follow that route. Some 23 per cent. follow the next route of super-apprentice, which starts at the age of 15. In that way, France has the apprenticeships, the training and the skills. The youngsters continue to have education at the same time—there is a mix of education and training.

Yet in this country, because of the way in which the law is framed, no youngster can embark on a City and Guilds or a Royal Society of Arts course, or on any other formal vocational qualifications, which are accepted and known throughout the industry, and we wonder why we lag behind those on the continent. We lag behind because, as someone said recently outside the House, those who theorise in education have said that if one attempts to keep youngsters in a building and is supposed to be teaching them something, one is giving a service to them. One is not. The youngsters would be far better served if they were allowed to undergo vocational training in a mix with education. That would help the problems of truancy, and pof law and order.

I hope that the Government, at long last, will begin to listen to the voices outside which have been saying that there is no need for the artificial divide in the engineering or in any other industry. We should get back to the recognition that all youngsters are not the same.

In France, by the time that youngsters reach the age at which they transfer from primary to secondary school, no fewer than 50 per cent. are not in the same year group in which they began their education at the age of five. Some 25 per cent. of them have accelerated by gaining a year, and 25 per cent. have slipped a year. The French see nothing wrong or unusual in that; it is the norm. In this country we should head in that direction so that, ultimately, we shall have a better educated and trained work force.

I commend what we are doing within the engineering industry because I think that it is an essential prerequisite, but I hope that wider points will also be looked at by my hon. Friend.

1.45 am

Mr. Jackson: Like the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens), I and the Government agree about the importance of the engineering industry in general and the engineering construction industry in particular, which is the subject of our debate.

I remind the hon. Member for Fife, Central that we had an extensive debate in February on the construction industry training board—a very similar proposition—when the hon. Gentleman raised his concern about the Government policy that underlies these proposals in respect of levies. Hon. Members who wish to look this up can do so by consulting *Hansard* of 25 February, columns 755-69. I do not think we need go over that same ground again tonight. I agree with the hon. Member for Fife, Central, who did not dwell on that point.

The hon. Gentleman referred to cuts in the funding of engineering training, but I think that he gave a rather selective figure, because he omitted completely the income

[Mr. Jackson]

coming to the new engineering training authority from voluntary subscriptions, and, indeed, the expenditure that will be undertaken by the engineering companies. We have lots of reasons to believe that that has substantially increased in recent years, along with an overall increase in expenditure by employers on training. The House might like to know that the Government's labour force surveys show that more and more people are receiving training. The numbers in training during the same four-week period increased by 85 per cent. between 1984 and 1990 and by 8 per cent. in the most recent year alone.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) put in perspective the points made by the hon. Member for Fife, Central about apprenticeships. I agree very much with him about the need to overcome the traditional divide between the academic and the vocational, between education and training. He may have seen the piece that I did on the subject in *The House Magazine* recently. I can assure him that his 20-year campaign on this subject will bear fruit. The Government have announced that there will be a White Paper shortly on the 16 to 19 age group, and when my hon. Friend reads that White Paper he will find that we are addressing this issue which he has been pressing so hard on us over the past 20 years.

The proposals before the House are, I emphasise, particular to the engineering construction industry. They do not represent a change in the Government's view that independent, employer-led and employer-supported arrangements are in general preferable to compulsion. The hon. Member for Fife, Central spoke about the 100 years of the voluntary system. I have to remind him—we covered this topic in the previous debate—that we had an extensive system of compulsion operating in this country for some 20 years down to the early 1980s, and it did not work very effectively. We believe, like most of the other countries that train effectively, that the best way is the voluntary way.

The hon. Gentleman asked me for some assurances about the review that we propose to have in due course to see how this system is operating and whether we should continue with it. I can certainly give the assurance that we will be open-minded in that review, and in that sense it will be the positive review that he seeks. Certainly we shall bear in mind what he says about the need for stability, but, on the other hand, we want to ensure that we have proposals that will work over the years ahead.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) pointed out and as we recognise, the engineering construction industry is different from most, if not all, other industries and it therefore needs to be treated accordingly. The proposals before the House have the support of the employers in that industry. They have been approved by the board. That they should be approved by the House is not in dispute—the hon. Member for Fife, Central has said that he does not intend to divide the House. I therefore commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 21st March, be approved.

Smoking

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

1.50 am

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): This debate is about three main issues: health, environmental protection and individual rights.

Not only is smoking dangerous to the health of non-smokers, but it is offensive in many other ways.

"Loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof nearest resembling the horrible Stigian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

That was said by King James I in 1604.

"it is a shocking thing, blowing smoke out of our mouths into other people's mouths, eyes and noses, and having the same done to us."

That was said by Samuel Johnson in the 18th century.

To bring us a little closer to the present, in 1986 the World Health Organisation said on the health question:

"Passive smoking violates the right to health of non-smokers, who must be protected against this noxious form of environmental pollution."

The problem is centuries old, and it is still with us.

I do not seek a ban on smoking as such. If smokers want to kill themselves, that is up to them. But if people have to smoke, let them do it in a designated area so that it does not cause danger to, or interfere with, the comfort and rights of the majority—the two thirds of the adult population who do not smoke, and who have the right to breathe in safe and clean air.

Let me state clearly that there is no need to spend much time reciting in detail the evidence that passive smoking —that is, breathing in other people's tobacco smoke—kills non-smokers. It is just over three years since the Froggatt report was published. That report stated that passive smoking kills several hundred smokers—through lung cancer—each year in the United Kingdom. Since then, the Government have repeatedly accepted the findings of that report. My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, then Minister for Health, said in May 1989:

"We believe that passive smoking . . . leads to several hundred deaths a year . . . the environment is being polluted by those who smoke in public places."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1989; Vol, 152, c. 614-84.]

Only recently, an excellent publication entitled "Passive Smoking—a Health Hazard" explained in detail the risks of passive smoking and recommended that action be taken to protect non-smokers. The report was drawn up by the Cancer Research Campaign, the Imperial Cancer Rersearch Fund, the British Heart Foundation and the National Asthma Campaign among others. The list comprises 48 bodies—virtually all the eminent health, medical and scientific bodies in the country. The foreword says:

"On the basis of a large body of research it can now be stated that passive smoking causes lung cancer in non-smokers and serious respiratory illness in babies. Passive smoking may also cause chronic middle-ear disease in children, and recent studies suggest an association between breathing other people's tobacco smoke and heart disease. In addition, passive smoking can aggravate existing illnesses such as asthma . . . risks of passive smoking are greater than those posed by any other indoor manmade pollutant released into the general environment. This information places a responsibility on employers, who need to safeguard the health of their employees; on those responsible for managing buildings and transport used by the public (and especially

those used by children); and on the Government, which has an overall duty to protect public health. Passive smoking is a hazard to health that can be prevented."

In gist, passive smoking is breathing in other people's tobacco smoke. Tobacco smoke is a cocktail of about 5,000 different chemicals, including carcinogens, irritants and poisonous gases. Smokers inhale the chemicals direct into their bodies as what is called mainstream smoke. Tobacco smoke in the air is about one fifth mainstream smoke, exhaled by smokers. A massive 85 per cent. is what is called sidestream smoke, which comes from the end of cigarettes or cigars between puffs. Sidestream smoke contains higher concentrations of many poisonous chemicals than does mainstream smoke. The collective results of more than 20 studies show that non-smokers living with smokers are between 10 and 30 per cent. more likely to get lung cancer than people living with others who are non-smokers.

Tellingly, if such a contaminant were incorporated into a new product today, it would be immediately banned. The effects on infants of parents who smoke—pregnant mothers in particular—are now well documented and I do not intend to list them in detail.

Only tobacco companies deny the overwhelming evidence on passive smoking. That is not surprising. They have the most to lose from the increasing number of restrictions on where and when people can smoke. The stakes for such companies are, indeed, enormous. The president of the tobacco multinational R. J. Reynolds has said of the anti-smoking measures:

"If they cause every smoker to smoke just one less cigarette a day, our company will stand to lose $92 million in sales annually."

But they are not winning their battle, I am glad to say. In February this year, an Australian court ruled that the tobacco industry was not telling the truth by placing full-page newspaper advertisements which denied that there was any evidence of harm from passive smoking.

Almost everyone now accepts that passive smoking is a health hazard and that to smoke in public is downright anti-social. It is perhaps that anti-social aspect that makes many people very angry about being forced to breathe in other people's smoke. It is simply unpleasant and unacceptable to go home reeking of tobacco smoke after sitting in a restaurant, pub or some other public place. Why should the majority have to put up with it?

Some would have us believe that, if we attempted to restrict smoking, we would at the same time restrict smokers' liberty. But one man's liberty is another man's poison. If we are to talk about liberty and rights, I, as a Conservative, believe in the right not to be forced to breathe polluted air. After all, I am doing harm to no one by seeking clean air. But those who smoke fill the air with a cocktail of chemicals including ammonia, benzine, cyanide and formaldehyde.

As a non-smoker, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not doing you any harm. If I smoke in your presence and near to you, I am endangering your health and I do not believe that I have the right to do that. Nor does anyone have the right to endanger anyone else's health.

I am pleased to say that many smokers accept the need for restrictions on smoking. A survey for the Consumers Association magazine *Which Way to health?* found a majority in favour of restrictions on smoking in all public places, such as public buildings, transport, shops, eating places and places of entertainment, except pubs. That majority included a large number of smokers. We are beginning to see a shift towards the smoke-free society that I predicted in my previous Adjournment debate on this subject in January 1990.

Many United Kingdom employers, including Ford and the Metropolitan police, have introduced written policies on smoking. Public transport in London, with the exception of black cabs, is now smoke-free, following the ban on smoking on London buses introduced in February. That example is being followed in many other cities. Many airlines are introducing no-smoking rules, following the example of Air UK and Air Canada, which have banned smoking on all flights.

I was alarmed to find that the air on board a plane is recycled. That means that the little air nozzle above my head—which I always turned on for fresh air—pumps out carcinogens from the smoking to the non-smoking section. Surely that is proof enough that ventilation will not adequately deal with tobacco smoke. Indeed, one reason why legislation is needed is that voluntary methods, such as better air conditioning and ventilation, offer no solution to the problem.

The most effective air conditioning system can filter out nearly all smoke particles, but the gases will pass through the filters. Therefore, filtered smoky air recirculated by air conditioning will still contain poisonous and carcinogenic gases. A study carried out by Birmingham university reported on the concept of building sickness and the effects created among office workers of itchy eyes, stuffy noses and dry throats. Good air conditioning systems wholly filter the air, but they recirculate 80 to 90 per cent. of it, bringing the rest in from outside. Consequently, most office air will be recirculated many times before being replaced. The dilution of smoke in the air is therefore very low. Meeting the necessary standards may result in complaints about draughts and will certainly make buildings much more expensive to run.

Applying an effective system to whole buildings would be prohibitively expensive and still would not protect people sitting near smokers from the hazards of environmental tobacco smoke. As the report on passive smoking concluded:

"Improved ventilation would not provide adequate safeguards against exposure to environmental tobacco smoke."

I congratulate the Department of Health on making clear statements that passive smoking does kill, but I press the Government to do even more. We are dealing with a significant health hazard. Passive smoking causes lung cancer as well as having a serious effect on the health of asthmatics and on young children in particular.

The Government have until now relied on airline operators, employers and others who control public places to take steps voluntarily to protect non-smokers' health, but those measures will go only as far as the tobacco industry will allow. We do not rely on voluntary measures to protect people from other hazards, such as asbestos or chemicals like formaldehyde in the air. Thanks to recent legislation, we do not rely on voluntary measures alone to ensure that our streets are kept clear of litter which is a public nuisance and not, like passive smoking, a health risk. We should not, therefore, rely on voluntary measures to ensure that our air is kept free from tobacco smoke.

The Government must agree that it makes sense and would be a popular move to introduce legislation making non-smoking the norm in society. That does not mean

[Mr. Alan Amos]

banning smoking outright, as I made clear at the beginning of my comments, but it means giving precedence to the rights of the non-smoking majority.

One argument that we constantly hear against using legislation is that bans are unenforceable, yet such legislation works. The Netherlands, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States—all modern, western countries—have national or local laws that protect non-smokers. I have witnessed them in action—in New York of all places. Despite its being the last place on earth where one would expect people to accept any rules regarding personal behaviour, New Yorkers have responded readily. I am pleased to say that one cannot walk into any restaurant without being offered a seat at a non-smoking table.

In this country I know that laws on smoking would be welcomed and enforced. By making the protection of non-smokers a legal requirement, we would find a willing audience. Many employers and restaurant owners have stated that they would like to introduce smoking restrictions, but that they would prefer the Government to take a lead by making non-smoking a requirement under the law.

On the question of workplace practice, the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 requires employers to provide a safe environment, free from risk to health and adequate for the welfare of employees. Under the Act, it is the duty of employers to do everything that is reasonably practicable to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. In criminal law, by virtue of section 2(2)(e) of the legislation, employers must ensure that the working environment is safe, but the provision has no teeth when it comes to the dangers of environmental tobacco smoke. Measures have been introduced on the grounds of safety and hygiene rather than to avoid the health risks of passive smoking.

In this country there are, in effect, no legal restrictions on smoking to protect people from environmental tobacco smoke. Yet such measures are widespread throughout the civilised world—in the United States, Canada, Australia, Norway, Spain, Belgium and recently Ireland, to name just a few countries. Despite that, however, some progress cannot be prevented. Last year, a social security tribunal ruled that one woman's asthma attacks, brought on by environmental tobacco smoke at work, should be classed as an industrial accident and she was awarded a disability pension.

I am sure that getting legislation is just a matter of time. Events are moving our way. Until then, I want to help the Government take steps to protect non-smokers now. Therefore, I suggest a five-point plan which should be adopted as soon as possible. Each point can be carried out quickly and easily, and each would take us closer to making non-smoking the norm.

First, each Government Department should be given 12 months to introduce a formal written policy on smoking. That policy should make no smoking the norm in all Government buildings and should allow smoking only in separate, designated smoking areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health could take the lead, as his Department is most aware of the hazards of passive smoking.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment could take active steps towards complying with the terms of the European Community mixed resolution of 18 July 1989. It calls on member states to protect non-smokers' health and to report progress on doing so by July of this year.

Thirdly, the Health and Safety Executive can be instructed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to implement an active programme for employers and employees which ensures that, not only are the hazards of passive smoking widely publicised, but that a smoking policy to deal with the problem is forcefully advocated. I suggest that the Health and Safety Executive should be set a target of ensuring that more than half of all United Kingdom employers have a proper smoking policy within two years.

Fourthly, the House should set an example to the nation by returning to the Smoking Rooms. Those used to be—it was before my time—the only places where smoking was allowed but, sadly, that considerate practice is now ignored. We would send a clear signal to non-smokers and smokers alike if we accepted that one Member of Parliament should not pollute another.

Finally and most important, the Government should support the Bill that I shall introduce tomorrow. It will amend the existing Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to give every employee the right to a smoke-free working environment. It is a simple measure and will not force employers to adopt a particular policy. They will have the right to choose which policy would be best for them, but any employee who was exposed to tobacco smoke would have the backing of the law in getting a smoke-free working environment. Employers would no longer be able to ignore the pleas of non-smoking employees for smoke-free air.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will take note of each of those five points. I believe that they will be widely welcomed and acted upon, given the chance. There is no greater form of indoor air pollution than other people's tobacco smoke, and moves to deal with the problem will be met with strong support and relief from the vast majority of people.

2.7 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) for allowing me to say a few words at this unearthly hour in the morning. I would not have dreamt of staying up this late if I did not wholeheartedly support what he has said. He made a cracking speech, and it is a great shame that more people did not hear it.

My hon. Friend said that the polluter must be sharply reminded that smoking is damaging, dangerous and unacceptable to other people. There is also a carrot: those who administer and organise public places such as restaurants, hotels and cafes should realise that, if they provided smoking-free areas, they would attract more non-smokers. Many people like me refrain from going to restaurants and cafes because they cannot stand the inconsiderate smoker who puffs smoke into their faces. As a result, restaurants and cafes suffer.

Surely the market force argument speaks even louder. Those who complain about the increased costs of running a business would have an easy way forward if they banned smoking other than in defined areas. They would find that

their business would increase and prosper. That must be the best way to decrease the number of people who smoke in public places. It is up to the operators to realise that the market force argument would prove the case.

My hon. Friend's robust and determined attempts to reduce the imposition of smokers on non-smokers were preceded many years ago by the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who took a most unpopular line in trying to stop people smoking. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has carried on that magnificent work and I hope that, in future, the House will have an opportunity to say that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Acton were the early fathers who changed the law so that people who find smoking in public places offensive will be able to thank them for their sterling work. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham on the wonderful example that he has given to us tonight.

2.9 am

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on seeking the opportunity to raise a subject of great concern to us all, and certainly to those of us who want to improve the health of the nation. I share my hon. Friend's deep concern about the damage that smoking can do to people's health. It is the greatest cause of preventable disease in the United Kingdom and is responsible for more than 100,000 premature deaths each year. We have made progress in reducing the prevalence of smoking, but we are not complacent. I welcome the opportunity that is provided by the debate to carry forward the issues of concern for us all, and certainly for my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), even at this unearthly hour. My hon. Friend's consistent concern and championship of the cause have, I believe, helped to change public opinion.

There has been a dramatic shift in the way in which smoking is perceived in Britain and in the areas in which smoking is regarded as unacceptable. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham identified many of those areas, which include public transport, British Airways, Air UK, London Regional Transport and the workplace as a whole, in which many more firms introduced non-smoking policies during 1990. I know that the Action on Smoking and Health consultancy, which is available to those who are thinking of establishing smoke-free policies at work, has received about 200 requests for its services. I pay tribute to the work that is undertaken by ASH. I am pleased to say that the Government are able to fund it to the tune of about £241,000. It has done much to press the issue and bring it to the public's attention.

In setting out his five-point plan, my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham referred to the steps that are being taken by several Government Departments. It is the intention of those of us within the Department of Health to achieve a smoke-free environment by agreement with the work force. The new buildings that are being planned in Leeds are intended to be smoke-free. During the time that I have been a Minister—over 18 months—many more no-smoking signs have been erected in public places. We shall shortly be producing renewed guidance for smoke-free policies in hospitals. We have commissioned an independent consultant, who has already produced a draft. We shall be consulting within the service shortly before making the guidance widely available. I hope that many others will follow our example.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham will know that the Department of the Environment will soon be producing guidance on smoking in public places, as envisaged by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. I am pleased that my hon. Friend identified the document that we recently helped to fund called "Passive Smoking: A Health Hazard". It was produced by the Cancer Research Campaign and the Imperial Cancer Research fund. That is authoritative information on a subject that is of great concern and importance to us all.

In his five-point plan, my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham referred to the mixed resolution and the request of the EC for information about the implementation of the directive. I assure him that we shall be providing that information as soon as the Commission formally requests it. We are fully confident that the progress that we have made will be equal to, or ahead of, that of other countries that are carrying forward the work.

My hon. Friend's suggestion of Smoking Rooms in this place is one that he should take up with the House authorities. He will understand that the matter is not entirely for me. I certainly wish him well. I shall watch the progress of my hon. Friend's Bill with care to see how it develops. There can be no doubt that the contribution of my hon. Friend, with the forthright remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams, who speaks so powerfully about the market forces that I believe have substantially but subtly led to changes over many years, have led to developments over the years which no one, whether at work, at business, at play or at home, can afford to underestimate.

Although the figures have come down significantly—we have had one of the greatest falls in the prevalence of smoking among the countries of the EC—we remain concerned about the amount of smoking among women, particularly young women. That is why one of the first steps that I took on becoming a Health Minister was to launch the teenage smoking campaign, and we have recently announced an initiative on the whole question of smoking by pregnant women. The effect of smoking not only on the mother but on the infant is incontrovertible. About one in 12 pregnant women still smokes, despite the evidence of the effect in terms of the low birth weight of the baby. That issue must be of great concern to us all.

Of every 1,000 young people smoking now, six will die on the roads, but 250 will die from the habit. Most will die from lung cancer, respiratory disease or heart disease. Many will die in middle age. So we must make discouraging smoking a high priority.

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Hexham pointed out, our advisory independent scientific committee on smoking and health has made it clear that there is a 10 to 30 per cent. increase in the risk of contracting lung cancer for non-smokers who are habitually exposed to tobacco smoke. That issue must be addressed urgently.

There are economic advantages from having a no smoking policy at places of work and leisure, including lower cleaning and redecorating costs, reduced absenteeism—50 million working days are lost each year from smoking-related diseases—higher morale and a better corporate image.

The tide is clearly flowing in the right direction. The incidence of smoking is being reduced, and smoke-free

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

provision is increasing. We must work with employers, managers and consumers to deliver a pleasant and healthy environment. Prevention is better than cure. As a Health Minister, I am involved in improving the services available to sick and disabled people. Smoking is unhealthy and unpleasant. It damages people's health, as the new label on cigarette packages makes only too clear.

Mr. Steen: Is my hon. Friend saying that we should introduce legislation, and will she propose that the Government do so?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will know that the voluntary approach has had great success. Our reduction in the prevalence of smoking has been in the forefront among EC countries. Our action has been effective and powerful and has changed attitudes, understanding and, above all, behaviour. At places of work, in public places and in people's domestic lives generally, the speed with which no smoking policies have been adopted has been powerful and effective. We shall continue to use all the levers at our control—of persuasion and encouragement—enthusiastically to champion the cause that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has brought to the attention of the House today.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 24 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SHARD BRIDGE BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (No. 5) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

CSCE

1. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in developing a conciliation mechanism within the conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The CSCE experts' meeting on the peaceful settlement of disputes, held earlier this year in Valletta, agreed a report containing provisions for the establishment of a dispute settlement mechanism—a panel of indepedent experts—within the CSCE process. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House. The dispute settlement mechanism would offer advice and comment to assist states in resolving disputes. The Valletta report draws extensively on British ideas put forward last year for a CSCE conciliation facility. We expect the June meeting of CSCE Foreign Ministers to endorse the Valletta report and to set up the mechanism.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Does not it demonstrate the good progress that has been made in the conference since the Paris summit and show the transformed political atmosphere in Europe? Can these procedures be used to help the suffering people in the Baltic states?

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's remarks. As to the second, I do not think that this mechanism can be used to deal with the problems of the Baltic states, for two reasons. First, they are designed to address the problems of inter-state disputes and, secondly, there are exclusions in the procedures that would enable one party to a dispute to exclude issues relating to sovereignty. I agree, however, that the principles reflected in the 10 propositions annexed to the mechanism should guide discussions in the Baltic republics, and we want urgent discussions between the Soviet Government and the Governments of the three republics.

Mr. Winnick: Does not progress depend to a large extent on the continuation of the democratic reforms taking place in the Soviet Union? Should not we pay tribute to the immense achievements that Mr. Gorbachev has brought about in the Soviet Union, transforming a totalitarian dictatorship into a near democracy? Is the Minister aware of the concern felt by many in Europe about some of the elements now appearing in Russia, which remind us of Tsarist tyranny? Such people should be warned that we do not want them to take power.

Mr. Hogg: I certainly agree that President Gorbachev has contributed substantially to the liberalisation of life in eastern Europe—one has only to look at the present position of the states that were satellites but five years ago to see the truth of that. But we also need to understand that there is still a long way to go before a pluralistic democratic state emerges in the Soviet Union. Our support is for the process of reform rather than for any particular individual.

Mass Destruction Weapons

2. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will take steps to prevent the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Yes, Sir. We are working to strengthen existing regimes of restriction and control. We have already reinforced and widened the scope of our export controls on chemical weapons precursors. We are considering urgently how to improve the regimes to prevent the export of technology and materials for biological weapons. We are also working for further accessions to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, to strengthen the international safeguards run by the International Atomic Energy Authority, to secure a commitment to the early negotiation of a chemical weapons convention and the strengthening of the biological weapons convention at its review conference in September, and to strengthen the missile technology control regime.

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his comprehensive reply. Does he agree that the powers of the International Atomic Energy Agency are clearly insufficient, given that Iraq was able to prove compliance with the rules of the IAEA as recently as November 1990? Does he agree also that the time is right for a significant new initiative in limiting the spread of weapons of mass destruction that will involve further inspection and verification powers for the United Nations, perhaps based on Security Council resolution 687, and that the United Kingdom is well placed to take that initiative?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, my hon. Friend makes a general point and directs it specifically to Iraq. The resolution that he mentioned provides for the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. We are actively supporting the United Nation's secretariat's work in setting up a special commission to carry through the resolution. I hope that it will be in action before too long.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that a serious aspect of the problem is the growing number of nations that have access to sophisticated delivery systems? As there is a limited number of suppliers of systems such as those for ballistic missiles, is it possible to give serious attention to limiting the availability of the delivery systems?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. That is part of the purpose of the missile technology control regime, which I mentioned. We must try to broaden that so that it includes most of the main suppliers, including the Soviet Union.

Mr. Robertson: In spite of that, did not we learn from the Gulf conflict the necessity of keeping nuclear technology out of the hands of the likes of Saddam Hussein? Surely, therefore, the first and essential step is to convert the partial test ban treaty into a comprehensive ban on all nuclear tests. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that after the sad and avoidable collapse of the review conference in January, the prospect of keeping in existence even the partial test ban treaty will die if the United States and Britain go ahead with continued nuclear tests?

Mr. Hurd: I usually follow the hon. Gentleman's logic, but I do not on this occasion. I think that the step of which he spoke is some way down the road. The first and essential step, to use his phrase, is to ensure that Iraq's potential to employ weapons of mass destruction is destroyed, and that that destruction is verified. We can then proceed to strengthen the regime in the way that I have mentioned.

CSCE

3. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to give individuals and non-governmental bodies an opportunity to participate in the CSCE process as extended by the charter of Paris.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We consistently uphold the importance of openness within the conference on security and co-operation in Europe process. We periodically hold consultations with individuals and non-governmental organisations. We include non-governmental representatives in United Kingdom delegations to some CSCE meetings. We also seek to ensure that individuals and NGOs have as free access as possible to CSCE meetings.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister will be aware that the charter of Paris, which was signed in November, specifically provided for widening the process to enable individuals and NGOs to contribute. We are especially anxious to have a means of contributing to the process, for several reasons. First, we would wish to ensure that the security provisions of the CSCE could be applied to the breach of the Helsinki agreement by the Irish Republic. For some reason, that is an issue that the Foreign Office seems reluctant to raise. Secondly, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the charter extended the CSCE to include cultural conflicts and the extension of democratic rights. Is the Minister aware that we believe that on both fronts we could make a significant contribution, if only to draw attention to the almost complete absence of democracy in part of the United Kingdom? That is an issue with which the Foreign Secretary, because of his record, might feel inhibited in dealing.

Mr. Hogg: We, too, wish to encourage openness in the process of the CSCE. I know that the hon. Gentleman is especially concerned about articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution. I do not think that those issues are best raised within the context of the CSCE, if only because that is likely to entrench the publicly declared attitudes of the Republic. The hon. Gentleman will bear in mind that article 1, I think, of the Anglo-Irish Agreement makes it plain that the Republic accepts the status of the Province unless the majority of the people in the Province wish otherwise.

Mr. Wilkinson: On the question of openness and mutual understanding within the CSCE, would not east-west relations be much enhanced if the Soviet Union were to reconsider its circumvention of the arms control process by, instead of disbanding three divisions on the central front, assigning them to its navy? Have the Government any comment to make on that?

Mr. Hogg: I agree with my hon. Friend that the policy of subordinating the three divisions to naval command calls into question the Soviet Union's commitment to the principles of the treaty on conventional weapons in Europe. Before we ratify that treaty, we must explore how we can bring the spirit of the treaty back into operation. We want to ensure that the Soviet position broadly accords, in every material respect, with the letter and the spirit of the agreement.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Minister agree that the formal inter-state arrangements enshrined in the charter do not adequately take account of the expense and the seriousness of disputes within states? I refer especially to the new nationalisms of central and eastern Europe and the potentially disastrous consequences of the inter-ethnic conflict that could arise.

Mr. Hogg: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety. However, had we tried to enshrine within the agreement a CSCE mechanism under which those internal disputes could be dealt with, it is probable that no agreement would have been made. The hon. Gentleman knows that a list of principles is attached to the CSCE disputes settlement mechanism, and they are applicable to internal disputes. They are largely procedural in character, but they can be invoked for internal disputes. The general principles that underpin the CSCE agreement are those that contracting states should have in mind when dealing with their internal negotiations.

Nigeria

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what ways Her Majesty's Government will be assisting Nigeria in the run-up to the general election in that country.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Our substantial aid programme to Nigeria—more than £32 million in 1990-91—will continue. It includes help with public administration reform and police training and legal

drafting, all with the aim of fostering good government and helping to establish structures and systems that will survive the transition to civilian rule.

Mr. Speller: Will my hon. Friend, on behalf of the Government, welcome the impending return of a democratically elected Government to Nigeria? Does he accept that Britain has had both a happy and a long-standing relationship with that country? That includes the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister worked there. Will he do everything possible to assist Nigeria as it comes back into the family of democracies?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The whole thrust of the Government's aid programme in Nigeria is to ensure support for the transition to, and the return of, democracy. Both my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook)—who is in his place—are, like my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, old Nigerian hands. They and Opposition Members represent the long-standing friendship between Britain and Nigeria.

Ms. Abbott: Would not one way to help Nigeria be to deal with the debt question? The Minister is aware that the Trinidad terms do nothing for middle-income debtors such as Nigeria. Just as Poland has required up to 80 per cent. debt reduction to get on its feet, will not countries such as Nigeria be able to help themselves only if there is serious debt reduction, in both the commercial and the financial sectors?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Lady makes a good point. We recognise that Nigeria is now a poor country, with a per capita income of below $300 and a very heavy debt burden. It does not formally meet the criteria for reduction schemes available for the poorest countries in the Paris club, but we have argued that, because of its low per capita income, it deserves special treatment.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that Nigeria is a huge country with tremendous economic and political problems, but with a sensible and moderate Government, who deserve every encouragement as they endeavour further to pursue the path of parliamentary democracy?

Mr. Garel Jones: Indeed, it is a huge country of which every corner is well known to my hon. Friend. We are supporting the efforts of the present Nigerian Government to return to civilian rule.

The Gulf

5. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about recent developments in the Gulf.

Mr. Hurd: Following Iraq's formal acceptance of United Nations Security Council resolution 687, a formal ceasefire is in place in the Gulf. The resolution re-affirmed the Iraq-Kuwait border of 1963, established a compensation fund and provided for the destruction of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons and long-range missile systems. Sanctions against the import of Iraqi products will be lifted only once Iraq has completed the steps necessary for the destruction of those weapons and weapons systems and once the Security Council has approved arrangements for the compensation fund. Other trade and financial sanctions against Iraq are subject to regular review by the council. The arms embargo will remain in force indefinitely. So long as Saddam Hussein remains in power, Iraq cannot hope to return to a normal relationship with the international community.

Mr. Nellist: What assessment have the Government made of the Amnesty International report on torture in Kuwait, which says that electric shocks, knives, whips, sulphuric acid, sexual assault and threats of execution have been used by Kuwaitis on Palestinians and others? Where is the democracy and respect for human rights that the Secretary of State told the House were at the base of the reason for the Gulf war? Are the Government more concerned with Britain's share of restoration projects, including restoration of gold taps in the Emir's palace?

Mr. Hurd: In pursuit of his argument, the hon. Gentleman should not misrepresent what I said. We went to war to reverse the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and to restore the legitimate Government. Those were the Security Council's words, that is what we set out to do, and that is what we did.

We take the Amnesty International report seriously, because it has been clear to us, and was made clear by us to Kuwaiti Ministers before the liberation, that this should be a new and hopeful chapter in the history of Kuwait. After what the Kuwaitis went through, it is understandable that there should be retaliation and disorder for a time. However, when I go to Kuwait in the next few days, I shall reinforce the message that I gave when the Government were in exile.

Mr. Budgen: On reflection, will my right hon. Friend concede that he may have been unwise last Wednesday when he said that the Government supported the Kurdish leaders' aims and objectives of autonomy within Iraq? Is not it vital to make a distinction between humanitarian aid and becoming involved in Iraq's internal politics?

Mr. Hurd: We have no desire to dictate or arrange either the map of Iraq or its constitution. The purpose of the presence of our troops in northern Iraq is, as my hon. Friend said, purely humanitarian. That does not prevent us from saying, when asked about our views, that we believe that the Kurdish people should have autonomy within the boundaries of Iraq.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: What steps is the Secretary of State's Department taking to elicit exactly what is meant by Saddam Hussein's offer of an autonomous region for the Kurdish population? Has the Secretary of State made representations to the United Nations to ensure that the Kurds are represented at the middle east peace conference?

Mr. Hurd: I have not done that, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State has been in touch again this week with Kurdish leaders in London. I have no precise information, but I understand that some of them are holding discussions with the Iraqis. The Kurdish leaders know better than anyone else what Saddam Hussein is capable of.

EC Foreign Policy

6. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of the experience gained during the Gulf crisis for the European Community's development of a common foreign policy.

Mr. Hurd: The Twelve acted together in condemning Iraqi aggression and in applying sanctions. They are not a defence community and did not seek to agree on military contributions to the allied effort in the Gulf. It is in Britain's interests to seek the greatest possible agreement within the Twelve on foreign policy matters and to act jointly when such agreement has been reached.

Mr. Wilshire: Does my right hon. Friend agree that foreign policy and defence policy must be in harmony for progress to be made? Does he also agree that the record of joint action, as distinct from rhetoric, both in the Gulf and in relation to the problems with the Kurds, makes unhappy reading? If that is so, does he agree that it is possible to be a good European by supporting the economic aspects of the EC, while seriously questioning the so-called advantages of a joint defence and foreign policy?

Mr. Hurd: The defence policy for members of the Atlantic alliance should rest on that alliance. I do not agree with my hon. Friend's other point. In the Gulf, both during and before the war, the record of the Twelve was certainly patchy, as I have said before. With regard to the present position of the Kurds, not only is the Commission playing a substantial part in the relief effort, but we are working closely on the spot with our partners, particularly the Germans, French and Dutch.

Ms. Short: Will the Foreign Secretary raise with all the European Foreign Ministers the present position in Iraq, the continuing uprising for democracy and, in my view, the disgraceful attitude of the west in failing to support that objective—*[Interruption.]* Please, Mr. Speaker, will you make Conservative Members behave themselves?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Lady can look after herself—but hon. Members should, please, behave themselves.

Ms. Short: Will the Foreign Secretary openly say that Britain gives its support to the uprising for democracy, and invites other European countries to do so, is willing to meet the Iraqi opposition and will give humanitarian and political support to them, or are we happier to allow Saddam Hussein's regime to continue?

Mr. Hurd: Of course we are not happier to do that. We have been in touch with Kurdish leaders, as I have said, and other opposition leaders as we are with a wide range of leaders of all opinions in many countries. As I have said, and as we have constantly said in the House, it was not the purpose of military action or of the presence of troops in Iraq—either during the war or now—to alter Iraq's boundaries or dictate its constitution.

Mr. Burt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the lessons of the Gulf conflict has been the need for European politicians to work more closely together? To that extent, does he welcome the closer relationship that now exists between Conservative Members of the European Parliament and their colleagues in Strasbourg?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I do welcome that—it is a step forward. I am clear, as regards not only the middle east, but all our dealings with, for example, the Soviet Union, that it is a substantial strength to this country if we can reach agreement with our partners on such matters and act on them. If we cannot reach agreement, we should not be bound by a majority voting on such matters. If we can reach agreement, it makes sense to do so and to act jointly.

Mr. Shore: I welcome the first part of the Foreign Secretary's reply, but put it to him, to place it clearly on the record, that the divisions in the European Community on how to react to the Gulf crisis were, to put it mildly, very worrying indeed, and if we had then been subjected to majority voting in Europe, no effective action would have been taken by this country or others in Europe. Therefore, in the light of the current discussions on a treaty for political union, will the Foreign Secretary make it plain that he will resolutely oppose the extension of majority voting to any aspect of foreign policy, as distinct from seeking consensus, which is entirely sensible, and co-operation with our European friends?

Mr. Hurd: That is indeed our objective, but I hope that neither the right hon. Gentleman nor any other hon. Member will underrate the advantage to this country of seeking agreement and joint action within the Community. I find that that happens over and over again, although not always. It did not happen all the time in the Gulf, but when it does happen, it is well worth getting.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my right hon. Friend stick to his guns and continue along the path down which he is already advancing, of ever-closer co-operation on achieving a more closely co-ordinated foreign policy?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. My hon. Friend chose his words carefully and I shall try to do the same. I agree with what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said: if we had had majority voting at some of the discussions which I attended during the Gulf crisis, the contributions of Europe, and of ourselves and the French in particular perhaps, might well have been less than they were.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that one perfect area in which to seek agreement and to execute joint action would be Antarctica? Is it not therefore a matter of great regret that Britain is now the only European country—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members read the question carefully, they would see that it refers to lessons learned from the Gulf for joint European co-operation. Is it not therefore a matter of great regret that Britain is now the only European country advocating mineral exploitation?

Will the Foreign Secretary and his Minister of State stop pretending that we are trying to find consensus when we are leading the minority opposing a consensus? Will the Foreign Secretary send his Minister of State to the Madrid conference now—I am sure that he would like to go—following in the footsteps of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), to take over the delegation and join the rest of Europe in opposing any mining in Antarctica for an indefinite period?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member has got lost, not for the first time. He strains our credulity when he describes the proposal for a moratorium which we put forward as advocating mineral exploitation. It is nothing of the kind.

British Hostages (Lebanon)

7. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the measures he is taking to free the British hostages held in the Lebanon.

9. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in efforts to secure the release of British hostages in the Lebanon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to make every effort in our contacts with the Iranian authorities, who we believe to have a decisive influence, to secure the release of the hostages. We have also contacted other countries, and the European Community troika, to reinforce the point in their own dealing with Iran.

Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development raised the matter with the Iranian Foreign Minister on 20 April.

Mr. Hind: My hon. and learned Friend will no doubt agree that the detention of Terry Waite and John McCarthy is inhuman and morally unjustified, and should be terminated as soon as possible. Is he satisfied from his contacts with the Syrians and the Iranians, who have the key to their release, that the two men are still alive? How recently has information about that been made known to him?

Mr. Hogg: As my hon. Friend knows, there are three hostages—John McCarthy, Terry Waite and Jackie Mann. We are deeply concerned about their plight. We believe that the Iranian Government have a decisive influence over their future. We have made it plain to that Government that we very much want to see our relations with Iran greatly improved. They will improve greatly once the hostages are delivered up.

As to Syria, I was there last month and I raised the question of the hostages on every possible occasion, and with President Assad. We do not believe that the Syrian Government have a decisive influence over the fate of the hostages, but, of course, the Syrian Government have considerable influence within Lebanon and over Iran. The Syrian Government have assured Her Majesty's Government that they are using every opportunity to impress on Iran the need to release the hostages. I believe that the Syrian Government are doing that.

Mr. Summerson: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the people of Lebanon should have the right to self-determination? Does he further agree that, if they had their own sovereign state within a democratic framework, not only would the hostages be released but the taking of hostages in future for political purposes would never happen?

Mr. Hogg: I do indeed think that the people of Lebanon have the right to self-determination. Apart from other things, that means that there should be no foreign troops in Lebanon, and that is a policy objective for which we must strive. Clearly, the taking and keeping of hostages is a dreadful business, and we must use every opportunity —and we are doing so—to procure the release of all hostages, especially the three to whom we have already made reference.

Sir David Steel: Following the welcome and long overdue release of Mr. Roger Cooper by the Iranian authorities, is the ball not somewhat in our court? Should not we contemplate the appointment of full ambassadors in London and Teheran, and should not we be seen to be active in trying to secure the release of Sheikh Obeid from Israel, where he was abducted from the Lebanon?

Mr. Hogg: I think that the taking of Sheikh Obeid, or anyone else of that kind, is an extremely reprehensible act, and it is extremely important for him to be released with all possible speed. As regards ambassadors, as I have already said, it is our intention to improve our relations with Iran as soon as the hostages are released. I think that ambassadors will be exchanged shortly after the hostages are released, but I do not see them being exchanged until that time.

Mr. Madden: While improving diplomatic relations between the British Government and Iran and Syria are most welcome, and clearly hold part of the key to the release of British hostages in the Lebanon, does the hon. and learned Gentleman place more importance on the arguments by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), speaking on behalf of the Liberal Democratic party, about the third side of the triangle lying in Israel? Will he put more pressure on Israel to release not only Sheikh Obeid but the large number of Arabs held prisoner or hostage by the Israelis, because many of us believe that that could be the decisive factor in obtaining the urgent release of British hostages in the Lebanon?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly should like the Government of Israel to release the people to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred. However, there are two dangers in the argument that he deploys. First, the taking of hostages is a dreadfully wrong act, and it is important not to link one thing with the other. Secondly, and perhaps more materially, our influence over the Government of Israel is limited in that respect. Therefore, if one impliedly accepts a linkage between the two and then fails to deliver what the hon. Gentleman is arguing for with the Government of Israel, it could make prospects more, rather than less, difficult for the three hostages to whom I have already referred.

Mr. Adley: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that, in three recent visits to the Lebanon, I have received every possible assistance from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, both before, during and after my visit. I cannot recall a specific request that I have made to the Government to which they have not acceded. Having said that, may I reiterate to my hon. and learned Friend the last two questions from the other side of the House? Will he accept it from me that while the Iranians, who do not hold hostages, are doing what they can to help with the release of our people, the Israelis, who do hold hostages, are seemingly doing nothing whatsoever to give assistance?

Mr. Latham: Israel has not got any hostages—Obeid is a terrorist.

Mr. Adley: It is no use my hon. Friend saying that Israel has no hostages. We all know about Sheikh Obeid.

Mr. Latham: They are terrorists.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Could the hon. Gentleman ask a question please?

Mr. Adley: Will my hon. and learned Friend ensure that, as regards relations, we mete out the same treatment on equal terms, to both the Iranians and the Israelis, as we are asking both of them to help with this problem?

Mr. Hogg: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind observations on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, although it put me on the qui vive when I heard him saying it. I welcome his visits, and I am grateful to him for the persistence and the courage that he has shown. As far as Israel is concerned, I think that I have already responded to that issue and I do not think that I have anything to add. As regards Iran, I do not wholly agree with the premise of my hon. Friend's question, because I believe that Iran has a decisive influence and say over the fate of the hostages.

Mr. Kaufman: Without in any way detracting from the hon. and learned Gentleman's efforts on the matter, and without any discourtesy to him, might I ask whether it would not have been appropriate, on the fifth anniversary of the incarceration of John McCarthy, if the Secretary of State had dealt with this question in order to emphasise the importance attached to it at the top of government? I am sure that, when he was in Damascus, the hon. and learned Gentleman was told what I was told when I went there for the same purpose—that the hostage takers pay great attention to the level at which such matters are treated, and that they drew attention to the fact that President Bush and Mr. James Baker had written personally, regularly and consistently about them to President Assad.

Mr. McCarthy has now been incarcerated for five years; Mr. Waite is also there and we have no news of whether Mr. Mann is even alive. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that the Government will take every opportunity at the highest level to press the issue? Other countries have had hostages released and although there are no facile comparisons, the British people are determined that our hostages should also be released.

Mr. Hogg: We believe that Jackie Mann is still alive. We cannot be certain, but we believe so. There is no item on the agenda between the Government and Iran which is more important than this issue. It is our paramount consideration and guides all our dealings with Iran. As to the importance that my right hon. Friends attach to the release of hostages, the Prime Minister has sent a message to President Rafsanjani. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has spoken to Foreign Secretary Velayati about this issue, and I raised it on two occasions with the Iranian chargé, and also in Syria last month. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development also raised the matter in Tehrain last week and the European troika has been enlisted, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. We have taken every opportunity—through our friends and allies and by ourselves—to impress on the Iranian Government the fundamental importance of getting our hostages out. Nothing is more important in our relations with Iran.

Iraq

8. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with Iraq.

Mr. Hurd: There can be no question of establishing normal relations with Iraq in present circumstances.

Mr. Arnold: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the presence in Zakho in northern Iraq of hundreds of Ba'athist armed police and of reports now coming out of intimidation and looting by them. Bearing in mind the potential for an armed clash between them and the Royal Marines now in the area and also bearing in mind the disincentive that they provide to the Kurdish civilians to come down from the hillsides and into care in the Zakho area, what steps are being taken with the Iraqi Government to secure the immediate withdrawal of those armed units?

Mr. Hurd: I share my hon. Friend's anxiety. We are in close touch with our American and French allies to decide the best way of dealing with the matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can I ask a critical question about the Kurds? In the event of the discussion that is currently taking place in Baghdad between Mr. Talabani and the Iraqi Government leading to agreement, will the Foreign Secretary and the Government go to the United Nations to seek a resolution to underpin that agreement in as far as it provides an international guarantee? Is not that the only way in which the Kurdish population in Kurdistan can be reassured that whatever measures are necessary will be taken to ensure their future security? Is not that the only way to proceed?

Mr. Hurd: I do not believe that the Kurds would feel particularly safe under the procedure which the hon. Gentleman sketches. They need, and will seek in any discussions in Baghdad or elsewhere with the Iraqis, something more local. They will need some clear assurance that, if they and their women and children return to their towns and villages, they will be secure, then, as the hon. Gentleman says, that they will enjoy autonomy. The Kurds need local assurance, and our humanitarian effort in the north is, of course, designed to help provide some of them with that.

Mr. Bellingham: The Foreign Secretary will be aware that, during the Gulf war, the Iraqis committed some serious war crimes, including crimes against our own air crews based in west Norfolk. What is the up-to-date position on bringing the perpetrators of those crimes to justice?

Mr. Hurd: We have emphasised throughout that anyone from the top down in Iraq who is guilty of committing these offences will be held responsible for them. Of course, one must first bring them under jurisdiction. The Kuwaitis are doing that, and the Saudis are doing it in some respects. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has arranged for the collection of any evidence. If my hon. Friend has evidence that he would like to make available, I hope that he will do so.

South Africa

10. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure the implementation of the United Nations declaration on South Africa adopted in December 1989.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We continue to encourage all sides in South Africa to maintain progress towards the aims set out in the United Nations declaration—the end of apartheid and the adoption of a non-racial, democratic constitution arrived at by peaceful means through negotiation.

Mr. Martlew: Surely the Minister agrees that it would not be right to remove sanctions at this time, because apartheid has not been done away with? Apartheid is not something which can be partially done away with. It must be put in the dustbin of history. We cannot take away sanctions, because there are still 1,300 political prisoners in South Africa and there are serious doubts that the land reforms proposed by the South African Government will take place. There is news this week that those land reforms will be watered down. I should be grateful for the Minister's comment on that point.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am afraid that I do not entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Britain, in conjunction with our partners in the Europe Economic Community, is attempting to recognise that President de Klerk has made substantial strides towards the type of society that all hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to see. That is the policy in both the United Kingdom and the wider community.

I have seen an early-day motion on political prisoners, to which the hon. Gentleman and several of his hon. Friends have subscribed. Certainly, that is also a serious matter. We welcome the release of 500 political prisoners this year, and we hope that that process will continue.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome for the fact that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will visit South Africa soon, for the statesmanlike remarks of President de Klerk during his visit to Britain, and for the arrival of Mr. Nelson Mandela in Britain this morning? Does he agree that the view that the progressive dismantling of sanctions is the best way of encouraging consolidated, desirable change in South Africa is ever more widely accepted throughout the world, except, it appears, by some of the dinosaurs on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The visit of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to South Africa this summer is a welcome step. It is a recognition by Her Majesty's Government of the encouraging progress that we have seen in South Africa. As my hon. Friend will be aware, Mr. Nelson Mandela will meet my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon. I agree with my hon. Friend: some Opposition Members had the opportunity to meet President de Klerk during his visit to London. *[Interruption.]* I am afraid that they did. Whether that will cause them trouble in their own party, I am not aware. It is encouraging that some Opposition Members met President de Klerk. I hope that they were impressed, as many of my hon. Friends were, by what President de Klerk had to say about progress in South Africa.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Minister aware that we expect from him something much better than parrot-fashion repetition of what he is told by President de Klerk? Is it not the case that the political prisoners have not been released; that the exiles have not returned home; that, since the release of Nelson Mandela, no progress has been made towards real negotiation about the transfer of power; and that the black majority in South Africa still have no vote? President de Klerk declined to meet the all-party South Africa group and when, yesterday, he was asked about the political prisoners, he could not answer but responded with the memorable "Majorian" phrase, "Wait and see." Does not the Minister realise that the people of South Africa cannot wait any longer? The peace progress is in great danger, and nothing that the Government are doing is helping to put pressure on de Klerk to deliver the goods.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Member's interest in and commitment to an integrated South Africa is well known, and I respect it. However, he is not prepared to recognise the very encouraging steps that have been taken by President de Klerk. It is untrue to say simply that political prisoners have not been released. In fact, 500 have been released in the past year. In addition, more than 1,000 political exiles have returned to South Africa. Unless the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends are prepared to recognise the real progress that has been made in South Africa, they will not make the contribution to the future of that country that I am sure they would wish to make.

Sir Ian Lloyd: May I endorse warmly the welcome that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) has just given to the news that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is to visit South Africa and that, possibly, there will be a visit shortly after that by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? May I remind both of my right hon. Friends that, in 1962 or 1963, the then right hon. Harold Macmillan made a very dramatic speech before both Houses of the South African Parliament, in which he referred to "the wind of change"? I suggest that, if the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister is asked to make a similar speech, they will recall the hurricane of change that has blown through that continent and elsewhere in the world. The world as a whole is pretty sick of hurricanes, so perhaps such a speech would be more appropriately referred to as "the change of wind" speech.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend's visit to South Africa will be part of Her Majesty's Government's efforts to continue the process of changing it into a non-racial, democratic country. I am quite sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would like to visit South Africa when the time is right. No doubt he will be encouraged by the cautious welcome that the Leader of the Opposition has given to that proposition.

Mr. Anderson: Do not the Government recognise the potential danger to British interests of our being still seen in the international community, including the European Community, the Commonwealth and the United Nations, as enthusiastically in favour of the premature lifting of sanctions? Are the Government prepared to listen not only to President de Klerk but to the representatives of the majority? Will they recognise that, in addition to the matters that have been referred to by my hon. Friend the

Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), the Internal Security Act, particularly section 29 on preventive detention without trial, is still in force? Until that Act is scrapped, all the exiles are back home, and all the political prisoners have been released, there cannot be a climate for negotiations with a view to bringing South Africa truly back into the international community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am sorry, but I am afraid that I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. For example, the recent decision of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Community to lift sanctions against South Africa was not pressed by Britain, but was taken unanimously. As the British Minister attending that meeting, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I received substantial and solid support both from Mr. Genscher and from Mr. de Michelis. I do not think that Her Majesty's Government would for one minute apologise for attempting to lead the European Community and the rest of the world in recognising the very important changes than have been taking place, courageously led at the moment by President de Klerk.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friends take the opportunity to get through to Mr. Mandela and to the African National Congress the message that the world is growing increasingly impatient with their persistent policies of sanctions and non-co-operation in the time warp in which they seem to be stuck? Will my hon. Friend take every encouragement from what President de Klerk has been saying this week, that legislative apartheid will be abolished in June and that the British Government's policy of relaxing and indeed abandoning sanctions will help that process far more than the ANC's policy of trying to wreck everything?

Mr. Garel Jones: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that the consistent policy that the British Government have pursued has played an important part in the process of reform to which he referred. Mr. Mandela is a force for moderation, and his meeting with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon will undoubtedly be an opportunity for my right hon. Friend to make some of the points to which my hon. Friend has just referred.

Iraq

11. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had concerning the Kurdish population of Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has had many intensive discussions with his American, European Community and other colleagues, the United Nations Secretary-General and relief agencies. The United States Secretary of State and European Community Foreign Ministers discussed the plight of the Kurds when they met on 17 April in Luxembourg.

Yesterday, I had meetings in Geneva with Prince Salruddin, Mr. Stafford of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, when we discussed the plight of the Kurds. I have also had three meetings with representatives of Iraqi opposition groups, including Kurds, and one of those delegations met my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank the Minister for that reply. Did he discuss with the Iraqi opposition their calls for a provisional coalition Government? Does he agree with their views that that would help overthrow Saddam Hussein more permanently? Finally, will he comment on the desperate need to get material aid moving in Britain as so much of it is being stored in warehouses? People have been gathering material together, but cannot get it shipped out to Iraq because of organisational problems in this country. Will he support more material and organisational aid to the Iraqi opposition?

Mr. Hogg: United Kingdom support for delivery and dispatch of aid is very considerable. The hon. Lady will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development said on that subject on Monday. The Kurdish opposition groups did not talk to me about a provisional Government. They think in terms of the Iraqi army overthrowing Saddam Hussein. They talk about their aspirations, which we strongly support, for a democratic pluralistic society, ensuring civil rights by constitutional means. They also support the concept of an autonomous Kurdish region within the existing frontiers of Iraq.

Jordan

12. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Jordan.

Mr. Hurd: I last visited Jordan in January. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State went there last month for useful discussions with King Hussein. I hope to visit Jordan again before long.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Since the Jordanians are likely to suffer a loss of $3·6 billion largely due to export reductions, transient payments and lack of remittances from the Gulf, and since it is important to maintain stability in Jordan and the middle east, what ideas does my right hon. Friend have for providing support to the Jordanian people during their crisis?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. We have a long friendship with Jordan, which will survive the disagreement we have had over the Gulf. There is no doubt that a stable Jordan is in Britain's interests. We have a bilateral aid programme, and we are also joining the substantial European Community aid programme, which amounts to £105 million, the first charge being delivered in February this year.

Mr. Kaufman: When the right hon. Gentleman has discussions with King Hussein and other leading figures in the Jordanian Administration, will he discuss with them the ideas which have been put to me by Mr. Peres, the leader of the Israeli Labour party, and which have been considered constructive by the Foreign Minister of Egypt and by Mr. Faisal Husseini, that Jordan can play an important part in bringing about a settlement of the Palestinian problem by helping to solve the problem of how the Palestinians should be represented?

Will the right hon. Gentleman make clear to the King and in every other circumstance the strong support of the United Kingdom Government for the strenuous and admirable effort made by Mr. James Baker to bring about a middle east settlement? Will he also publicly deplore in

this House the setting up of a new settlement by the Israeli Government on the west bank, which cannot do other than damage the attempts at a peace settlement in the middle east?

Mr. Hurd: We strongly support the efforts that Mr. Baker is making at the moment. We constantly urged the United States to make an energetic attempt to tackle the problem when the Gulf war was over, and Mr. Baker is now attempting to do that. Last week, in Luxembourg, he explained to us the lines on which he is working and they seemed sensible to me. Whether they will succeed is another matter.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about the foolishness, to put it mildly, of the Israelis establishing, and trumpeting their establishment, new settlements on the occupied territories at the present time. That policy is wrong at all times, but particularly damaging at the present time.

One of the key problems is who speaks for the Palestinians. As the right hon. Gentleman said, Jordan might be able to play a helpful part in that. That is not certain, but it is something which is being considered, and it is worth doing so.

President Iliescu

13. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions with President Iliescu of Romania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had no opportunity for substantive discussion with President Iliescu during the latter's recent visit to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that President Iliescu welcomes the help given by this country to the 170,000 children still in Romania's orphanages? Will he confirm that the British embassy in Bucharest will give all possible help to British couples who have been cleared to adopt Romanian orphans?

Mr. Hogg: Yes, indeed, but we must also remember that the interests of the children in question must be the paramount consideration of everyone.

BILL PRESENTED

Health and Safety at Work (Tobacco Smoking)

Mr. Alan Amos, supported by Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Mr. Anthony Steen, Mr. John Bowis and Mr. Roger Gale presented a Bill to amend the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 so as to provide for the control of smoking in places of work; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 May and to be printed. [Bill 141.]

Local Authorities (Street Lighting)

3.31 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require relevant local authorities to make an annual assessment of street lighting needs; to set standards of quality, maintenance and improvement; and for connected purposes.

I make no apology for raising the subject of street lighting once again, as it is important for hon. Members to recognise that the existing stock of street lighting in Britain is in an appalling state. Much of that stock is already unsafe as well as shamefully unsightly. In fact, most of the United Kingdom stock of municipal lighting is more than 40 years old, worn out and well past its true shelf life. A massive backlog of work cries out to be done.

Street lighting has become one of the Cinderellas of local authority spending, and as other pressures are exerted, the renewal of Britain's lighting stock has been put to the back of the queue. Worse still, every year, when the sun comes out and the clocks go forward, the problems of inadequate street lighting are forgotten for another year. For the most part, therefore, existing budget levels are totally inadequate.

Spending at current levels, for example, is now insufficient to meet the replacement of deteriorating columns in all metropolitan districts. Overall, estimates reveal that metropolitan districts should be spending some £19·5 million per year over the next five years to replace expired columns. However, only £6·9 million per year is being spent—a shortfall of about £12·5 million per annum.

A major spending programme is, therefore, genuinely required. That will not be achieved if we continue with the inaction and neglect that means putting things off year after year. The solutions lie with central and local government. It is no use the one blaming the other. Both must recognise that what is required to tackle the problem is a radical change of policy, with a new framework to produce solutions and actions, and funds to finance those actions.

Historically, street lighting has been installed to enable the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians in the hours of darkness. Such installation has been related largely to the public highway and is based on accident reductions from nationally accepted "accident saving" figures.

The Department of Transport readily accepts that effective lighting reduces night time accidents by at least 30 per cent. and that lighting can reduce accidents in fog. It has been argued that the recent M4 carnage might have been avoided if lighting had been fitted as standard on the motorways, as the police had previously urged.

In recent years, there has been increasing evidence that the appropriate level of street lighting can make a significant contribution to crime reduction and, in particular, to reducing public apprehension of crime, not least among the elderly and women. A British standard now requires that pavements should be better lighted—in the past, the object was to light roads for traffic rather than give a care for those on foot.

Today it is evident that good road lighting installations improve the confidence of road users, particularly pedestrians, and assist the police and emergency services. Before and after studies of relighting schemes carried out by Middlesex polytechnic's centre for criminology in some London boroughs showed that good lighting has a valuable role to play in the reduction of crime and the perceived fear of crime.

Recently, the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham commissioned one of the reports as part of its relighting programme. The feeling of personal safety was increased for 63 per cent. of householders and 62 per cent. of pedestrians questioned. In addition, the threat of harassment to women decreased spectacularly.

In the London borough of Tower Hamlets, another revelation was that 69 per cent. of people interviewed felt that their personal safety had increased and 94 per cent. believed that fear of crime had been reduced. In addition, residents believed strongly that crime and anti-social behaviour had decreased.

The Home Office has a tendency—indeed, it is always tempted—to dismiss this kind of strong human reaction as unscientific, perhaps because it does not do the research itself. That is probably why, of all London boroughs, it chose Wandsworth for its research, the results of which we have been awaiting for far too long.

The House will also be interested to know that six independent academic surveys are being carried out at present in the major cities of Manchester, Birmingham, Hull, Leeds, Glasgow and Cardiff on the relationship between street lighting, crime, the fear of crime and the quality of life. The work involves a relighting scheme preceded and followed by detailed survey work by academics from local universities and polytechnics.

I am informed that as yet it is too early to provide a comprehensive picture from the initial survey findings, but the results in some of the large cities are as dramatic as those of the first surveys in London. Street lighting has been shown to have an important effect on crime, fear of crime and the quality of people's lives. Between 65 per cent. and 75 per cent. of people regard fear of going out alone after dark as a problem.

Some examples of that include the fact that more than half those questioned said that they deliberately avoid certain streets at night because of fear. More than 60 per cent. of people regard their street lighting as inadequate and poorly spaced. In a large 1960s housing estate in Leeds, 95 per cent. of people believed that improved street lighting would be the most effective way to increase women's safety in the locality.

One problem for local authorities is that street lighting cuts across different Government Departments. The benefits of better public lighting are of real importance and are the proper interest of the Department of the Environment, the Home Office and the police. Yet the spending decisions fall to the Department of Transport and the highway authorities. As long as no one Department ultimately has responsibility, we are likely to have difficulty and we must find a way to bridge that crossover of interests.

In recent years there has been a revolution in public lighting technology. In many cases, spending on improved lighting can have a demonstrable pay-back—a positive rate of return. The London borough of Enfield is devoting half the funds raised from recycling glass to renewing its street lighting. A £300,000-a-year programme to replace existing street lighting will be combined with improvements to footpaths, shopping parades and mini-roundabouts. The borough engineer and surveyor has also

been authorised to carry out a boroughwide survey of accidents and to report on how improved lighting could help to enhance safety.

Today's lighting is better and cheaper. A single street light burning all night, every night, provides for seven households at an operating cost of £30 per annum. New lighting soon recovers its cost because it uses less energy and is much cheaper to operate. It brings benefits by reducing accidents, crime and fear of crime and by improving the quality of life especially for women and the elderly.

Local authorities must be encouraged to develop assessment criteria and techniques to build on the work of the academic surveys to date and the example of places such as Enfield, and they should be required to use that approach in ordering spending priorities. They should be required to ask themselves the following pertinent questions to show the physical state of clapped-out columns and equipment. First, what is the spending level of replacement lighting equipment and how does that compare with the levels required to prevent further deterioration? Secondly, when do we start the programme of replacement? Thirdly, what assessment has been made of the impact of improved lighting upon crime, the fear of crime and the quality of life of residents? Improved lighting is highly popular with men and women, young and old, and is a visible demonstration of concern for people as well as vehicles in the priorities for transport and highways.

The after-dark environment of our towns and cities is a key factor in our quality of life. In our residential areas as well as our town centres, a decent environment demands freedom from robbery and burglary, from vandalism, harassment and threats and from anxiety and fear and freedom to walk the streets at night. That would make better public lighting attractive to ordinary people.

I firmly believe that community problems such as street crime, vandalism, harassment and fear can be solved by well resourced, co-ordinated initiatives managed by local authorities. Better public lighting is a basic requirement of local communities. It would help to cut crime, to increase people's sense of security and to inspire wider community activity.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. George Robertson, Ms. Joan Walley, Mr. Ted Rowlands, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. George Buckley, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse and Mr. Ray Powell.

Local Authorities (Street Lighting)

Mr. Alan Meale accordingly presented a Bill to require relevant local authorities to make an annual assessment of street lighting needs; to set standards of quality, maintenance and improvement; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 10 May and to be printed. [Bill 142.]

Orders of the Day

Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CARRYING ON OF CERTAIN ACTIVITIES

3.42 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 22, leave out from 'for' to end of line 23 and insert

'an Executive Agency within the Civil Service of the Crown to carry out designated activities at the premises; and'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 3, in page 1, leave out lines 24 to 27.

No. 2, in page 1, line 24, leave out 'or another company' and insert 'Executive Agency'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 4, leave out 'their services and'.

No. 5, in page 2, leave out lines 7 and 8.

No. 8, in page 2, leave out lines 10 to 13.

No. 9, in page 2, leave out lines 10 to 19.

Mr. Rogers: Our amendments are an attempt to restore a little sanity to this vital issue. Over the next few hours, we shall debate, in effect, the privatisation of the production of nuclear warheads. That fact cannot be dressed up, however much the Government may try to do so by using words such as "contractorisation", and by saying that they will keep control. As the Minister acknowledged throughout the Committee stage, this is privatisation—privatisation based on the Government's incompetence. In effect, they are saying that they cannot manage Aldermaston and our nuclear weapons production any more, and that they are not good enough at the job, so private contractors will have to be brought in.

As my hon. Friends know, the Conservative party is the party of big business. It likes to present an efficient streetwise image, although we know that it cannot manage the economy. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement was a member of the Committee, but he was too busy to turn up for its meetings. He was probably too busy polishing his antique cars to bother to show up. With his background, it is no wonder that he does not want to talk about defence procurement. After all, he is the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. Any procurement failures in the areas that we shall be discussing this afternoon and evening fall directly upon the right hon. Gentleman.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): Name one.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister says, "Name one," by golly. We shall be embarking upon the single-service debate shortly. Every procurement problem that we have faced has involved overruns in time and costs. The Minister knows that he is hopeless at doing his job, but he is a military historian. He is not like his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the Secretary of State for the Environment. *[Interruption.]* Well, I do not know

[Mr. Rogers]

whether the right hon. Member for Henley is his friend. I believe that he described him as the "wrong horse" on one occasion. The right hon. Member for Henley was appointed Secretary of State for Defence specifically to introduce a business element into the Procurement Executive. He brought in his friend Sir Peter Levene to head the executive, and for the ensuing seven years we have had disaster after disaster.

The right hon. Member for Henley is now, as I have said, the Secretary of State for the Environment. Again, we shall have disaster after disaster. The right hon. Gentleman walked out of the Cabinet because he had quarrelled with his mistress or master. I am not sure how the previous Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), should be described. I suppose that the right hon. Gentleman is likely to run out again over the community charge or poll tax problems.

The decision to privatise the production of nuclear warheads was based upon the incompetence and mismanagement of the Government. They set up a committee of inquiry under Sir Francis Tombs, who is now Lord Tombs and the chairman of Rolls-Royce. The Tombs report never really came out. It has become one of the most secret documents under this most secretive of all Governments.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) asked on several occasions whether we could have sight of the Tombs report and other documents so that we could properly conduct our opposition to the Bill. We were allowed no sight of the report. The Government said that we could not have the report in full or in summary: the report remained entombed. The Government said originally that they would not let us have sight of it because it contained confidential advice to Ministers. There was talk of an internal advice note. In Committee, the Minister said:

"The Tombs report is an internal report that was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence for its own use on the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Many other Departments in Whitehall commission their own reports to help them to manage their own Departments effectively. As it is an internal report, it is not for publication. Indeed, it would be bizarre if every such report were made public. That is the main reason for it being confined to the Ministry of Defence."

That is not a good enough reason. The Minister added:

"Secondly . . . it refers to the Atomic Weapons Establishment."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 24 January 1991; c. 5.]

In other words, anything that refers to the establishment has a security classification.

Later, when the Government's credibility was punctured, they played their usual Tory trick. They wrapped themselves in a Union Jack and responded a little more hysterically, saying that disclosure would be against the national interest and against national security. The truth is that disclosure would be against the interests of the Tory party. I venture to guess that there is no classified material in the report. I guess also that there is no mention in it of the production of nuclear weapons. I have no doubt that it refers to organisation and management, but that could be the organisation of management of Marks and Spencer or Tesco. The same principles are involved.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): If there were classifed material in the Tombs report, would it not be simple to excise it and allow the remainder of the report, and in particular its conclusions, to be put in the public domain? Would that not better inform the House when it is making a decision on whether the Bill should pass into law?

Mr. Rogers: We specifically asked on many occasions the Government to do that. *[Interruption.]* The Minister is not really interested in the Bill; he showed that in Committee. That is why he is rabbiting on now. Instead of gabbling with his colleagues on the Front Bench, he should listen to the debate; he might then learn something about his Department.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) raised a valid point. We asked the Minister to take the classified material out of the report. Hon. Members who serve on the Public Accounts Committee or the Select Committee on Defence receive reports from which large sections have been censored. Of course, as Members of Parliament we cannot be trusted. The Government would not even think that Members of Parliament should be privy to organisation and management reports. We gave the Government the opportunity to delete classified material from the reports, but they refused to do so. They shrouded themselves in the Union Jack and said that it would be against the national interest.

The Government took the same attitude with the Select Committee on Defence. Despite the fact that it is Conservative dominated, the Government said that it could not see the report. The Select Committee commented on that in its report:

"A study undertaken by an outside consultant, on the board of a public company, is in a rather different category from advice tendered to Ministers by a Civil Servant acting in a professional capacity. It is unsatisfactory that, where a report by a distinguished industrialist may have formed the basis of a major change in policy, the House let alone the Select Committee charged by the House with oversight of the Department concerned, should be denied a view of it."

It is not only Labour Members who object to the Government's secretive manner; so does the Conservative-dominated Select Committee.

If mere management reshuffling was all that would result from the internal review and the Tombs report, we would say that, like every other Department, the Ministry of Defence was entitled to reorganise its management if it so wished. However, it is not just a matter of reorganisation. The Government have the right to instigate such reviews and to implement their findings on the basis of departmental management. But we are dealing with fundamental proposed legislation that will affect the way that we produce the most fearsome weapons that mankind can devise.

We tabled this amendment, which suggests an executive agency rather than contractorisation or privatisation, because we are greatly concerned about the way in which the Government are behaving. The employees and trade unions involved produced proposals and then presented a document to the Secretary of State. They met him and suggested ways in which the Government's fumbling, dithering and mismanagement could be overcome. The Secretary of State rejected those suggestions and said that the Government would go ahead with privatisation.

We understand the Government's objections to trade unions as a matter of political dogma. For the Government, anything that comes from the work force or the trade unions must be bad, while anything that comes

from their friends in the City or from big business must be good—except, of course, certain comments made yesterday, which must also be bad. However, as soon as the trade unions make a suggestion, the Government turn a blind eye. They jumped to the most extreme option available to deal with the problems at Aldermaston.

The Labour party and the trade unions accept that changes needed to be made, and still need to be made, in the management of the production of nuclear weapons. On many occasions we have criticised the Government, and we are not alone in doing so. The Tory-dominated Defence Committee said:

"It must be open to question whether the shortage of production and management experience now identified at AWE should not have been recognised at a much earlier stage and remedial action taken then, rather than after the programme had run into difficulties. Much the same thing happened with the construction of the A90 building. . . . It would appear that the culture of the 'self-sufficient' research establishment was not only entrenched in AWE but also in senior MoD management who failed to grasp that the AWE lacked the management resources required".

Just as importantly, we also recognise, as did the trade unions and the workers in Aldermaston, that a change was needed in the relationship between the Atomic Weapons Establishment and the Government—a relationship that has deteriorated to such an extent that it has led to the Government's extraordinary admission of failure to run those establishments. However, never did we or any rational person expect the Government to come up with the half-baked, ill-considered proposals in the Bill. They are so daft that we can see the Minister of State's hand in them. Such proposals could come only from his hand. I notice that he has retreated from the Chamber in disarray. He probably realised what I was going to say and has gone to the underground garage to polish his Rolls-Royce.

Even the Select Committee on Defence was taken aback by the Government's proposals. Paragraph 57 of its report says:

"On 5 December 1989, the Secretary of State announced measures far more radical and far reaching than the evidence put before us last year had implied, with his proposals for the full-scale contractorisation of AWE."

Paragraph 60 of the report says:

"Although the Secretary of State recognised the 'valid concern of the Select Committee about the need for improvements at AWE' and sought to place his proposals in the context of that concern, it is clear that they go a great deal further than this Committee envisaged or suggested".

Not even the Select Committee on Defence, which investigated this issue in great detail, envisaged that the Government would jump over all the reasonable options and land up with this most unreasonable proposition.

Our amendment would set up an agency formed on the model that was envisaged in "Next Steps", the document issued by the Government. It would be fully in line with the Ibbs report, the recommendations of which were fully accepted by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. The then Minister for the Civil Service, the right hon. Member for Shoreham (Sir R. Luce), characterised "next steps" as the Government's way of improving value for money and quality of service in the absence of a market mechanism. He also made it clear that

"More direct accountability would not be allowed to undermine the Northcote-Trevelyan principles upon which the Civil Service is based."—

that it should not detract from the essential accountability of departmental Ministers to Parliament; such matters are permanent. By adopting that dogma-based suggestion, the Government are creating yet another division between Parliament and the control of vital issues. When I spoke at a public meeting near Aldermaston some months ago, one of the supervisors said, "Mr. Rogers, I wish that they would realise in London that in Aldermaston we are producing not rocking horses but the most fearful weapons." However, it seems that the Government's political dogma has dictated their actions and prejudiced their judgment.

4 pm

The dogma is seen particularly in Government's attitude towards the work force in the establishments. If ever there were an industry requiring high morale to ensure maximum safety and security, it is this most potentially dangerous of all industries. But the Government, by their action, have created a poisoned atmosphere of mistrust among the workers and low morale, leading to increasing numbers of people leaving —the very thing that the Bill was supposedly intended to prevent.

The trade unions in the plant and the workers in the plant—more often constituents of Conservative Members than of Opposition Members—have continually made constructive suggestions to improve production and management. They have entered into pay agreements providing considerable flexibility and said that they were prepared to accept new frameworks for consultation. They recognise existing problems and have made positive suggestions, but the Government, due to their incompetence and inability to manage—which we see in so many aspects of public life today—have refused to respond. All reasonable objections and all reasonable suggested options have been rejected. That is why we have had to table the amendment and why we shall push it to a vote.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): The Bill considerably affects my constituency because a large number of the people who work at Aldermaston live in the villages of Tadley, Baughurst and Kingsclere and a number of surrounding villages. Therefore, anything arising from the Bill, particularly as it affects the staff, is of significant importance to my constituency.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister was helpful in explaining a number of the Bill's aspects as they affected my constituents. I think that hon. Members from both sides of the Committee will agree that the Minister was helpful throughout, and courteous in his treatment of the Committee. Therefore, I should like to express my gratitude to him, but remind him that, in politics, gratitude is a lively anticipation of further benefits to come.

Will the Minister repeat on the Floor of the House the assurances that he gave in Committee on four matters? First, will he give an assurance that existing and pre-contract No. 1 standards of safety will be maintained and rigorously enforced? Secondly, on security, will he assure us that the costs and standards of staff screening will remain the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence? Thirdly, will he assure us that there will be no reduction in the pensions that staff now have reason to expect, and that full indexation of pensions will remain?

Can my hon. Friend say a little more about a matter that I raised with him in Committee concerning contributors to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority pension scheme, known as the ukulele scheme? Those people were covered by the original arrangements for Aldermaston. When it was transferred to the Ministry

[Sir David Mitchell]

of Defence, they were given the option not to move to the new pension scheme, and many remained in the old one. There are about 700 people who would like to remain in that scheme. I have put the point to my hon. Friend, and he has expressed sympathy for the workers. Has he made any progress on the matter?

Fourthly, in Committee, my hon. Friend gave considerable assurances about redundancy. He did not expect any skill redundancies. If there are redundancies, he said that compensation would be on the same scale as for people employed in the civil service. Perhaps my hon. Friend can help me a little further by explaining how far into the future assurances that he can give about the maintenance of the arrangements for compensation for redundancy will continue. I understand that, at the time that the change to contractor employment takes place, redundancy will be fully covered by the existing arrangements. Will the workers be covered two months, three months or six months later by the assurances that my hon. Friend gave in Committee?

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman has said that the Minister gave assurances in Committee on redundancy compensation and said that it would be in line with redundancy compensation for civil servants. Does not the hon. Gentleman remember that, when we pressed the Minister on the issue, he acknowledged that he would not have control over it, that the workers would be employed by an employing company and would effectively not be civil servants, and that therefore he could not give any promise that they would have civil service treatment if made redundant? If the hon. Gentleman recalls the events in Committee, he will remember that we reminded the Minister what happened when the royal dockyards were privatised.

Sir David Mitchell: My understanding was that the matter was dealt with fully and carefully in Committee when my hon. Friend explained that the contract would require the contractor to meet those terms on redundancy. I think that I understood correctly what my hon. Friend said in Committee. I am now seeking assurances as to how far the contract will bind the contractor into the future.

Assurances on those four matters are of enormous importance to my constituents. I hope that when he replies to the debate my hon. Friend can repeat those assurances on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I too should like to pay tribute to the courtesy and, indeed, good humour of the Minister in Committee. I regret that his courtesy did not extend to accepting the quality and effectiveness of many of the arguments mounted against various clauses as the Committee stage proceeded.

Amendment No. 1 raises the fundamental issue of principle in the measure. That issue of principle was referred to by almost all who spoke on Second Reading and it came up time after time in our clause by clause consideration of the Bill in Committee. Of course, it gives rise to the consequences of some of the issues which have just been referred to and in respect of which undertakings have been sought. If the Government were not embarking upon contractorisation of the kind which the Bill embodies, the undertakings sought by the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) would not be necessary.

I remain firmly of the view that, in the development and production of nuclear weapons, there should be no dilution of ministerial responsibility. Ministers should be obliged to come to the Dispatch Box and to answer to the House for that responsibility. I remain of that view because these are weapons of mass destruction. I suspect that, of all the duties that are incumbent upon Ministers of the Crown, the responsibility to determine whether weapons of mass destruction are deployed, or even used, is probably the most awesome.

In my judgment, it is in the public interest that those who have that responsibility—a responsibility that includes the development and production of such weapons—should be answerable to Parliament. It may well be said that they will remain answerable to Parliament if these proposals are allowed to go through. However, as I have sought to point out on Second Reading and at every available opportunity since, if there is any falling down in safety, if there is any element in the way that the contract is fulfilled that is contrary to the terms of the original contract, Ministers will not say at the Dispatch Box that their Department has failed to exercise proper supervision; they will say that there has been a breach of contract.

As I have pointed out on a number of occasions, it beggars description for us to believe that we should go to the High Court in the Strand and litigate about such matters, especially at a time of national or international tension, when I should have thought that nothing could be more calculated to be damaging to morale.

This amendment is at the heart of the proposal. I am not persuaded that the production and development of something as important and responsible as nuclear weapons should be handed away, or that it should be subjected to the interposition of some other company between Ministers and their responsibilities. After all, the proper defence of the realm is perhaps the most significant of all ministerial responsibilities.

The Minister has tried, with his courtesy, tact and good humour, but he has not persuaded me that the proposal in respect of which this amendment has been tabled is valid. I encourage my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote in support of the amendment. Respectfully, it seems to me that, if it were carried, the Bill would better reflect Ministers' responsibilities and would much better reflect the public interest.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I am not prepared to argue, because the Select Committee on Defence, on which I have the honour to serve, has looked long and carefully at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Indeed, many years ago it was given a duty by the House to report annually on Trident and our nuclear weapons, and it still does so. I am not convinced that the pre-existing structure was right for AWE and I would not for one minute attempt to argue that it was. It could have been amended without recourse to "next steps" agency status, but the Government were not prepared to do that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has already quoted from a report in which the Committee was unanimous in saying clearly that the Government's proposals in the Bill go too far. There was no Division in the Select Committee. There has been only one Division in that Committee, which was many years

ago, because we strive to reach unanimity on major questions, especially on this most important question of the safety and continuity of our Atomic Weapons Establishment.

We have to consider the establishment in context. The only other establishment of the kind in the western world —one that is capable of making Trident warheads—was at Rocky Flats and it is now shut. The Americans have no capability to make warheads for their Trident missiles. That was widely reported last week in the Congressional Armed Forces Committee review, where the question was asked. I believe that diplomatic sources have been approached to find out whether Aldermaston could make warheads for them. I was given to understand that the reply was no and that Aldermaston was too busy trying to make them for our own requirements. Therefore, AWE is the only establishment of its kind. The question must be asked, what happened to Rocky Flats? Was it not capable of making weapons? Of course it was, and they were tested, but it was run in precisely the same way that the Government propose to run Aldermaston under the Bill and it became unsafe, polluted and a disaster area, which it still is. I do not believe that the installation will reopen.

4.15 pm

In 1978, the Pochin report was published. It dealt with a previous occasion when areas of Aldermaston became unsafe. Paragraph 3 of annex H states:

> "In matters of safety it is necessary to have redundancy in all aspects: in materials ('safety factor'), in control systems ('back-up'), in personnel ('emergency teams'), and so on. For example, a bridge or a lift that is just safe, but has no safety margin, paradoxically is in its most dangerous state. Redundancy of effort is as necessary as redundancy of materials. Where staff is the minimum necessary to achieve the bare level of safety any unusual concatenation of events may bring trouble."

I agree entirely with the Pochin report in that respect.

It may be convenient if I remind the House that because the new commercial management, which seems to have been in operation even before the Bill is passed, took steps to change the arrangements of shift working for routine maintenance—a desperately important safety requirement —for the first time since the closure of plant which led to the Pochin report, the plant failed to operate on one normal working day. Everybody turned up for work but could not work because the maintenance effort had been cut. That is just one example of what we appear to be facing.

A few weeks ago, when Dr. Glue appeared before the Select Committee, I questioned him about what had occurred. He is supposed to be responsible to the Minister for ensuring that the plant is operated in a safe and efficient manner. I was less than impressed by his response. He implied that it was more important to score minor points against the trade unions on a rota working agreement than to ensure the safety and continuity of the plant. What was the Government's response? It was to continue with the Bill as drafted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) explained in detail why we have tabled the amendments. I listened carefully to the points raised by the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), who is not here. The only way that he can be certain about the issues that he raised is to join us in the Division Lobby in support of the amendments. Anything that the Minister says is consequent on him achieving a good enough contract with the managing contractor and on that contract being complied with. As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) rightly pointed out, if such matters are dealt with in that way, they will literally become matters of opinion, and that opinion will have to be decided in the High Court. That is not good enough for something as potentially dangerous as the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

I pay tribute to the management, to the employees and to the design of the new buildings at Aldermaston because they are excellent and work safely, and efficiently, when they are allowed to do so. Having said that, because of the previous direct civil service conditions of service and the contraints on the plant, the way it was operated as a research establishment and nothing more and the way in which the manufacturing aspect was taken care of were good enough. However, a "next steps" agency under the Government's own arrangements could take care of those problems without the potentially dangerous introduction of a management contractor, over which the House and Her Majesty's Government would have control only through the contract itself.

I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House who are convinced that Aldermaston should work in a safe and effective fashion to support the amendments. If they do not, they may allow Aldermaston to be run in such a way that there is a better than even chance, on the evidence before us, that it will have to be shut for safety reasons.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Those hon. Members who did not go through the sweat and long hours of the Committee stage should be reticent in arguing with their colleagues. I should have liked to serve on the Committee, but it took place alongside the proceedings on the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill on which I had a lot and a half to say, so I could not serve on the two Standing Committees at once. I excuse myself to the Minister for not being on the Committee.

This is a most important Bill. Like the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), I believe that the Bill is the core of an important argument. We have read press reports which may or may not be accurate to the effect that there is some question—I put it no higher— about the stability and long-term safety of existing British nuclear weapons.

I had the honour to be asked to contribute to the obituaries of the late Lord Penney. I recall that one of his anxieties over the years was that testing, monitoring and checking had not taken place because, the distinguished physicist argued, no one could be certain that arms that were stored for a long or longish period of years would remain stable. I am not in a position—I do not think that anyone in the House is—to make judgments about the physics of such weapons, but when a man of the experience of Lord Penney says that there is some doubt, it is up to us to take some notice.

I know better than to ask the Minister outright whether British nuclear weapons are unsafe. Even if he thought they were, I suspect that he would be justified in not telling me, at least on this occasion, in open debate and without the coverage of the Official Secrets Act, by which I am not covered. However, I am entitled to ask a rather different question. Are the Minister, the Secretary of State for Defence and their senior colleagues satisfied that, under the arrangements that they propose, important matters can be monitored in the detail that they certainly were at one stage by those working at Aldermaston? The answer

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

may be that they are quite relaxed about it, that they have made all the arrangements and are absolutely certain that there are no possible dangers and no possibility of the physics of instability applying at Aldermaston. If the Minister said that, I for one would not dispute it much further. I would take it as an honourable answer on behalf of the Government. However, I would like it to be put on the record that the Minister really believes that, under the proposed arrangements, the stability of the weapons can be properly and effectively monitored.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Through circumstances far beyond my control, I was unable either to speak in the Second Reading debate on the Bill or to take part in the Standing Committee proceedings. My information on what was discussed in the debates is somewhat limited, so I shall keep my remarks as brief as possible.

As both Aldermaston and Burghfield are in my constituency, the question of safety is of paramount importance to my constituents—not only those who work in the establishments, but everyone. I live only five miles from Aldermaston. My hon. Friend must be aware of the long-running saga of the leukaemia and lymphatic cancer cases. The Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment has looked at these, but has not yet come up with a definite answer.

COMARE—a Government body, albeit independent of Government control—is responsible for doing what its title suggests it should do. I applaud much of what this Bill contains. If it becomes law, will COMARE retain its predominant position? Will it still be able to investigate anything that gives rise to concern about safety in an establishment, anything that worries people living in the area? I am thinking about possible emissions from Aldermaston or Burghfield. Such an assurance would go a long way towards putting at rest the minds of those who are concerned that contractorisation and the safety element are not spelt out quite as clearly as we should like.

Over the 18 years during which I have represented the constituency of Newbury, there have been a number of reported leaks. On such occasions it is very reassuring to my constituents that their Member of Parliament can put down a question and expect a reply within three days, and that if that reply is not adequate further questions may be put down. If, in such an event, it is no longer possible to take some safeguarding steps on behalf of my constituents, contractorisation will damage itself in terms of the security that is necessary for the sake of the future of the establishments.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): My comments will be even more brief than those of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir Michael McNair-Wilson). I want simply to reinforce the points that he made and the argument that I understand was made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). Aldermaston is indeed in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury, but it is also very close to the borders of three parliamentary constituencies, of which Basingstoke is one. As I live about one mile from the Aldermaston perimeter, I can beat the claim of my hon. Friend.

I hope that the Minister is taking serious note of hon. Members' concern about general matters of safety. Members of Parliament representing constituencies in this area feel that they have a particular responsibility. I welcome the assurances that my hon. Friend the Minister has given to date.

Mr. McWilliam: I am very surprised at what the hon. Gentleman is saying. In Committee, he had the opportunity to vote for specific safety amendments that we introduced, but he did not do so. Indeed, he opposed them.

Mr. Hunter: That is very easy to answer. I listened to the arguments of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, but was not convinced by them. That is why I did not vote for the amendments.

Mr. McWilliam: Rubbish.

Mr. Hunter: We listened for many hours to the arguments, but we were not convinced. The fault lies with the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, not with us.

Mr. Rogers: Even if the hon. Gentleman felt that our arguments were not good enough, surely he should have been convinced by the content of the amendments, every one of which was worded carefully with a view to enhancing the safety aspects of the operation at Aldermaston. I accept that we may not have been able to convince the hon. Gentleman by argument, but surely the text should have done the job.

Mr. Hunter: I do not dispute the hon. Gentleman's intentions, but I certainly dispute the force of the argument which supported the amendments, and for those reasons I shall have no part of them.

I conclude by stressing that I look forward to further reassurances from my hon. Friend the Minister.

4.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): It is a pleasure to reply to the first debate on the Bill on Report. As the House will know, the amendments are intended to ensure that the Atomic Weapons Establishment will in future be operated not by a commercial company but by an executive agency within the civil service. We have had a very sober debate, and I shall seek to answer the points that have been made and restrict myself to the scope of the amendments.

We have to admit that, if we accepted the amendments there would be no need for the Bill. Obviously, the Secretary of State has the power to set up an executive agency without a Bill. Therefore, everything in the Bill relates directly or indirectly to the fact that, under contractual operation, the staff at the AWE would no longer be civil servants. However, I should like to reply to the point made initially by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and stress that we are not privatising the assets, property or equipment of the AWE, which will remain under the ownership of the Secretary of State. We are transferring only the management of the manufacturing. It is important to bear that in mind when people start talking about privatisation.

Mr. Rogers: I am afraid that, like the Minister of State, who has left the Chamber, the Minister simply was not listening to what I said. I never said that the Government were privatising the assets or property of the AWE. I said

that they were privatising the management of the production of nuclear warheads within the establishment. I accept that the Minister will remain the janitor of the buildings.

Mr. Carlisle: I am glad that, in that poetic way, the hon. Gentleman has made it clear that we have reached agreement on that particularly important point.

In contrary to his assertions, we have seriously considered the arguments in favour of a "next steps" agency at AWE. Such agencies have considerable attractions for those organisations which should be part of the civil service, but after careful thought we reached the conclusion that the AWE is not such an establishment. However, I should like to join the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) in paying tribute to the staff at AWE. The fact that they are being contractorised is no slight on their considerable and unique talents, expertise and skills. Some of the staff at AWE are pre-eminent in the world in their branch of science.

However, we believe that enterprises, especially industrial ones, are generally run more efficiently in the private sector. Therefore, where it is right and feasible to introduce full contractorisation, we prefer to do so.

The Atomic Weapons Establishment is involved in research and development and in manufacturing. In our view, such an establishment belongs in industry and not in government. Of course, the fact that the business is nuclear means that very stringent safeguards are required, but not that personnel must be civil servants. Just because manufacturing is best managed by those with experience of industry, agency status would be only a partial solution to the problems at AWE. That would not involve the full and early introduction of private sector expertise and would not allow access to the production and management expertise of a large industrial concern. In my view, it is only full contractorisation that can give full, private-sector management flexibility, pay flexibility without reference to Whitehall, as well as the all-important access to the corporate expertise of a major industrial company or consortium.

AWE does everything from research and development to production, in-service maintenance support and final dismantling. AWE is therefore a complete industry and it should be allowed to benefit from the industrial management expertise of the private sector. I believe that the logic of that argument means that we have every right to carry it through.

We must always remember that our ability to meet the challenging Trident programme which is now building up is our prime aim. That is vital if we are to sustain our independent deterrent. We believe that the contractorisation of the operations at the AWE will secure that aim.

I have visited the various establishments, and I know that there is concern among the employees about various aspects of the change because we are asking them to leave the civil service. Many of the issues raised by them relate to employment and safety.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) for his kind words, as well as for those of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). Those hon. Members and others are particularly concerned about safety aspects, which formed the bulk of the questions raised in the debate. Safety is the paramount aim, which we intend to achieve. We shall have all the existing safeguards, such as the safety directorate, but we shall also introduce two important additions.

First, the compliance office, which is responsible to and employed by the Ministry of Defence, will be represented at the four establishments. The staff of that office will have the right to go anywhere in those establishments to monitor any activity to ensure that full safety is achieved. The second addition is the safety requirement which will figure largely in the contract. Penalties will be imposed if safety is not properly pursued, and, in addition, incentives will be part of the contract to reward excellent performance on safety.

Mr. McWilliam: Who will pay the salary of the compliance officer and his staff?

Mr. Carlisle: The MOD. The staff will be employed by the MOD, thereby ensuring their independence.

If the contractor impinges on the safety requirements or does not live up to his legal requirements he will, for the first time, be subject to a court of law, which the Secretary of State never can be.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the compliance office responsible for passing judgment on the stability or otherwise of existing nuclear weapons? If not, who is responsible?

Mr. Carlisle: I shall deal with that point in a moment, but it is important to remember that the responsibility for safety does not rest just with the compliance office. That responsibility will rest largely with the contractor and the work force.

As I said, the safety directorate will remain at the AWE, and the unions and all the employees will have a direct interest in safety. When I visited those establishments, they told me that they would be the first people to jump on any lapse in safety standards according to their views. Therefore, safety is not just the responsibility of one person; it will depend upon the combined surveillance and alertness of a range of people.

The points raised about safety are of particular relevance to the local people and to my hon. Friends the Member for Hampshire, North-West and for Newbury (Sir M. McNair Wilson), who wrote to me raising points of interest throughout the Bill's passage, and it is nice to see him in recovered health, and my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), who also pursued safety matters throughout the Bill's passage.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Minister tell us a bit more about how he envisages the compliance officer operating? Can any employee of the private contractor go freely to the compliance officer and say that an infraction of procedures has taken place, of which the latter may not be aware because some of the poisons are invisible and cannot be recorded on a monitor, without it affecting his promotion or job prospects?

Mr. Carlisle: That would be a reasonable way to proceed. The compliance officer will not only receive information as a result of his own observations and studies but also from within the establishment. I hope that what the hon. Gentleman suggests takes place.

Sir David Mitchell: Since the compliance officer is to have a relationship with the Ministry of Defence, can my

[Sir David Mitchell]

hon. Friend give the assurance for which my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) asked in relation to answering questions in the House?

Mr. Carlisle: All Members of Parliament will be able to ask questions in the House on any matter concerning the AWE, and the Secretary of State will have to answer them.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): What about the question of safety? It will be the responsibility of the compliance officer to see that everything is okay, but what powers will he have if he notices that the contractor does not have enough staff on the job to provide safety cover? That could happen tomorrow, and we want to know what the compliance officer would do if it did.

Mr. Carlisle: The compliance office will have strong powers. It will be able to instruct the contractor to remedy the defects, and if the contractor fails to do so, the compliance office will have the power to shut down that part of Aldermaston; so its powers are strong.

Mr. Rogers: If that is the case, why are the compliance officer's terms of reference not within the Bill? As I understand it, the compliance office will be set up. Under the terms of contract as outlined at various times by the Minister, if the contractor conforms he will receive his money, if he puts up a good performance he will receive extra money, but if he does not perform, the only way to make him do so is to go to court. That is what the Minister said when he opened the debate. Why does not the Minister put the functions and duties of the compliance office in the Bill, as the Opposition suggested in an amendment in Committee?

4.45 pm

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman has been a Member of the House long enough to know that everyone frowns on a part of a Bill that is superfluous. The Secretary of State already has the power to set up a compliance office. To prove that, the compliance office is already being formed. It is bad practice to put into a Bill powers which already exist, and it is right to follow good legislative procedures.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Is not the Minister being a little disingenuous in that answer? This is a matter of public confidence. We are changing, dramatically and fundamentally, the way in which nuclear weapons are developed and produced. Would it not be in the interests of public confidence and in support of what the Government now propose to ensure that the compliance officer has express statutory responsibilties in respect of the new arrangements that the Bill seeks to introduce?

Mr. Carlisle: No, the Secretary of State already has the power to set up a compliance office, and he has given undertakings time after time that the compliance office will be a central part of our plans for contractorisation. As I said, it is superfluous to write it into the Bill. If one were to follow the hon. and learned Gentleman's line of argument, every Bill would be massive, because everyone would be seeking guarantees. I remind Opposition Members that this is a narrow Bill, which creates arrangements in connection with the setting up of an employing company.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister really is talking a load of rubbish.

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): The hon. Gentleman cannot say that.

Mr. Haynes: I am saying it. He is talking rubbish. We want to know what kind of safety cover will be available in the units and what kind of responsibilities this chappie will have. He has massive responsibilities and it is a load of rubbish to say that they should not be in the Bill. It is not just hon. Members who want to know exactly what responsibilities this chap will have. The Minister is pushing things to one side in this important measure.

Mr. Carlisle: If the hon. Gentleman wants to make such an intervention, he should listen more carefully to the debate. I have answered quite a few of his points already and it was a mistake to give way to him.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has been very patient. He raised an important point. As I understand it, he was talking about the implications of the Drell report. We remain closely in touch with our United States colleague. Governments of all parties give the most careful consideration to safety matters, because safety of the nuclear warheads and missiles is pre-eminent.

It may be of some comfort to the hon. Gentleman to know that the warhead that we will be using in Trident will be designed and manufactured in the United Kingdom. It is not the same as that designed in the United States, although we have confidence in the United States warhead. It will be the subject of a comprehensive series of trials and independent assessments to ensure its safety both before and during operational service. There is an independent check on the safety of our nuclear weapons in the form of the nuclear weapons safety committee and the ordnance board, both of which have independent status and which report on and study carefully the safety of our warheads.

We take the matter extremely seriously, but we are confident that what we are designing and have designed is safe. In addition, as I have already explained, safety will be central to the contract, and we will not compromise on it one jot. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman. It is obviously a matter that we will have to continue to regard seriously.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the ordnance board, under the terms of the contract, have complete access to the confidential information of the contractors? Are the contractors obliged to reveal anything that is asked of them to the ordnance board?

Mr. Carlisle: The contract has not yet been written, as Labour Members know, but we intend to put into it everything necessary for safety. The nuclear weapons safety committee and the ordnance board will continue to have the full authority of their independent status.

Mr. Rogers: To use the words of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) the Minister's response is disingenuous. We tried in Committee to get details of the contract, and we were told that the contract had not yet been drawn up. For the past year, however, 22 people at Aldermaston have been carrying out the functions of phase 1 of the contract. The Minister therefore should not say that we do not know what is in the contract because it has not yet been drawn

up. There is an extant contract, and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow has asked whether the provisions governing the ordnance board are in that contract.

The Minister appears to be nodding. In that case, next year, after we win the election, we shall check those terms, because he will not let us know them now.

Mr. Carlisle: The provision does not have to be in the present contract, because the place has not yet been contractorised. So the authority of the ordnance board and the nuclear weapons safety committee is the same as it has been for the the past few years. The hon. Gentleman cannot have understood the Bill. At the moment, in phase 1, there is an interim contract. Only in October 1992 will we enter the second phase of full contractorisation. There is no point in starting to draw up the contract in detail until we have secured the Bill.

The hon. Member for Blaydon asked a question about safety, referring to the American experience. The American experience, and indeed the experience of Russia, where there was an horrific nuclear explosion at Chernobyl in a nuclear institution run by the State, show that, whether nuclear facilities are owned by the state or are privately operated, safety has to be considered as a separate issue. We have studied the American experience carefully and have ensured that we would add the safeguard of the compliance office to our current safeguards. Safety will be written into the contract, and we are satisfied that our arrangements will meet any criticisms that arose with the GOCO experience.

Mr. Dalyell: There must be a careful study of the American experience. Has the Ministry of Defence considered the Zebrowski report on Three Mile Island in that context?

Mr. Carlisle: I am certain that it will have done, but perhaps I should write to the hon. Gentleman, who is a past master at bowling googlies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury raised an important point about the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment. Its studies will continue and have our full support. We value them highly. It may be of some comfort to my hon. Friend to know that the latest study of his area showed that radiation from Aldermaston and Burghfield was negligible—far too low to account for any observed increase in childhood leukaemia in his area. In any event, I understand that the increases noted appear to have taken place in major urban areas such as Reading, not in the villages next to the Atomic Weapons Establishment site.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Would it be fair to ask my hon. Friend whether the tritium leak will be referred to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment?

Mr. Carlisle: That is very much up to the Committee. The incident took place in a research facility which had nothing to do with the manufacturing operation now being helped by Hunting-BRAE. The leak was very small —only two thousandths of the normal annual natural radiation to which people are exposed. Nevertheless, any leak of any sort is serious, and we are investigating it. We intend to learn the lessons of any inquiry into it.

Mr. Rogers: Again I do not understand the Minister's answer. The hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), in whose constituency Aldermaston lies, asked the Minister about the tritium leak. I understood the Minister to reply that the leak took place in a research facility, but in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), he said that it took place in the A91 building, which is a production facility, not a research facility. Can the Minister clear up the confusion?

Mr. Carlisle: The A91 building has not even been commissioned yet. There is no tritium in the A91 facility. The hon. Gentleman must get his facts right. [HON. MEMBERS: "You gave that information yourself."] I shall have to look into the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West was worried about other aspects of safety and security. The Ministry of Defence will retain responsibility for the positive vetting of everyone concerned. Redundancy terms for anyone now at the AWE will continue as if they were in the civil service before vesting day. Those terms will be written into the contract, which will come up for renewal after five or seven years, but the redundancy terms would continue thereafter as a condition of service, which could not change without the employees' agreement. If employees did not agree, they could claim unfair constructive dismissal, under which they would be entitled to their previous redundancy entitlement. That gives them security.

Mr. McWilliam: Will the Minister confirm that the protection under TUPE will last only until vesting day, and that from vesting day plus one it will disappear?

Mr. Carlisle: Will the hon. Gentleman repeat that question?

Mr. McWilliam: Will the Minister confirm that the employees are protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 until vesting day, but that after they have been transferred into their new employment, they will lose that protection? Even before that time, they can claim only unfair dismissal.

Mr. Carlisle: That is not true. The TUPE regulations persist for a certain time after vesting day.

Pensions were debated at length in Committee, and the House will recall that AWE staff are usually members either of the principal civil service pension scheme or the UKAEA principal non-industrial superannuation scheme. Following contractorisation, a single new scheme will be established for AWE staff; it will match as closely as possible the schemes as they are at vesting day. No one will be made to suffer detriment to their pension arrangements as a result of contractorisation. The pension rights will be written into the contract and thus guaranteed, so that everyone's pension will be at least as good as the pension that he can expect now.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): Will my hon. Friend comment on the transferability of the new pension under the new structure? Will it be transferable to other pension funds if the staff move elsewhere?

5 pm

Mr. Carlisle: I shall continue with the section of my brief that I was on before my hon. Friend intervened. I understand that he may wish to return to the question of transferability.

[Mr. Carlisle]

I fully understand that individuals feel an attachment to their pension scheme and may be anxious at the prospect of leaving it. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West and others were especially concerned about members of the AWE staff who are members of what they have described as the atomic energy scheme. I undertook sympathetically to consider the arguments that my hon. Friends advanced.

I am pleased to confirm that, if they so choose, staff of both pension schemes will be able to leave their accrued service up to vesting day in their present schemes. They will not have to transfer their accumulated pension rights to the new AWE scheme. A person will therefore be able to receive an atomic energy or civil service pension on retirement that is based upon their length of service before vesting day. That will be topped up by an additional pension under the new scheme that covers service after vesting day. This option may be especially relevant to the older AWE members of the atomic energy scheme, given their attachment to the scheme and the considerable length of service covered by it. To this extent, no one is being forced out of his or her existing pension scheme.

I have discussed in some detail with my colleagues in the Treasury and the Department of Energy the possibility of going further and allowing, by amendment to the Bill, service by ex-atomic energy staff at AWE after vesting day to accrue within the atomic energy pension scheme as opposed to the new AWE scheme. My hon. Friends will remember that the possibility was debated in detail in Committee.

I must tell them, however, that the conclusion of the discussions with the Treasury and the Department of Energy was that it would be wrong to agree to such an amendment. That is partly because of longer-term complications that would result in having some former civil service staff at AWE in a different scheme from other employees, and partly because it is the Government's general policy that, whenever staff are transferred from the public to the private sector, they should not remain in a public service pension scheme.

I must emphasise that staff will not have to take their accrued service in the atomic energy scheme and the civil service out of the atomic energy scheme if they do not wish to do so. I can help to some extent those who are concerned about these matters. I know from the contents of my postbag and from talking to those who are concerned that the older members of the atomic energy pension scheme are by no means entirely content with all its provisions. Some of those at AWE are less than happy about the scheme's constraints on retirement before the age of 65.

I shall ask my officials to discuss with the trade unions possible ways of extending to ex-atomic energy staff at AWE some of the flexibility that will be incorporated in the new pension scheme for AWE staff after contractorisation. It is unlikely that we shall be able to substitute 60 years for 65, but we may be able to ameliorate the position somewhat. To that extent, the new pension scheme at the contractorised AWE will be an improvement on the pension conditions which would otherwise have prevailed for the ex-atomic energy staff at AWE. When the pension arrangements are improved in the way that I have described, I hope that my hon. Friends will be partially satisfied at least.

Since 5 December 1990, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence first announced the Government's proposal to introduce full contractorisation at AWE, there has been much debate about the principle of contractorisation and the options. I have heard nothing to weaken my conviction that the introduction of a contract operation with appropriate safety, security and financial safeguards is the best way forward for AWE. The House will know that AWE has been able to meet the requirements of the early stages of the Trident programme. As the requirements increase and AWE's manpower shortage continues, it is necessary that it should do even better.

To achieve that, we must bring to AWE the production management expertise and freedom to manage which a contractor operation can offer. We cannot secure that freedom or full management and manufacturing experience if AWE remains an agency. I therefore recommend that the House reject the amendments.

Mr. Rogers: I am most unhappy with the Minister's reply, although I am obviously pleased, as are those who represent employees at Aldermaston, with the proposed alterations to the pension fund. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends would welcome the proposals, as would the work force and the trade unions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) asked the Minister whether he could give any assurance that employees would be protected from redundancy after vesting day plus one, and referred to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. The Minister replied, "Yes, that is in the regulations." Where does it appear? I ask the question at an early stage in my remarks, so that those in the Box can have time to advise the Minister.

Sir David Mitchell: I understand that the assurance appeared in the contract and not in the regulations. It will be part of the terms of the contract that the contractor has to comply with the civil service terms on redundancy during the term of the contract. I understand also that that is what my hon. Friend the Minister said in Committee. Perhaps my hon. Friend will have the opportunity to confirm that. I hope that I have succeeded in explaining why the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) cannot find the assurance in the regulations.

Mr. Rogers: I was not talking about what was said in Committee. I was referring to what the Minister said at the Dispatch Box a short while ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon asked the Minister whether there would be any protection from redundancy for workers on vesting day plus one. The Minister replied that the answer was to be found in the 1981 regulations. My colleagues and I have read the regulations, and it seems that they do not provide the assurance that the Minister suggested. Our argument is that all the talk about protecting people's rights falls in the absence of the assurance in the regulations.

Mr. McWilliam: Perhaps my hon. Friend will reflect on the Minister's statement that the contract has not yet been written. I do not know how he can construct legislation

that ends in a contract when he does not know what will be in the contract. Have I understood correctly what the Minister appears to be saying?

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: I shall respond, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon intervened in my speech. He has raised a point of interest, not merely a debating point.

There are 7,000 workers who are concerned about redundancy, and most of them are the constituents of the Minister's hon. Friends. I am happy to allow the Minister to make even a lengthy intervention to clarify the issue.

Mr. Carlisle: With the leave of the House, I shall intervene. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) has provided the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) with the correct answer. The 1981 regulations have been implemented in the transfers of many employees, not least those in the dockyards.

It seems that the hon. Member for Rhondda has not read my answer on building A91. There is no tritium in the building and it has not yet been commissioned. It has been constructed for the treatment of low-level liquid waste. Some faults were found in it while it was in the process of being commissioned. That is why there was no radioactive material in it. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads my answer.

Mr. Rogers: I am quite happy to read the answer. The Minister said that there was corrosion in the A91 building and that it was a production, not a research, facility. I have the grace to say that, in that matter, the Minister may be right. I only wish that he had the grace to apologise when he has been shown so often to be wrong. *Hansard* will show what he said about the transfer of undertakings on the protection of employment. He cannot bury his answer under a frivolous remark about safety problems. Many constituents of Conservative Members are concerned about the protection of redundancy and pension rights. Indeed, I am not sure about any protection. If those people asked me for advice, I could not give it to them.

The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), who is a former Transport Minister, is an expert in privatisation matters. I served on the Committee that considered the Bill to privatise bus services. He was so good that, when we asked him why he wanted to privatise bus services, he said, "I went to Cheltenham, where there is a private scheme. I jumped on a couple of buses and asked a few old ladies what they thought of privatised bus services. They said that they thought they were good, and that is why we want to extend privatisation throughout the country." That was the great scientific survey on which the Department of Transport based the privatisation of bus services. Nevertheless, more thought went into the privatisation of bus services than has gone into this Bill, which will privatise the production of nuclear warheads. It is a cobbled-together Bill.

I do want to delay the House as we are anxious to proceed to the first vote. I am anxious to discover how Conservative Members will vote. When we tabled amendments in Committee dealing with such matters as safety, pensions and redundancy, which sought to enhance the position of the constituents of Conservative Members and others who, like me, live in south Wales, Conservative Members voted with the Government. We must not forget that Aldermaston is only one of four atomic weapons establishments. If Conservative Members had any guts or gumption, they would vote with the Opposition tonight. They cannot be clear about the issues. I challenge them —especially those who have had letters from constituents, copies of which have been sent to us—to vote with us tonight.

I know that the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West voted with us once in Committee, so perhaps I am doing him a disservice. He spoke fluently and impressed the Minister. Conservative Members must put their votes where their mouths are, and that means voting with us tonight.

Sir David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman has issued a challenge, and I will take it head on. My constituents have raised certain matters with me through letters, meetings and interviews. On each of the four matters on which I asked for assurances from my hon. Friend the Minister, I have had assurance. That is why I feel confident in supporting my hon. Friend in the Lobby.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is easily pleased. He should have pressed the Minister to include some safeguards in the Bill. The Minister said that it is a very narrow Bill. When we spoke about share deals and other matters being included in the Bill, he said that it was too narrow. It is; it is only three or four pieces of paper. There would have been plenty of room to include the regulations and safeguards that we want. We would have been quite happy to read a couple more pages if that meant that we could protect the interests of those working in the establishments.

5.15 pm

We are not happy with the Minister's replies. He will not accept the amendment that would establish an agency, and that is a severe indictment of his party's policy. We want an agency based on the "next steps" model, which is his party's policy. It has been promulgated, developed and promoted by the Government, but the Minister would not trust it to run Aldermaston. He claims that any industrial activity is better in private hands. We all know what happened to Rolls-Royce; it did not do very well in private hands.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): It did.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is ignorant of what happened. He is only a young lad in school at the time. His school probably did not have newspapers. The hon. Gentleman is one of those to whom the Prince of Wales referred recently.

Rolls-Royce was a private company, but it went bust. It was taken into public ownership and turned around, and it was then returned to the private sector. Ferranti, another defence company, also went bust, was taken into public ownership and turned around. It is now back in the hands of the private-sector friends of the Tory party. There are numerous examples of private companies which, were it not for public intervention, would have collapsed. That is the history of the car industry. The private-sector friends of the Minister are not really that good.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's theme. Will he apply his mind to what would happen if a company that obtained the contract that the Bill would pass to the private sector fell into liquidation or

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

became incapable of fulfilling its responsibilities under the contract? What would be the consequences for national security?

Mr. Rogers: I had intended to deal later with the problem of the contract. The hon. and learned Gentleman spoke eloquently about that both in Committee and in his earlier intervention. The only recourse against a contractor would be through a court of law. Let us suppose that there was an emission of radioactive waste, followed by litigation against the company. Which company would be the subject of that litigation? Would it be the No. 2 company—the employing company—which is the only company with which the Government will have any connection? At present, the contracting companies are Hunting Engineering, Brown and Root and the Atomic Energy Authority. One of those companies is an American company based in Dallas. Another is a major engineering company, for which the production of nuclear warheads will be only a minor activity.

Against whom can the constituents of Conservative Members litigate? The employing company will exist only to employ people. What assets will it have? The Minister has already said that the Government will not give it any. Against whom can the workers and the communities litigate should there be yet another emission of radioactive material?

The proposal for contractorisation has been ill conceived out of the incompetence of the Government. It is a cobbled-together Bill. In Committee, it was evident time and again that the Government had not thought through the problems. They saw the American GOCO scheme and wanted to follow it, rather like some people wanted to follow schemes for marinas and theme parks. The Government therefore picked on the Atomic Weapons Establishment and decided to make it into a GOCO scheme without thinking the matter through. The production of nuclear warheads is far too serious an issue for a Government experiment. That is why we shall press our amendment to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 219.

Division No. 125] **[5.19 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter

Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, [illegible]
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Rogers: I beg to move amendment No. 6 in page 2, line 8, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State shall not make arrangements under subsection (3) above with any company—

(a) in respect of which more than 10 per cent. of the relevant share capital is held by—

(i) a person who is not a British subject entitled to residence in the United Kingdom, or

(ii) a company in respect of which a majority of the relevant share capital is held by a person or persons who are not British subjects entitled to residence in the United Kingdom, or

(b) which is a subsidiary of a company which would be caught by paragraph (a) above, or

(c) which does not fall within paragraph (a) or (b) above, but which nevertheless appears to the Secretary of State to be under the effective control of a person or a company defined in paragraph (a) (i) or (ii) above,

and if paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) above apply to a contractor at any time, then any arrangements made by the Secretary of State with that contractor shall be terminated forthwith, any contract between the Secretary of State and that contractor shall be void forthwith, and no compensation shall be payable to a contractor on account of such termination or voiding.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 10, in page 2, line 21, at end insert

'"relevant share capital" means the company's issued share capital of a class carrying rights to vote, and as further defined in section 198(2) of the Companies Act 1985; and a percentage holding of such relevant share capital shall be calculated as set out in section 200 of that Act.'.

Mr. Rogers: This group of amendments deals with the ownership of the companies involved in the privatisation. Ownership was and is a matter of great concern and we discussed it a number of times in Committee. The Opposition hope to convince the Government of the foolishness of their proposals. We want to ensure that any contract made between the Secretary of State and a contractor would contain a proviso in relation to any transfer to a person or persons not in the United Kingdom of any shares in such a company, so that if a transfer took place, it would be notified to the Secretary of State. In addition, we wanted to ensure that, where the transfer exceeded 5 per cent. of the income or value of the total share capital of such a company, the Secretary of State should terminate the contract.

Obviously, ownership is a major security worry. It would be of great concern if the company running the AWE were owned or controlled from overseas. There is nothing in the Bill, and we have received no assurances

[Mr. Rogers]

about this from the Government, stating that the contract must provide that the ownership of the production of nuclear warheads at Aldermaston, Burghfield, Foulness and Cardiff should not be in the hands of a foreign company or that there should be no foreign nationals working there.

Concern on this issue was expressed not merely by Opposition Members. Conservative Members, in particular the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), voiced deep fears. The hon. Gentleman mentioned security, and said:

"secondly, the protection of the national interest, in that secrets which are involved in the high technology production of atomic weapons should not be penetrated by any outside commercial or foreign power interests."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 31 January 1991; c. 77.]

Earlier in Committee, the Opposition had moved an amendment in an attempt to ensure that legitimate national interests could be protected against the vagaries of the stock market and money lenders. Although we pressed it hard, the Government rejected the amendment and the reasoning behind it—that, in the exceptional sphere of arms production, it was necessary to maintain not only accountability to Parliament, but domestic ownership of the companies involved in production.

In the third sitting of the Committee, the Minister stated in response to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell):

"I accept that share ownership details must be spelt out in the contract. It would be possible to set out in the contract who should own the shares and how many and provide for the Ministry of Defence to give prior written consent to any changes of ownership and shareholding. That would cover any takeover of the contracting company, and I guarantee that such a provision will be made in the AWE contract when it is drafted. That will meet the Committee's fears on that score."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 31 January 1991; c. 85.]

It is significant that there was no mention of a special share in either that quote or anywhere else in the Minister's answer. Obviously, there was no intention at that time to introduce the concept of a special share.

Even that statement by the Minister was unsound. The Government will not have any control over the purchase or sale of shares in the contracting company in which the Minister will have a special share because that special share is in the employing company. The contracting companies are Hunting Engineering, Brown and Root and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, so how can the Minister have a special share in those companies? The only place where he can have a special share is in the employing company.

Mr. McWilliam: What about the contracting company?

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend mentions the contracting company, but the contracting company is Hunting-BRAE. Hunting Engineering, Brown and Root and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority are private companies. The Minister intends to set up another company, which will be the employing company. It will operate within Aldermaston and will be a company with no assets. The Minister says that the Government will have a special share in that company. It will not even be floated on the stock market, so how can the Minister buy a special share? In Committee, in response to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, the Minister said that it would be possible to set out in the contract who owned the shares. Perhaps the Minister can tell us the mechanics of a special share.

This is another example of the Government's muddle-headedness over the Bill. They have not thought the matter through. The Minister has an opportunity to put the record right, or will we have long letters later, as we had in Committee, giving the explanation? When we raised matters in Committee, we were often told that the Minister would write, and a day or two later we got lengthy explanations. The trouble is that the Minister is running out of time. He must stop dithering and decide what he will do.

In Committee, we moved an amendment proposing that the Government retain a majority holding in the company so that there could be accountability to Parliament for the production of nuclear warheads. We thought that we had lost that undertaking. Then, after the fourth sitting of the Committee, we had a letter from the Minister saying that the Government would retain a special share. How can they retain a special share in something they do not own? Is the Minister going to create a special share? Perhaps he can satisfy us on that point and say how he will stop shares being sold. If he can explain how he can prevent shares in Brown and Root being sold on the Dallas stock exchange, I will be more than pleased. I was pleased at first sight by what seemed to be a return to sanity, but after closer examination of what the Minister had said, I realised what a sham the announcement was.

The Minister gave reasons in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). My hon. Friend has asked me to apologise to the House for his absence. His wife had an operation yesterday and he has had to return home. I thank him and all my hon. Friends for their enormous support in Committee. Had my hon. Friend been here today, he would have been speaking from the Front Bench on some of the issues.

In his letter, the Minister said:

"The Secretary of State's special share in the employing company will give him certain rights, including the power to prevent the company being dissolved or sold to outside interests. This means that he can ensure that the company will continue indefinitely to fulfil its sole function of acting as the employer of AWE staff."

At one time, the Minister says that he will retain a share to ensure that the company does not fall into foreign ownership, and at another he says that its only function will be to act as the employer of AWE staff. Of course, it will not have shares that can be bought or sold, because it will not be a registered company. There will just be a contract cooked up between the Minister and his friends in big business. The Government have done nothing about control of ownership of the contractor, about foreign ownership or about access by foreign nationals into this most sensitive of defence areas. Those matters were of fundamental importance in our amendments in Committee.

The Minister scoffed when I talked about control of ownership of the contractors and friends of the Conservative party. He should look at where the money comes from to elect him. Millions and millions of pounds are paid by big business to ensure that Conservative Members are elected. Surely the Minister does not think that he has been elected because of his great charm.

5.45 pm

The shares of Hunting and of Brown and Root will be sold on stock markets—the shares of Hunting in London, and the shares of Brown and Root, a wholly owned subsidiary of an American company incorporated in Dallas, on the Dallas and other American stock exchanges, although not in London. Our amendment may be too late, because part of the management control of the production of our nuclear weapons is already in the hands of a foreign company. However, the Minister said that he would not mind Americans being in control. He does not regard Americans as foreign nationals.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rose: It is no good the Minister shaking his head. He should know by now that I read Committee proceedings. If he wants me to, I can quote what he said about not objecting to Americans because they are friends of ours. If they turn into enemies, perhaps something will be written into the contract to cover that. Perhaps it will say, "If the Americans become enemies, the contract will be null and void."

In that context, we must remember that an important statutory function of our Atomic Weapons Establishments is to carry out research and development. Such is the production facility that all our basic nuclear research and nuclear secrets may be in the hands of foreign nationals. The special share could not prevent that, and the Minister knows it.

Let me quote from the same letter to my hon. Friend:

"I should first say that this special share does not run counter to anything that I said about the ownership of the contractor during the debate on amendment No. 3. We do not intend that the Secretary of State will hold shares in the contractor. The employing company is a separate company, formed by the Secretary of State solely for the purpose of employing the AWE work force. When a contract is awarded for the operation of AWE, the contractor will be required to acquire the employing company which will thus become a wholly owned subsidiary but only for the duration of the contract. If that contract were to change hands, the employing company would be acquired by the new contractor."

How the special share means that there will be any public accountability, or that the company cannot fall into the control of foreign nationals, is absolutely beyond me.

The ownership of the company is a matter of great concern to Conservative Members, as I mentioned when we were debating the last group of amendments. Compensation and possible litigation in the event of accidents were matters raised in Committee by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East and by my hon. Friends the Members for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) and East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). Against whom will there be litigation if there is an accident? Will it be against the company with no assets, which exists only to employ staff, against the foreign-owned company or against the Ministry of Defence, which will be the landlord or janitor, depending on how we want to describe it? Perhaps the Minister can tell the House.

We tabled the amendments because we are concerned about the matter. The problem is that the Government have allowed their party political dogma to shroud the national interest and to prejudice their judgment. They have not thought this through. The experiment is doomed to failure; that is why I hope that hon. Members will support our amendments.

Sir David Mitchell: I agree with the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), to the extent that there is a need to ensure that nuclear secrets remain secrets and that the contractor is United Kingdom-based. However, the amendments go much further than that and pursue an extraordinary course of action. They would have three principal effects. First, they would bar a company in which 10 per cent. or more of the shares are held by a non-United Kingdom citizen from having the contract; secondly, they would ensure that, if 11 per cent. of the shares are owned by a non-United Kingdom citizen, the contract is void; and, thirdly, they would ensure that no compensation will be paid if the contract is made void in such a way. That is different from ensuring that a foreign citizen does not have a majority shareholding, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will resist this group of amendments.

These amendments are especially revealing about the Labour party's attitude in 1991. They exemplify its narrow-minded, anti-foreigner attitude. It is a party prepared to accept the United States's nuclear umbrella but not prepared to allow a 15 per cent. shareholding by a citizen from that country. It would not allow a 15 per cent. minority shareholding by a NATO citizen, or by an Irish national, but it would allow——

Mr. Rogers: Does the hon. Member agree that it also would not allow Saddam Hussein to acquire a 15 per cent. shareholding, in the way that he did with Matrix Churchill and other companies that provided the armaments to kill British soldiers?

Sir David Mitchell: It is perfectly reasonable to ensure that the contractor company does not fall into foreign hands, but that is quite different from saying that no more than 10 per cent. of the shares can be held by any citizen of the various countries that I have described, which are friendly to us in so many ways.

The hon. Member for Rhondda is saying that a CND supporter can have more than 10 per cent. of the shares, but that a citizen of a NATO member country cannot.

I recall that the hon. Gentleman is a former card-carrying member of CND, as was his No. 2 spokesman in Committee. All his CND colleagues would be allowed to hold shares through his amendment, but a staunch supporter of NATO would not be allowed to. That strikes me as a pretty nonsensical amendment to table.

Mr. Rogers *rose——*

Sir David Mitchell: I have not finished with the hon. Gentleman yet.

One wonders why the hon. Gentleman takes such a view. Is it because he is desperately anxious to ensure the confidentiality of everything that goes on at Aldermaston?

Mr. Rogers: I assure the hon. Gentleman that, if I bought shares in such a company, it would be as an ex-member of the Welsh Regiment and not as an ex-member of CND.

Sir David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman does not deny that he is an ex-member of CND—a former card-carrying member—and, if I recall correctly, he said that he was proud of it.

I asked whether the hon. Gentleman was anxious to secure confidentiality in what happens at Aldermaston—I

[Sir David Mitchell]

see that he nods as an indication of his support for that view. Therefore, I shall quote from the *Basingstoke Gazette:*

"A Labour MP leading the fight against bringing in private management at the Atomic Weapons Establishment has asked workers for information about the Aldermaston plant."

Apparently the former card-carrying member of CND went down to Silchester, which is just outside my constituency on the borders of Aldermaston, and asked workers for information about the plant. Now he is tabling an amendment seeking confidentiality.

I quote again from the *Basingstoke Gazette:*

"Mr. Rogers promised confidentiality for information received".

It is a fine kettle of fish for the hon. Gentleman to come here now seeking to protect confidentiality, when he has gone to Aldermaston asking people to give him information about the plant.

The other aspect of this pair of amendments that I find extraordinary is that no compensation will be given to the contractor if it finds that 11 per cent. of its shares are held by any of these offending citizens from America or from NATO countries.

The hon. Gentleman has proposed that, if someone buys additional shares on the stock exchange and so acquires more than 10 per cent. of the shares, which the company has no power to prevent—it cannot control who buys and sells its shares—the contract becomes null and void. Not only that, but no compensation is paid. The shareholders who own nearly 90 per cent. of the shares will lose a valuable contract, with all that that implies, but will receive no compensation. The hon. Gentleman should take his amendment away, because it is rubbish.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I hope that I shall not be disqualified from participating in this debate by virtue of the fact that I have never been a card-carrying member of CND and have never had the honour to serve in the Welsh Regiment; nor am I a regular subscriber to that compelling organ of public opinion, the *Basingstoke Gazette.*

The amendment seeks to examine—in the context of Report stage—the circumstances in which control of a company which had obtained a contract under section 1(3) of the Bill might raise questions of national importance in the minds of the people of the United Kingdom. It is right and proper that, when one considers the contractorisation of the production and development of weapons of mass destruction, which form a significant part of United Kingdom defence policy and are likely to do so for a long time to come, we should examine with some scruples the extent to which the control of any such company might pass into hands which are not entirely sympathetic to the objectives of the people of the United Kingdom.

That seems an entirely proper issue for the House and the Select Committee to consider. The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) might have had something to say about the detail of these amendments, but may I respectfully say that he gave scant consideration to the principle behind them, which seems to me to be of considerable importance.

I have re-read the Minister's observations in column 105 of the report of the fourth sitting of the Standing Committee. As I understand it, he said that the special, or golden, share, will apply only to the company formed for the purpose of employing those who will work at Aldermaston. Apparently there is to be no attempt to create or retain for the Government any similar control in the company which may win the contract. That might raise questions of national importance.

If the shares of a company that won the contract for the production and development of nuclear weapons were to fall into the hands of other companies—or companies formed by national Governments; we know that that is by no means unusual—circumstances might arise in which control of the company at Aldermaston rested with another company or with a nation whose interests were wholly antagonistic to those of the people of the United Kingdom. How could we then guarantee that the company fulfilled the responsibilities placed upon it by the contract? It would be simple for the company to walk away from the contract during its lifetime and to say that it did not want to continue with it.

We should be left—as hon. Members have said—to seek recourse on the Strand to try to compel them to continue with it. In legal terms, that would be extremely difficult, and the Government's remedy would be to try to obtain damages. In the meantime, the production and development of nuclear weapons—which is, and is likely to continue to be, a central part of the United Kingdom's defence strategy—might be brought to an end, prejudiced or dealt with in such a way as to make it difficult for us to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent.

We are dealing with a substantial issue of principle, which we raised with the Minister in Committee. With respect, it seems that, in spite of his courtesy and tact, he did not contrive to deal with it in a way that could be considered intellectually compelling. It is now incumbent on him to explain to the House what remedy he believes that the Government would have in the circumstances that I have outlined. He might be dismissive of the amendments, but he must at least direct his attention to the principle they raise and give us what assurances he can about how the United Kingdom's national interest would be protected in such circumstances.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: If we were to follow the principles outlined by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) to their logical conclusion, we should not buy the missile from America or from General Dynamics, but should make it in this country. We depend on the good will of the Americans for the missiles to carry the Trident warheads. Without that good will, we should not have nuclear missiles.

6 pm

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman is right. Since the Nassau agreement, the United Kingdom has depended on the good will of the United States for the provision of nuclear missiles. Some people regard that as politically acceptable and some do not, but it is a fact. I am concerned that we should have to rely not merely on that good will, about which I am reasonably confident, but on the good will of unknown companies or unknown Governments whose commitment to the same ideals as us might be, to say the least, lukewarm. They may not be members of NATO or share the aspirations of the western alliance; indeed, it might be in their interests to prejudice the production and development of nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom.

The hon. Gentleman's intervention has, if anything, crystallised the argument. It has made even more sharply

the point that the Minister must consider. I hope that the Minister will share with the House his doubtless extensive discussions with colleagues from the Ministry of Defence about how the interests of the United Kingdom can be protected if the contract is won by a company the control of which may pass out of hands that the United Kingdom would regard as entirely friendly.

Mr. McWilliam: I listened carefully, and with some surprise, to the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). I thought that Senator Joe McCarthy was dead. Clearly, his descendants still exist in some form. He asked, "Are you now or have you ever been . . . ?" If the hon. Gentleman wants to know, yes, I was a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and I probably still am. I do not know. If not, I should be sorry because I should like to vote against some of its policies. One of the reasons for staying in an organisation is to change its policies.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Like the Labour party.

Mr. McWilliam: Yes, like the Labour party. We are members of all sorts of organisations, not because we agree with all of their policies—although we agree with most of them—but so that we have the right to change things.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) was right—I have been around Aldermaston. I probably have a higher security clearance than he has. That is not something to worry about.

I worry about what the application of section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to the selling of secrets about atomic production to a foreign national. There is an ugly word for that—treason. The Act does not differentiate between selling to a country that is friendly or unfriendly. It applies only to the passing of information.

Our nuclear programme was founded on American technology and on American transfers of information, but it has come a long way since then, and it is not based on that technology or on those transfers now. Much of the research on which it was based was carried out in this country, so there is plenty of room for co-operation.

The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West asked whether we should allow one of our NATO allies to acquire shares. I should be extremely worried if, for example, the Belgian company that refused to fill our 155 mm artillery shells, which we needed for the Gulf, was allowed to acquire shares. Belgium is a member of NATO, and that company could legitimately acquire shares if we accepted the hon. Gentleman's argument. I do not believe that that company should be allowed to do so.

I realise that the drafting of the amendment is extremely tight, but it has to be. Hunting Engineering is owned by Brown and Root (UK). Brown and Root (UK) is a myth. It is registered in the United Kingdom, but it has no British shareholder, unless those shareholders have acquired shares in the United States as it is an American-owned company. I am not anti-American. I should object if it were any other company.

In Committee, we pressed the Minister at least to recognise that it was not a good idea to allow foreigners to acquire sufficient control of our atomic weapons production so as to jeopardise it. What is more, we said that it was not a good idea because the more foreign control there was, the more the security of information was compromised. The Minister did not accept those arguments. I am willing to bet that the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West will not tell his constituents that he fought for the right of foreigners to own shares in Aldermaston. I have news for him. I bet that the *Basingstoke Gazette* is hanging on my words, and I hope that it uses them.

Sir David Mitchell: My point was that the amendment prescribes 10 per cent. as the barred level—so to speak—which seems ridiculous. Surely there can be no objection to a minority shareholding. There is an objection to a majority shareholding, which is why the Minister has introduced the golden share. That is different from the minority of 10 per cent.

Mr. McWilliam: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention, because it makes it clear to me that he has not even begun to comprehend what the debate is about. It is not about the niceties of who owns a company that makes ping-pong balls. If it were, I should leave the hon. Gentleman and his friends in the City to carry on—as they have since time immemorial—doing what they like. I am pleased that for the moment at least, such manipulation does not apply to the Atomic Weapons Establishment, but it will unless the amendment, or something similar, is adopted. We must prevent some of the things that happen in the City happening in the interesting area of protection.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) spoke about the Minister's letter about the golden share. I recall reading a newspaper during the Easter recess. Something in that letter triggered my memory, and I am reminded to ask the Minister a question. Which of the members of his private office is a medium, because I am convinced that Lewis Carroll wrote that letter?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I listened to the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) with a good deal of interest. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) said, the hon. Gentleman sought to make membership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament some sort of criminal offence. I remind the House that 139 states are in effect members of an international campaign for nuclear disarmament. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West would like to turn his attention to them and make similar sneering remarks about other NATO countries such as Norway and Denmark which refuse to have nuclear weapons on their soil. The Canadian Government, which is under Conservative control, also refuse to have nuclear weapons on their soil.

The Government of Canada and the Governments of 139 non-nuclear countries share the views of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. They believe that it is sane and sensible not to have nuclear weapons on their soil. I should be interested to know whether any Conservative Members here today wish to persuade any of those 139 countries to take nuclear weapons into their possession. I should be interested to receive any recommendations to that effect.

Of course those countries will not take nuclear weapons. They know that the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty is an important treaty to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Who can deny the assertion that, if nuclear weapons spread to other countries, there will be a greater danger of them being used? The rationale behind the amendment is that, because the weapons manufactured at the AWE are the most dangerous on earth, there should be some control by the Government.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

The Government wish to continue the policy—with which I disagree—of manufacturing nuclear weapons here in the United Kingdom. We cannot provide absolute prevention of foreign domination through legislation, but we can try. It seems to me that 10 per cent. is not an unreasonable limit on any shareholding. For example, if Saddam Hussein's front men had 10 per cent. of a company—Nuclear Weapons Manufacturing (Basingstoke) Ltd., for instance—the Tories would be slavering at the jaws and saying how dangerous it was that this Hitler-like person had obtained 10 per cent. of the company.

Mr. Rogers: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cryer: I shall continue with my remarks, if I may.

The danger of someone like Saddam Hussein gaining more than 10 per cent. of such a company is one of the important reasons for the 10 per cent. limit. I shall come to Matrix Churchill in a moment, if that is what my hon. Friend has in mind.

The 10 per cent. limit is also a safeguard against the shifting sands of other Government's policies. We all remember less than a year ago the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, not attacking Saddam Hussein as a potential tyrant, but attending a garden party organised by the Iraqi embassy at which he encouraged our manufacturing industry to sell equipment—weapons were embargoed during the Iran-Iraq war—to the Iraqis. That was why a perfectly good manufacturing company in the machine tool sector—Matrix Churchill—was bought up without the Government raising an eyebrow.

Why did they not raise an eybrow? It was because their ideology is that capital should be free; there should be no impediments on it. It should move between countries, gaining its 5, 10 or 15 per cent. return as profit. Therefore, they believed that it was wrong and arbitary for a Government to intercede between the capitalist and the object of his investment. Lying beneath their policy is the ideology expressed time and again by people who are still in the Government.

The present Minister is a perfectly polite and pleasant man, although he has wrapped a shroud around some nasty policies. However, he may not be in his job for long and some free-booting free-market Minister may be put in his place who might not treat the safeguards so conscientiously as the present Minister does.

6.15 pm

The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West was saying succinctly that the rights of capital are superior to the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Let me deal with another argument that he used. He suggested that the Labour party was anti-foreigner because Labour Members wished to exclude foreigners from ownership of the company. I am one of the those people who do not like pointing nuclear weapons at foreigners. By and large, nuclear weapons are pointed at foreigners. The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West is prepared to point a whole range of nuclear weapons at foreigners, so that on the scale of concern and affection for foreigners I rank higher than the hon. Gentleman. I am not prepared to exterminate foreigners on a greater scale than civilisation has ever achieved.

I remind the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West that when we were friendly—when I say "we", I mean the Government——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to refer his remarks to the amendment. They are rather too general at present.

Mr. Cryer: My remarks deal with an amendment which is designed to protect against the purchase of an important contracting company by foreign owners through the penetration of foreign capital in a highly sensitive area —the manufacture of the most dangerous weapons that mankind has, sadly, discovered.

The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) suggests that there are grave dangers in not including some legislative provision other than a golden share. We have often heard Ministers make the case for retaining a golden share in a company. One by one, Ministers have come to the Dispatch Box and told the House that the Government intended to get rid of the golden share. They did so in the case of Jaguar Cars, which was supposed to be an important pinnacle of British manufacturing industry.

There are other considerations. One is the nature of this area of manufacturing. That is why I am pointing out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we had friendly relations with Iraq not long ago. Matrix Churchill was bought up under the eye of the Government to export good quality machinery for manufacturing weaponry. Some people understood that. I want to demonstrate that, even with this legislation there cannot be an absolute guarantee of protection. All we can do is to seek to influence behaviour and make it conform with the aim and spirit of the Bill.

The perfectly decent firm of Sheffield Forgemasters was involved in the manufacture of a super-gun which the Department of Trade and Industry could not recognise. The Department could not recognise a super-gun if it was sprayed on its eyeballs. Yet we are to depend on the Government. If the gun had been assembled outside the DTI on Victoria street, the civil servants would have looked at it and said, "What a super piece of oil piping." It took the Iraqi civil service to tell them that the oil piping was more expensive and of a higher standard that the average bit of scaffolding, which was what the DTI thought it was.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend talks about companies being encouraged to export to Iraq materials that could be used for the production of armaments. International Military Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Ministry of Defence, actively encouraged Astra to purchase PRV of Belgium, which produced the propellant for the big gun, so that it could export the propellant to Iraq, or siphon it through Jordan into Iraq. Of course, this country's main producer of the propellant is Royal Ordnance plc, which was handed over to British Aerospace. Even the present Government would have looked a little sad if they had encouraged Royal Ordnance to supply the propellant for the big gun. However, they certainly encouraged Astra to purchase PRV so that it could do so. So far as this business is concerned, the Government's hands are very dirty indeed.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes an apt point.

If the amendment were accepted, breach of the legislation would preclude compensation. Its purpose is to

encourage greater scrutiny by the people operating this company. They would realise that, if they did not exercise scrutiny, their pockets would be hurt. I am afraid that one of the traits of some sections of humanity is that, in the absence of a prod of that nature, they turn a blind eye, especially when they get no guidance from a supine and inert Government willing to sell pretty well anything at any time to anybody anywhere, so long as the people who contribute to Tory party funds make a fast buck. That may seem a little crude, but it is the reality, even if the Government try to avoid it with grand words.

At Question Time today, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said that he supported the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. As I said at the beginning of my speech, the 139 non-nuclear signatories to the NPT want some assurance. They get no assurance from this country, as it is embarking on the manufacture of Trident nuclear weapons. That is what this legislation is about. I do not want people to be put on the dole; I want expertise and skills in this field to be transferred to projects that would preserve and benefit life instead of having the potential to destroy it.

I certainly want to see the end of the manufacture of Trident nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom. As a matter of fact, so do those 139 non-nuclear nations. They keep telling us that it is unfair that the nuclear signatories, including the United States and the Soviet Union, should be negotiating some reduction—as they have been, through the INF treaty—while the United Kingdom does nothing of the sort. In review conferences, they keep asking, "Why should we get rid of nuclear weapons, and refuse to manufacture or deploy them, when the United Kingdom sets no example at all?"

Sir Anthony Durant: I have been following very closely the hon. Gentleman's remarks about atomic weapons throughout the world. Does he advocate the closure of Aldermaston?

Mr. Cryer: I thought I had made it absolutely clear that I should like to see the Aldermaston expertise and skills used in the development of materials and equipment for the preservation and development of life. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that getting rid of nuclear weapons would necessarily result in many people being put on the dole, he is mistaken. We can—indeed, we must—plan the change. It is the absence of planning that has resulted in so much redundancy following the so-called peace dividend.

I want to return to the detail of the clause. The 139 non-nuclear nations to which I have referred are not impressed by the record of the present and previous Conservative Governments, who have spent £10,000 million on Trident nuclear weapons. If they see the manufacture of nuclear warheads handed over in a sloppy manner to private contractors, who, with regard to proliferation, may be subject to rather less Government control, they will be even less impressed.

If the Government are to continue this manufacture, which I steadfastly oppose, and if they are to continue with this legislation, as I have no doubt they are, even though I steadfastly oppose and deplore it, we should at least have some safeguards. Perhaps one day the Minister will get a trip to Canada under Government auspices. If that should happen, would he not want to be able to say, "We are providing every possible safeguard"? If the people there said, "But Labour put forward some decent safeguards, and you rejected them," he would have a perfectly reasonable answer. He would be able to say that the safeguards had been rejected in the Commons but would be accepted in the Lords.

I dare say that all legislation is flawed to some degree. However, the Minister should be in a position to say that the House of Commons at least tried to provide some control over the manufacture of weapons capable of causing more death, more destruction and more lingering horror than occurred in the whole of the Gulf war and the subsequent Kurdish crisis. These are important safeguards, and I ask the Minister to accept the amendment.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I regret that I was unable to be present for the debate on the first group of amendments. I was attending a meeting of the Select Committee on Defence, which was considering the threatened closure of the Rosyth naval base. Having been a member of the Standing Committee that considered this Bill, I am glad to be able to contribute at this stage.

It is with a feeling of unreality that we see the Government, in their dying weeks—we hope that these are their dying weeks—introducing legislation to commit the ultimate folly of privatisating the manufacture of nuclear weapons, having privatised almost everything else. In these circumstances, we can always depend on the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) to extend the unreality. He has certainly done so today. Evidently, he is prepared to go to the wall for the rights of any number of foreigners—people from Iraq, Argentina, the Soviet Union, or anywhere else—to purchase any number of shares in the operating company of the Atomic Weapons Establishment. The hon. Gentleman's party regards itself as the party of patriotism. It is the party that wraps itself in the flag.

Sir David Mitchell: I understand the reasons for the hon. Gentleman's absence from the earlier debate. He must have been still absent when I made my speech, as I did not make the suggestion that he has just put into my mouth.

Mr. Home Robertson: I was present, and I listened very closely to the hon. Gentleman's interesting speech. He was at great pains to make clear what he felt about friendly foreigners. But there is nothing in the Bill about friendly foreigners; there are no restrictions. Share ownership in the operating company will be open to anybody. Evidently, the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is a good thing that people from any country should be able to purchase shares. Plainly that is unreasonable, irrational and dangerous. There should be restrictions. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West, giving due consideration to national interests as well as local interests, will table a manuscript amendment putting foreigners into different categories. So far, he has not done so. He is prepared to go to the wall in support of the case that any foreigner should be allowed to buy any number of shares in the operating company.

Sir David Mitchell: That is not what I said.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: So long as that person is not a member of CND.

Mr. Home Robertson: Yes, so long as he is not, and has never been, a member of CND, and has no relationship with it.

Mr. McWilliam: Or the Welsh Regiment.

Mr. Home Robertson: Or the Welsh Regiment, or the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry, or the Durham Light Infantry.

In the next part of his extraordinary contribution, the hon. Gentleman suggested that there was something seditious about the trip of my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who led for the Opposition in the Standing Committee, to Aldermaston to try to get some perfectly relevant, openly available information about the way in which Hunting-BRAE was conducting its affairs at the time leading up to the introduction of this legislation.

As ever, the Government have jumped the gun about privatising the Atomic Weapons Establishment and Hunting-BRAE is already involved. I put it to the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West that it was entirely proper for my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda to find out relevant information in anticipation of the proceedings in Committee and debates in the House. It was equally proper for employees at Aldermaston to brief hon. Members on both sides of the House and tell us what was going on there, how inefficient it was and how they had managed to lose an entire day's production because of the way in which they were conducting their affairs.

6.30 pm

On reflection, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West should acknowledge that his outburst was unjustified and disgraceful, and hon. Members on both sides of the House should acknowledge that the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda on behalf of the Opposition is the correct and patriotic way to proceed with the legislation.

I personally feel that the whole Bill should be thrown out. I find it quite bizarre that we are talking about privatising the operation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Certainly there must be safeguards as to who can own shares in that company in future. We heard from the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West on behalf of the unreconstructed Thatcherite Tory party that absolutely everything is up for grabs and that anything can be solved. The Tories would even sell their grannies. They would sell the Atomic Weapons Establishment to anyone, including Saddam Hussein. That is irresponsible, and that is why the amendment should be accepted.

Mr. Haynes: The Government are privatisation-barmy. There is no doubt about that, but this time they have gone over the top. Here they are privatising the establishment that is responsible for the manufacture of nuclear warheads. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where are the Government going? The things that they are flaming well doing are clearly barmy. We are now discussing the foreign ownership of British companies.

The Minister was warned in Committee, but he did not respond in the way we wanted about the foreign ownership of the four establishments. What are the Government doing? They privatised gas, oil and electricity, but the privatisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment is a different ball game.

Mention has been made of Saddam Hussein. The Ministry of Defence let him get away with murder when it came to weapons. The Government did not do a damn thing. The Iraqis had pilots in the air in the Gulf war, and we damn well trained them. That is another point about foreign nationals. Now the Government are saying that those foreign nationals can come and buy shares in the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Never mind the percentage—the principle is rotten. I hope that the Minister has listened to all the speeches about foreign ownership of the AWE. The Minister is getting a bit eager. I have not finished yet. I have just opened my notes.

I am worried because we are discussing the Ministry of Defence. I ask the House to concentrate on the cock-up that the Ministry of Defence and the Government have made of military establishments. We are talking about the AWE. Saddam Hussein has been mentioned; we should not forget Colonel Gaddafi. I have spoken to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown), who is a great friend of Gaddafi. He goes to see him from time to time, and he tries to badger him into helping to release the hostages.

What about Gaddafi buying into the AWE? After all, Saddam Hussein was supposed to be a friend of Britain and the Government encouraged him in all manner of things. Now the Government are leaving it wide open for Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi and other nasty dictators throughout the world to buy into the AWE. While I gather my thoughts, I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. McWilliam: While my hon. Friend gathers his thoughts, he might recollect that, as far as I am aware, the Libyan Government own shares in the Agusta aircraft company, which is the part-manufacturer of the EH101 anti-submarine helicopter that is being developed for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Haynes: We have another voice of experience from the Select Committee on Defence. My hon. Friends know a lot more than I do about defence because of their experience on that Select Committee. I am not a member of it, so they are way out in front of me, but I can see real dangers in the Bill resulting from foreign ownership of the establishment that manufactures wicked and dangerous weapons.

In Standing Committee, we asked questions about security. We gave the Government a right going over, and we were not satisfied with the Minister's response. If they allow foreign nationals to buy into the Atomic Weapons Establishment, they will have a hell of a job with security and policing. I want to know whether they will build up the manpower when foreign nationals have bought into the establishment.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Which manpower?

Mr. Haynes: The manpower involved in security. The numbers employed in security at military establishments are dipping all the time. The end result is that they are using people who have just got out of prison to do security work.

Security at military establishments is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. I want to stress the cock-up that the Government have made of that, but we are discussing something quite different—the manufacture of nuclear warheads. The Ministry of Defence will be responsible for the security of the establishment. If foreign nationals will be able to buy into the AWE, we must do something about the security system there. The Minister

would not answer our questions in Committee. The things that are happening under the present Administration are quite appalling.

I can tell the Minister that my constituents are not too pleased with the Bill. I go round to the British Legion club. Those boys were prepared to give their lives for our nation. They are concerned about what the Government are doing in the Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill.

There is another question that was not answered in Committee. If foreign nationals bought into the privatised AWE, how many jobs would be lost? Every time the Government have privatised an industry, jobs have gone —hosts of them.

If such companies do not make enough money, more and more jobs go. If the companies start to lose money someone else must buy in. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, if that happens in this case, who knows who will buy in? The Government will dilly-dally and dither all over the damn place in the hope that someone will come along and snap up the AWE quickly. They will not study who those people are, or who they represent. The Government have shot off in this direction and have not listened to the Opposition's suggestions. We have told them the things that could go wrong.

I believe that the Government should dither on this issue so that it is studied properly. My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) made particular reference to the need to look at this matter properly. The Government should not rush head on. The Government dither on some things, but they rush like silly beggars on others.

The Minister may think that this is a big joke, but it is a serious matter. In Committee I talked about his baby. He has a lovely baby.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has he?

Mr. Haynes: Oh, aye. That baby was also a serious matter and the Minister could laugh about that, because it was a happy event. I look forward to the next happy event, but he should think seriously about the problems we have described tonight. I hope that the Under-Secretary will convince the Secretary of State. It is no good talking to the Minister of State; he was not a member of the Committee, and today he ducked in here for about two minutes. Oh —I see that he has just returned. I did not notice him by the Chair, but now he is here to listen to the back end of my speech. He has missed all the others and all the serious issues that were raised.

It seems that all the sheep on the Conservative Benches will follow the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary, just like they followed them on the poll tax. They have had to back off on that, because they got their backsides kicked in their constituencies. I want their backsides to be kicked about this Bill, because, as soon as the electorate wake up to the effects of this privatisation, they will tell Conservative Members in no uncertain terms to back off, just like they did on the poll tax.

After the next election, we shall act at the first opportunity to get rid of the Bill. We shall follow the proposals advocated by my hon. Friends.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no quarrel with the basic principle behind the amendment, which is to protect United Kingdom national security interests. There are, however, other ways in which to do that than by including in legislation a requirement limiting the percentage of foreign ownership in the contracting company. The Opposition's suggestion does not represent the most effective way in which to secure full security. We believe that this issue is best tackled through the contract and other means, not through the Bill.

I should remind the Opposition, as I did in Committee, that protecting national security is the job of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—it is his central role. He does not need a statutory obligation to ensure that he does his job. He would never hand over the running of the AWE to foreign control.

I should also remind the House that the Government are retaining ownership of all the property, assets and equipment at the AWE. We are only contractorising the management.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister says that he will prevent foreign ownership through the contract. We are simply asking him to tell us how.

Mr. Carlisle: If the hon. Gentleman is patient, I shall outline how we will ensure security. I should be happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman again later.

It may be for the benefit of the House if I outline how we shall ensure that the Government retain influence over ownership of the companies involved in the operation of the AWE. I say "companies" because we intend to adopt for the AWE the two-company structure of an employing company and a contracting company. That was the arrangement we followed when contractor operation was introduced into our royal dockyards. It is therefore a well-proven arrangement, and itself provides important safeguards.

6.45 pm

Our intention is that, shortly before vesting day, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will form the employing company for the purpose of employing the AWE's staff. As I have said, this will be a different company from the contracting company, which will be the private sector company or consortium that wins the competition for full contractor operation of the AWE.

As part of the contract, the contractor will take over ownership of the employing company from my right hon. Friend. The purpose of the employing company will still be to act as employer of the AWE staff. However, for the duration of the operating contract, the employing company will be wholly owned by the contractor, with the important exception of a single special share which will be retained by my right hon. Friend. That will provide important safeguards.

The two-company structure and the special share in the employing company will benefit the staff by providing continuity of employment. If, after about five to seven years, a further competition is held and another contractor is appointed to run AWE on our behalf, that firm will be required to take over the employing company from the original contractor. Staff will remain employees of the same employing company.

Similarly, if, for any reason, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wished to operate the AWE himself, or if we were unhappy with the contractor, the two-company structure and the special share would enable him to take back the employing company and thus the entire staff of AWE under direct Government control. That is an important safeguard for the Government, as, if necessary,

we could revert to operating the AWE ourselves. I believe that that answers the particular concern expressed by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell).

Given the safeguards provided by the two-company structure and the special share, I regard it as neither necessary nor right to seek to legislate on possible foreign shareholdings in the contracting company. The ownership question, which is linked with wider security issues, is better covered at the tender and contract stages.

We have made it very clear that we shall ensure that the choice of contractor and the terms of the contract take full account of all security considerations. The contractor must comply fully with our security requirements, including satisfying my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about its ownership. I stress that we shall be looking for a United Kingdom-based prime contractor, who can comply with those requirements. We shall ensure that the ownership of the contracting company, whether or not it is owned by a consortium, is not prejudicial to our defence interests. I stress that we shall be most careful about that, but I reiterate that it is not a matter appropriate to legislation. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) put that argument convincingly.

We will also take measures to ensure that, once the contract has been let, there is no possibility of national security considerations being compromised through shares changing hands. I repeat the guarantee that I gave in Committee—all the requirements to protect security and ensure that the contractor fulfils security criteria will be written firmly into the contract.

I regard this as a matter for the contract rather than legislation, because, irrespective of any foreign shareholdings, there may be United Kingdom companies or individuals who would not meet our high security standards and whom we would find unacceptable as our operating contractor at AWE. That is why it is important that our security criteria are strictly applied both in the award, and during the term, of the contract. A restriction in the Bill defining an acceptable level of foreign ownership would, by itself, be insufficient adequately to protect national security. We need the whole strength of our ability to enforce security, not just a restriction set down in the Bill.

Conversely, AWE experts have always co-operated closely with their counterparts in the United States and will no doubt continue to do so. I cannot accept, for example, that there is any objection in principle to a degree of involvement from companies based in the United States. As everyone will know, and as has been mentioned in debate, our nuclear links with the Americans are close and valued, and have been so valued by Governments of all parties.

As the amendment is designed, albeit unacceptably, to protect national security, I should take this opportunity of reiterating the Government's commitment to maintaining the very highest standards of security at AWE. Those standards will be not only applied in our selection of contractor, as I have already mentioned, but also written in detail into the contract so that the contractor is under no doubt about the high standards that he must meet. In addition, every employee of the contractor, and any parent company, who has access to AWE information or sites will be rigorously vetted by the Ministry of Defence and will meet our high standards.

The contractor will also be required to comply with our "need to know" principle which restricts the dissemination of classified information—a well recognised and widely used principle. Any individual who breaks security rules will risk losing his or her security clearance and could be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. In the event that the operating company was itself implicated in those theoretical events, sanctions will be available under the contract which could, as a last resort, culminate in terminating the contract. I must repeat that, if the Secretary of State is truly worried about national security, he has full power to rescind the contract and to take the employing company back into his full ownership.

In conclusion, the Government are committed to maintaining the highest security standards at AWE. This includes the question of foreign ownership, although that is but one aspect in our overall security requirements. Coupled with the safeguards provided by the two-company structure and the special share arrangements in the employing company, it is far more sensible and effective to safeguard security by the careful application of well proven security criteria to those companies who tender for the contract, than by the blunt instrument of statutory provision. I therefore invite the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Rogers: I still cannot understand what the Minister is on about in relation to retaining a special share. He has said in his letter that he is setting up a company that will be solely an employing company; it will have no function other than to employ people. There will then be a quite separate contracting company. At present, on phase 1, that will be a consortium of Hunting Engineering, Brown and Root, an American company, and the Atomic Energy Authority.

The special share will stop no one from purchasing shares in the contracting company. Anyone who has the money to purchase them on the London stock exchange, or the Dallas stock exchange in relation to Brown and Root, will be able to do so. The present 22 managers are employed by Hunting Engineering, Brown and Root and the Atomic Energy Authority. Is the Minister saying that the special share in the employing company will stop Brown and Root and Hunting Engineering trading on the stock exchange?

I cannot see what the function of the special share is, except that it will prevent any transfer of that company to anyone else and so will secure the jobs of the people who are working there, something which I applaud. It cannot secure who works there in the first place.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman is worried about the transfer of shares in the contracting company. We can well write into a contract that the Secretary of State would have to be advised about the transfer of shares from a contracting company, and then the share in the second employing company, the special share, comes in. If, for security reasons, the Secretary of State disliked that transfer of shares and was determined to stop it but the transfer went ahead and the Secretary of State believed that that was not in the interests of national security, that special share in the employing company would enable him to cancel the contract and take back the employing company into his own ownership, and thereby take over the running of AWE himself. That is the final fallback, and it is foolproof.

Mr. Rogers: It is incredible. The Minister says that he can write into a contract with a company the fact that its shares cannot be free traded on the stock exchange, or at least, if they are, that the Government must be notified before or after. If a company does that, the Minister's only response will be to cancel the contract. The company will be right in the middle of producing warheads for Trident. As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, the Government will end up in the law courts in the Strand. I have never heard anything so ill-conceived in my life.

Surely to goodness the Minister understands that a special share in an employing company, which in his own words is set up solely to employ people, will have nothing to do with controlling the management of Aldermaston. The Minister is setting up this structure to bring in outside management because, as he says, the Ministry of Defence is not good enough to run the place. He has said time and time again, "We do not have the expertise. We have got to go outside and privatise." Then straight away he says, "Ah, but we are going to set up this structure." The Minister is talking nonsense and the structure that he is proposing is ill-founded.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) described the contribution of the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) as disgraceful. As it was an attack on me, I will leave the hon. Gentleman to live with his own conscience. Our amendments would prevent the proliferation of the technology and the expertise that are required for the production of nuclear weapons. Surely to goodness Conservative Members are not saying that they want an open seam for the production of nuclear weapons, especially after the Gulf war. Not even the Prime Minister believes in that.

Only yesterday, the Prime Minister suggested that there should be an arms register. That happens to be about five years after the Labour party suggested it. Like his safe haven policy it is a little late—plagiarism yet again. We do not mind him copying our policies—that is why we advocate them—but an arms register is a step along the path of non-proliferation and we applaud it.

We are glad that Conservative Members have come over to our way of thinking. Why not extend the idea to Aldermaston—*[Interruption.]* The Minister of State for Defence Procurement is muttering again, but as a military historian he should realise the sense of my argument—even though he never bothered to attend Committee to listen to it because he was too busy, as I said before, with his antique cars. He should have attended our debates and carried out his responsibilities as the Minister for Defence Procurement.

7 pm

The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West mentioned my former membership of CND. Sometimes people change their opinions in the light of new circumstances. The hon. Gentleman may be somewhat neanderthal in his views but some of us are a little more flexible. He suggested that my position as a Member of Parliament was unsound because I was a former member of CND. I know that Conservative Members do not worry about former members of the National Front. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman thinks that his background is more sound than mine. I know that membership of the Welsh Regiment does not count for much—not even with me—but for what it is worth, I was a national service man. I am not sure where the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West served, but he can take my membership of CND and the Welsh Regiment as he likes.

If I had really wanted to be unsound, I would have been better off going to a public school, since one of the qualifications for membership of the long list of traitors to this country is membership of the Conservative party or attendance at public school. I do not know of many steel workers or miners who have sold secrets to the Russians, but I am sure that quite a few former university and public school boys who may have been friends of Conservative Members or even of the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West probably sold out to the Russians. The Tory party sold out to the Nazis before the war; it collaborated with them throughout the 1930s and claimed that Hitler was a wonderful man. So Conservative Members should not point the finger at us and call us unsound or traitors. They should look among their own ranks, where they will find a viper's nest. If anyone knows about loyalty in the Conservative party, it is the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

These were probing amendments to which we have received no response. It appears that we are not going to get the Minister to change his mind, so we shall not press them to a Division. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule

APPLICATION OF CERTAIN ENACTMENTS

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 4, line 27, at end insert—

'*Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (c. 34)*

4A.—(1) For the purposes of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, so far as relating to authorisations required under section 6(1) of that Act for the disposal of radioactive waste, a relevant site in designated premises shall be treated as a site in respect of which a nuclear site licence is for the time being in force.

(2) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above, "relevant site" means a site used by a contractor for the purposes of any activity which would, if section 1 of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 applied in relation to the site, require a nuclear site licence.'.

This is a technical amendment. Under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, there are two different regimes for authorising the disposal of radioactive waste. Nuclear power stations and other major nuclear sites which are subject to licensing under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 are regulated jointly by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Other sites which dispose of much smaller quantities of radioactive material are regulated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution alone.

AWE is currently exempt from both Acts, although both HMIP and MAFF fulfil a quasi-regulatory role at AWE sites by administrative arrangement.

Under the Bill as amended in Committee, AWE will remain exempt from the licensing provisions of the Nuclear Installations Act but will become subject to the Radioactive Substances Act. A consequence is that, although HMIP will acquire a statutory role in authorising disposals of radioactive waste at AWE, MAFF will not, as none of the AWE sites will be licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act.

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

After discussion with MAFF, we have decided that it would be appropriate for MAFF to have a statutory role in authorising radioactive discharges at those AWE sites —Aldermaston and Burghfield—which would be subject to licensing under the Nuclear Installations Act were it not for the exemption provided in paragraph 5 of the schedule to this Bill. The amendment which we are now discussing has been drafted to achieve that purpose. Although it appears in the schedule, it does not confer any exemption upon the contractorised AWE; on the contrary, it imposes an extra layer of statutory regulation, and thus an extra environmental safetguard, by giving MAFF a role as well as HMIP. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Mr. McWilliam: I thank the Minister for his explanation. We do not intend to oppose the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

7.7 pm

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am delighted to move the Third Reading of this Bill. We have spent some time taking the Bill through Committee and are now approaching a conclusion. I should like to explain the general purpose of the Bill, which is to meet the requirements of the Trident programme.

We believe that the Bill will improve the operation of manufacturing at AWE, thereby guaranteeing as effectively as possible our independent nuclear deterrent. Hon. Members will recall that I have often said that our Trident programme is on time at AWE, but production targets are becoming tighter, and to meet those targets we believe that we must organise manufacturing at AWE as effectively as possible by introducing the expertise of the private sector.

I also stress that we are not privatising AWE. All the property, assets and equipment will remain the property of the Secretary of State for Defence. What we are putting into private hands is AWE's organisation of manufacturing, which can best be carried out by people with the skill and experience that come from organising a manufacturing enterprise.

This is not to cast slurs on the abilities of the people at AWE, for whose qualities we have the highest regard. They are among the most skilled in their sphere in the world, and they are dedicated to helping us to secure our deterrent. We believe, however, that efficient manufacturing is best achieved by those with experience of manufacturing in the private sector. Therefore, the best way forward for AWE is for the operation to be contractorised. The path is already familiar to the House because we took it with the royal dockyards. They, too, have excellent staff, with exceptional skills and knowledge. It is fair to recognise, none the less, that the talents of the AWE work force do not lie primarily in areas of manufacturing.

Various serious concerns have been expressed by my hon. Friends who have constituency interests and by Opposition Members during many debates on the Floor of the House and in Committee. I am confident that the fears have been met.

There have been fundamental fears, for example, about security. I have often said that the Secretary of State is the ultimate guarantor for security. He can ensure in a number of ways that there is proper security, and we went into those in detail on Report. If the Secretary of State is worried about security, his special shares in the employing company provide him with the ultimate sanction of cancelling the contract and taking back the employing company. We do not expect that to happen, because there are several steps that could be taken before the ultimate sanctions were employed. As I have said, the ultimate sanction rests with the Secretary of State in the interests of the state's security.

The House has been greatly concerned with safety. The Government are obviously extremely concerned about safety and accept that it is of paramount importance. I think that I have satisfied the House that all the existing safeguards will remain. Again, the Secretary of State is ultimately responsible for safety. Several extra safeguards have been introduced. Safety will be written deeply into the contract, and the contractor, will have an incentive to ensure that safety is of the highest level. He will suffer under the terms of the contract if he does not fulfil his obligations to ensure the proper level of safety.

Sir Anthony Durant: I apologise for not being in my place when there was reference to the escape of tritium. There is no doubt that there is concern about it. Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that he will talk to the establishment in advance of contractorisation to ensure that everything is secure? There are anxieties now, and I hope that my hon. Friend will go to the site and talk to those concerned about current safety.

Mr. Carlisle: I know that my hon. Friend has been worried about a tiny leak of tritium. I can confirm that there was an extremely small leak on 19 February in an area where research was taking place that is not central to the existing operation by Hunting-BRAE, which is concentrated on manufacturing. The regulating authorities were informed. As I have said, the release was extremely minor. No member of the public would have received exposure of more than 1 microSievert. The House will know that members of the public receive every year, on average, more than 2,000 times as much radioactivity as that from natural and background sources.

The leak has been investigated, and we are expecting a report soon. I shall be surprised if we do not accept all the recommendations that are contained in the report. I hope that that will satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) and his constituents.

As I have said, safety will be written into the contract. There will be support from the compliance office that we are setting up. As a last step—this course was not available when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was managing the manufacturing—the contractor could be taken to court.

Some concern has been expressed about terms and conditions. These will be protected by the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. We have guaranteed that pensions will be as good as they are now, as will terms of redundancy. We do not expect any redundancies so long as we are true to the Trident programme. The order book stretches securely into the future.

Our aim is to secure a nuclear deterrent and to ensure that the manufacturing effort is conducted on time and as efficiently as is possible. We have before us a sensible Bill

that contains strong safeguards to protect national interests and AWE employees. I commend the Bill to the House.

7.16 pm

Mr. Rogers: For all the reasons that the Minister has advanced in support of the Bill, we shall vote against it. It is obvious that the measure was conceived out of the Government's incompetence and that their incompetence extended into the drafting of it. On many issues that we discussed on Second Reading and in Committee, we were extremely unhappy. Indeed, both Conservative and Opposition Members expressed reservations about some of the Bill's provisions. The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) said on one occasion that he supported the Bill in principle, although he did not support some of the details. That seemed a daft approach.

Many of the issues that have been raised this evening were debated in Committee. The more that we examined the Bill the more we were confirmed in our view that the Government are extremely bad at managing the procurement of nuclear warheads and weapons and of defence equipment in general. Our view was confirmed by the Select Committee on Defence. When examining the production of Trident, it became extremely concerned about extensive delays and overruns in cost and in time. It is beyond me to understand how the Minister can say that he is happy with the Trident nuclear programme.

The Select Committee dealt with the Government's feeble attempt to redress the system that prevailed in Aldermaston before bringing in 22 managers at £25 million a year. The Select Committee took the view that the result was different levels of payments to different grades in different ways so as to cause division and dissension, even when more money had been paid. It seemed that employees asked to be returned to a lower grade where they could earn more money.

The Government say that the management of Aldermaston was poor in their hands. I can understand that. Surely it is perverse for the Minister to use his incompetence to justify privatisation. It is because the Government are so poor at doing their job that they have introduced this privatisation measure. The Minister has told us that, if the Government are to meet their nuclear deterrent programme and provide a proper defence for the country, it is essential to privatise the manufacturing section.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member was a member of the Committee that considered the Bill, but he has been absent during today's proceedings until recently. It happens that he worked at Aldermaston. As he was part of the shambles that existed there, he should take some of the blame. Therefore, I shall not give way to him now.

The Minister says that he is not privatising but contractorising. However, as can be seen from column 47 of the *Official Report* of the Committee proceedings, previously he said that the Government were privatising. It is privatisation, certainly of the intellectual aspects of the production of nuclear warheads and of the production itself. The fact that the Government are retaining the physical aspects of Aldermaston under their control simply means that they are acting as the landlord or the janitor. We are discussing the production of some of the most fearsome weapons known to mankind. We are concerned about the proliferation of those weapons and the fact that there is no real control over the penetration of the installations by people from other countries. The Bill contains no safeguards to prevent such penetration because the Government have removed civil service status from the people working at that establishment.

I should have liked to talk about a number of aspects at length, but I shall desist because of the pressure of time. In particular, I should have liked to speak of the Government's appalling inefficiency and mismanagement in the construction of the A90 building. Time and again, we have alerted the Government to the problems with the building, not only in its roof, but in the stainless steel tanks that have welding problems and may allow the emission of toxic and radioactive gases into the atmosphere. The building was privately constructed and the work supposedly was carried out to British Nuclear Fuels specifications. Much of the work had to be redone because it was unsafe. Who picked up the bill for all that additional work? It was the taxpayer. That does not fill me with confidence about the Bill's proposals for the production, supervision, safety and ultimate delivery of the finished product.

When I raised those matters in Committee, the Minister dismissed them and said that I was wrong and was scaremongering. He said:

"the problems of the capital programme are now firmly in the past. The A90 construction work is now complete. Several hon. Members referred to the problems with the duct work, which was acknowledged to be unsatisfactory. It has now been replaced by suitable materials. . . . I have seen the A90 building . . . and it is a very good one.

Installation of the equipment is largely complete and commissioning of the building and equipment are now under way. We shall be able to meet the requirements for production of Trident, and I am pleased to say that the Trident programme is on course to meet its in-service date by the mid-1990s."

There is already two or three years' slippage in the programme. He continued:

"An unsatisfactory situation has now been brought up to date through the various steps which we have taken. Work on the building is on time, it will meet the programme and it is safe."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F,* 19 February 1991; c. 242.]

During the past week, we have seen just how safe it is. Answers from the Secretary of State have also shown that the work is not on time. Perhaps he could tell his Minister that.

Many of the issues that we have not had the opportunity to discuss this evening relate to control, accountability, certain aspects of safety, security, financial control, the general efficiency of the establishment, and other options that have not been considered. I am sure that hon. Members who represented Aldermaston, Burghfield, Cardiff and Foulness would have supported our amendments had they had the opportunity to do so, but they had not because of the Government Whip. I am referring to such matters as funded redundancy to ensure that after, TUPE 1981 plus one day, the work force would have the security that the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West said that he wanted for his constituents. He did not have the gumption to vote for our amendment, but perhaps he will vote with us on Third Reading. At least some of his hon. Friends abstained because they recognised the fundamental flaws in the Bill.

[Mr. Rogers]

We need to derive into the issue of the contract. It is incredible that, at least two years after the proposition came to the fore, the Minister still cannot tell us what is likely to be in the final contract. For a year, some 22 people from a contractor have been operating under phase 1 of the contract, but we still have no information about the contract. Time and again in Committee, the Minister said that he could not tell us what would be in the contract because he did not know. That was an awful admission. After all this time, he still has no idea of what will be in the contract for the production of nuclear warheads. That is a sad and sorry admission, but it is in line with the clear fact that the Bill has arisen out of the Government's incompetence—an incompetence that has not stopped.

7.26 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: I have already explained why I was unable to take part in the Second Reading debate and in the Committee proceedings. I am glad that I have sat through the remaining stages and Third Reading. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has shown extraordinary patience despite being sorely provoked by many unreasonable arguments. He answered the points made extraordinary well and comprehensively. I thank him for his answers to my questions.

I well remember going to see Mr. William Rodgers when he was a Minister at the Ministry of Defence. It was a year or two after I had become the Member of Parliament for Newbury. I asked whether I could be shown around what was then called the AWRE at Aldermaston. He was polite, but he said, "Michael, we do not allow Members of Parliament to go around the establishment because of the problem with security clearance. We do not want to get involved in that area, because we are not sure what might arise." Now, many Members of Parliament have been around that establishment, and I like to think that my representations made some difference to the thinking of the Ministry of Defence about opening the establishment to Members of Parliament and the Select Committee.

The Bill is about the contractorisation of the four atomic weapons establishments. Perhaps it is because Aldermaston falls within my constituency that I think that it is the jewel in the crown. Ever since it was a wartime airfield, and then a leading establishment in the nuclear arms programme established by the first Labour Government after the war, it has played a leading role in the defence of our country. I endorse what my hon. Friend the Minister said about its work force. They have given marvellous service to this country. They are extremely skilled. I suspect that the expertise that Lord Penney assembled around him at Aldermaston was the envy of many other establishements throughout the world. Aldermaston has been responsible for Polaris, Chevaline, and now Trident. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that the Trident programme is on time and will meet the needs of our nation.

I relate that history only to make the point that Aldermaston has existed for four decades. To argue that the management structure that was right in the beginning continues to be right—regardless of the changes in the nuclear arms industry—is to put one's head in the sand. Indeed, it is no longer called AWRE Aldermaston, but AWE Aldermaston.

We must all be aware of the criticisms of the A90 project and the other difficulties that have arisen as Aldermaston has moved from being a research and development centre to a production centre like Burghfield. Therefore, I entirely endorse the contractorisation proposals in the Bill. The management structure that the Government have chosen is right, as will be shown—as my hon. Friend suggested in his statement—by the Trident programme.

Different management skills are needed now from those that were in place when research and development were predominant. Moreover, despite the fact that some hon. Members found criticisms in the Select Committee's report, its ninth report, published last June, stated that the Atomic Weapons Establishment was suffering from serious problems that required effective remedies. The Select Committee supported the idea of outside management expertise and endorsed the Ministry of Defence's thinking. Bearing in mind the fact that it is an all-party the fact Committee, it made it difficult for the trade unions' wish to maintain the status quo. That seems to be the right approach to the new problems confronting the establishments.

Such action logically leads to the Bill. I recognise that, at this stage of the proceedings, some will continue to be sceptical about the proposals and others who are concerned about future profits, job security, pensions and redundancies within the new structure. However, my hon. Friend the Minister will have reassured them tonight on those points.

The unions are right to ask to be consulted, and I hope that no modern management would ignore their plea. The unions state that the continuing morale and confidence of the work force will be of the greatest importance to the success of the contractorisation, as it will be to future recruitment. I am sure that that is uppermost in the minds of contractors. I also agree with the unions about the need to demonstrate a commitment to the highest levels of safety. It was useful to hear from my hon. Friend the Minister about the role of the compliance officer and his overview of general safety. It is good to know that parliamentary scrutiny will continue and that Ministers will still be accountable to Members of Parliament about safety at Aldermaston. It is also good to know that COMARE will continue to impose inspections when emission problems arise.

The assurances of my hon. Friend the Minister, taken with the objectives of contractorisation, will ensure a new future for Aldermaston and Burghfield. Both establishments have served us well and have a greater chance to serve us even better in the future.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I share the sentiments of the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) about the apparent inexhaustible patience of the Minister. However, I regret to part company with him when he says that the Minister has been sorely provoked by unconscionable arguments. If there has been provocation, it has arisen because of the Bill, which the Minister has often properly described as very narrow terms. It has been drawn in narrow terms to ensure that the maximum power and responsibility rest with the Executive and that the legislature has little to do with the way in which the

principal proposal in the Bill is implemented. That is a matter of great regret, as is the failure of the Government to accept the compelling argument that the position of the compliance officer and her responsibilities for Atomic Weapons Establishments should have been enshrined in legislation and in express and specific statutory duties.

We are being invited to pass into law a Bill that depends on the Ministry of Defence's ability to negotiate a contract in effective terms. That will depend on the ability of the Ministry of Defence to enforce that contract, once it has been entered into, and, crucially, on the capacity of a private company to implement the terms and conditions of that contract. That is far too risky and flimsy a basis upon which to rest a matter as important as the nuclear weapons capability of the United Kingdom.

The issues that were raised on Second Reading have not been dealt with properly by the Government. For that reason the Bill deserves to be rejected.

Mr. Brazier: I had the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee on the Bill. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) in commending my hon. Friend the Minister for his patience in Committee in the face of some very repetitive and often badly argued comments from the Opposition. I strongly support the Bill, and remind the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that Conservative Members believe that the private sector is better at managing manufacturing operations because we have the modesty to see that, on the whole, private business is better at it than Governments.

I wish to raise just one of a number of points that my hon. Friend the Minister was good enough to discuss with me; indeed, it is the only issue that has not been fully resolved. It concerns research at Aldermaston. It is important to remember that, although there have been considerable problems about manufacturing, our research effort at Aldermaston remains world class. It is the envy of the Americans, for example, who never cease to be amazed at how the comparatively minute sums of money that we spend on research produce such great benefits. The Americans spend colossal sums in comparison. Nevertheless, our relationship with the large American facilities is important.

The basic problem with bringing in a contractor to manage research as well as production and development is that contractors do very little work in pure research, at least in the physics environment. If we are to ensure that we get the best of both worlds—I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is anxious to ensure that we do—and all the benefits of improvements in manufacturing that flow from the extension of contractorisation while keeping our world class reputation for research, we must safeguard the contract structure for our research facilities.

I have in mind two safeguards drawn from the American analogy. In the United States, there is a considerable distinction between the contractorisation of the research side, which is held in the three main establishments by non-profit-making organisations. In two cases the contractor is the university of California and in the third it is a non-profit-making trust, which is a subsidiary of a profit-making company.

The two safeguards that I propose are, first, that the contracts for research must be administered by the chief scientific adviser and not by the Procurement Executive. In America, we have seen how successfully the Department of Energy manages the research contracts. They do so on a long-term basis, with five-year contracts that are assessed in arrears as opposed to the short-term approach of the Pentagon's procurement staff, adopted with other defence research facilities. I suggest that the chief scientific adviser should manage the contracts.

Secondly, the contract must be based on a system in which an outside body assesses the work at the end of a certain period when the bulk of the profit margin is awarded as a single sum so that the contractor does not, as so easily happens, find himself faced with large sums of money being spent on production and development work, on which their main attention is focused, and the small sums that are spent, perhaps on a cost-plus basis, on research get ignored. The talent can thus be sucked away from research into assisting development and production.

That is the only major aspect of the Bill that continues to concern me, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider those matters. I do not expect him to comment on them in detail when he replies to the debate. I remain convinced that the Bill is correct because I firmly believe that the private sector will manage the development and manufacturing side better at Aldermaston than any Government could and that it will provide the opportunity for the staff there to improve further their performance.

7.39 pm

Mr. McWilliam: I should like to take this opportunity to correct one or two of the misapprehensions voiced by Conservative Members, particularly those of the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson). First, the trade unions were extremely helpful to the Select Committee on Defence when we were considering the problems of Aldermaston. No Opposition Member has argued recently that there was nothing wrong. We know that there is something wrong. The Select Committee reported that there was something wrong, made that clear to the House and made recommendations about ways in which we could correct the matter.

In the Bill, the Government have, as usual, gone too far. The trade unions made extremely helpful and forward-thinking suggestions, and have continued to do so. The view of the Select Committee, which was unanimous and which my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and I signed——

Mr. Home Robertson: I was not a member at the time.

Mr. McWilliam: I am sorry—my hon. Friend was not then a member. The report stated that there should be an injection of private expertise, but not privatisation.

I should also remind the Minister that it was not the public sector that ripped off the British taxpayer over the construction of the A90 buildings, but the private sector. Therefore, let us have no illusions about whether there are good and bad people in the private sector—there are.

The other factor that should concern Conservative Members, but does not seem to, is that the Americans managed to let the private sector destroy their atomic weapons production establishment at Rocky Flats because they were more interested in making money than in safety and making safe weapons. That establishment is now shut and cannot reopen where it was because it is no longer safe to be there. Private sector expertise did not help the Americans very much with that establishment.

[Mr. McWilliam]

I should remind Conservative Members who were not privileged to serve on the Standing Committee that the Minister has always relied on what he can get into the contract. When the Opposition attempted to introduce a schedule to set out some principles that should be included in the contract, he resisted our proposals. Therefore, we can have no confidence that the basic safeguards for which we are asking will be in the contract because we shall not see it—at least, not right away. We shall see it soon when the next general election comes, and my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) becomes the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. What is more, I am certain that, knowing my hon. Friend, he will take an early opportunity to make a statement to the House on the contract's shortcomings and how he intends to deal with them—but I am sure that he will deal with that issue in his own reply.

The Bill is the last piece of privatisation legislation to receive its Third Reading in the House. It does not deserve that Third Reading. It is the dying gasp of an outmoded, doctrinaire Conservative philosophy, epitomised by the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, which seems to have been set up. It will not have the effect that the Minister wants, and will not protect the nation in the way that our practical suggestion of a "next steps" agency would. We did not say, "Don't do anything." We have tried to be practical and to help all the way, but the Minister has been unwilling even to accept our sensible amendments about safety, health and foreign ownership. On that basis, the Bill does not deserve a Third Reading, and I intend to vote against it.

7.45 pm

Mr. Morgan: It is not often that a Member for Cardiff rises in the Chamber twice in a week to oppose privatisation measures that affect his constituency. A few days ago, I opposed privatisation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department and now I am opposing the privatisation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment. The Cardiff, North constituency contains the third, or perhaps equal second, largest plant in the AWE empire.

This is not a popular measure in the Cardiff district. Two specific allegations relating to safety have been put to me, and I think it is important for the Minister to hear about them and deal with them. If we transpose beryllium for tritium, one of the allegations about the Atomic Weapons Establishment bears an uncanny resemblance to the incident at Aldermaston that has emerged in the public domain. I have been told that the handling procedure at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Llanishen, in respect of beryllium powder when it is melted to make beryllium alloy, malfunctions from time to time.

When that happens, it illustrates a classic case of the sort of choices that the private contractor would face—whether to abide by the safety regulations and contaminate his stock of argon gas or to contaminate the atmosphere which my constituents and those of Cardiff, North have to breathe.

The beryllium alloy is melted inside a steel tube, which is pressurised to 18,000 lb per square inch in argon gas. When the steel tube bursts, as it inevitably does every five or 10 years, the argon gas should be vented back to the argon gas store and contaminates it. That is hard luck on the argon gas, as it must then be disposed of because it has beryllium in it, which is as toxic to the human chest as asbestos. In some ways, it is not as bad as radiation, but in other ways, its toxic effects can be worse in the shorter term. Unfortunately, the standard handling procedure for that very rare occurrence is to vent to atmosphere, rather than back to the argon store.

The second allegation is even more tricky and sensitive, and involves how private contractors would deal with any incident within the plant. Often when maintenance procedures are being carried out, people have to wear protective clothing. I have been told that no personnel are to appear out of doors within the plant complex dressed in protective gear in case that alarms people on the buses that go past the plant on their way up to the Llanishen council estate, Caerphilly and Rhiwbina. We should remember that the Cardiff establishment, unlike the other AWE establishments, is in the middle of a densely populated residential district in a large city of 300,000.

Such issues must be sorted out. We must determine the standard procedures that are to be used before the Bill becomes law and before it comes back to this House from the other place. I am not satisfied that the Minister has faced up to his responsibilities. He has not confronted the safety issues and the relationship of the establishment to the local community to enable me to act on behalf of my constituents and support the Government. As a result, I shall be in the No Lobby tonight.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 155.

Division No. 126] **[7.47 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*

Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Jimmy Dunachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Broadcasting Licences

8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move,

That the draft Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 28th March, be approved.

The order is made under the powers contained in schedule 2 to the Broadcasting Act 1990. Its purpose is to supplement the broadcasting ownership rules contained in schedule 2 by introducing certain additional provisions which, no doubt to the relief of the House, I shall summarise rather than rehearse in full.

The provisions in the draft order that are, I suspect, of most immediate interest to the House are those relating to the circumstances in which two regional Channel 3 licences can be co-owned. The order provides, first, that two such licences may not be co-owned if they are both large. For these purposes, we have designated the top nine, in terms of advertising revenue, as large, and the remaining six as small.

When the Government originally announced their decisions on the ownership of Channel 3 licences, we said that, in addition to ruling out co-ownership of two large licences, we planned also to prohibit co-ownership of two licences for adjacent areas. This became known somewhat inelegantly as the contiguity rule. At that stage, the Independent Television Commission had not set out the number or shape of Channel 3 regions that it was going to advertise. However, we were working on the basis that, if the ITC was minded to retain the existing ITV map—which it has now said that it intends to do—we would expect only the top six to be designated as large.

In making general provision for one person to hold two Channel 3 licences, we recognised that in some cases such an arrangement could result in sensible economies of scale without threatening regional identity. We were, however, anxious to avoid circumstances in which licences covering an unacceptably large part of the country were held in common ownership. The proposed ban on contiguous ownership was intended to meet that concern.

We decided, on further reflection, that to impose a contiguity rule of that kind for the full 10-year licence period might be counter-productive, in that it could prevent some combinations of ownership which offered scope for sensible economies of scale, and were therefore potentially attractive in commercial terms.

Indeed, given the uncertainties of the broadcasting environment in the 1990s, I simply do not believe that it would have been practicable to rule out for all time the possibility of contiguous mergers which might, under some circumstances, be in the best interests of all concerned, especially the viewers.

Simply to have dropped the contiguity rule, while retaining only six large areas would, however, have left the way open for combinations of ownership which could give an unhealthy dominance to a single company. We therefore decided that if, in the longer term, there was to be no separate contiguity rule, it was right to increase the number of regions to be designated as "large" from six to nine, and the draft order so provides.

In response to strong representations that we received from various quarters on the contiguity issue, we have also accepted that we should offer some reassurance to the smaller companies that they will not risk being outbid by predatory neighbours before they have the opportunity to establish themselves. Therefore, we decided that a contiguity rule should apply during the bidding process for the new Channel 3 licences.

The effect will be that a single person or company cannot win two licences for adjacent areas. This restriction will, however, be lifted as soon as the relevant licences have been granted, at the end of this year or early next. From then on, there will be no specific ban on contiguous takeovers, but takeovers of all kinds will, of course, be subject to the general moratorium on takeovers imposed by section 21 of the 1990 Act.

Under that provision, takeovers can take place until the end of 1993 only with the consent of the ITC. The ITC is likely to give consent to takeover or merger proposals during that period in certain circumstances, such as where one of the licensees was in serious financial difficulties, or where a planned merger had the joint agreement of both parties. Hostile takeovers, on the other hand, would almost certainly be ruled out.

I should emphasise that our decision on contiguity does not imply that, at the end of the moratorium period, any or all of the smaller regions will necessarily be co-owned by a company holding a larger region. Moreover, where one company holds two licences, it will still be obliged to meet in full the separate regional requirements for each of the two regions.

The chairman of the ITC is in full agreement with our proposal, and considers that the ITC will have no difficulty in ensuring that where licence areas are co-owned, the licensee provides distinctive local programming for each region.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): If the separate requirements of individual regions have to be maintained—I understand that that is so as to maintain regional identity—how does the hon. Gentleman believe that there could be scope for the sort of economies of scale that might be the only justification for some sort of merger?

Mr. Lloyd: There could be economies in the use of a sales force or in some of the administrative back-up. There are a number of ways in which that might be achieved. However, what could not be altered is the undertaking made and enshrined in the licence about the type of regional programmes that would be provided, the number of hours, the time and the ITC's requirement that 80 per cent. of regional programming must be produced in the region either by the licencee or independents. Therefore, there is a strong safeguard as regards regional broadcasting, but there is plenty of scope for economies of scale.

I believe that these provisions on co-ownership, while different in form from what we envisaged originally, are entirely consistent with the policy intentions that we announced during the passage of the Broadcasting Bill last Session. We continue to attach great importance to ensuring the preservation of the district regional identity of the Channel 3 licences and to the discharge by the licensees of their regional programming obligations, as I have just said.

The ITC has, as I have said, confirmed that it will be able to ensure that regional commitments are fulfilled, even when there is joint ownership of two contiguous

licence areas. I am not surprised that it should have come to that conclusion, as the Broadcasting Act contains some very substantial safeguards.

For example, the Act requires that a sufficient amount of time should be given for regional programmes. That varies from licensee to licensee but generally it is more than has been the case in the arrangements to date. It follows that if, following the moratorium period, a single person were eventually to own two contiguous licence areas, he would not be permitted to treat them as one mega-region and transmit identical programmes in both areas. Neither could he, as some have feared, simply move the entirety of his programme production base to a single location and produce what purport to be separate regional programmes from there.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister mentioned programme production bases, but perhaps he would confirm that the Act does not stipulate that regional programmes must be made in the region.

Mr. Lloyd: It is certainly stipulated in the requirements set by the ITC. To meet the quality threshold, a bidder must state that he will do that, and it will be written into his licence if he is successful. Therefore, we shall have a copper-bottomed undertaking.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does not the Bill strengthen the regional commitment of Channel 3 licensees by virtue of amendments passed in Committee? Those amendments will require licensees to demonstrate to the ITC what arrangements they are making for regional programmes, which must be made in the region.

Mr. Lloyd: That is right but, if my memory serves me correctly, the Bill did not specify what the figure would be. The ITC has since specified that it is to be 80 per cent., and that figure will be written into the licence agreements. If there is a takeover, the new owner must observe the agreement.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The issue is where and how such programmes will be made. It is right that there should be a regional commitment. The strength of ITV is that it sets up regional centures of excellence in television production. They are there because of the federal system. Now, there will be nothing to require those centres to be maintained. Programmes could be farmed out to independents nominally in the regions, and those centres of excellence and skill could be disbanded and eliminated.

Mr. Lloyd: Regional programmes will have to be made in the regions. That is not a nominal requirement. Eighty per cent. must be made there because, if not, a company would not be fulfilling the requirement laid down by the ITC, which will be included in the licence agreements.

Mr. Corbett: I wish to clarify one point. It is true that the ITC has stipulated that 80 per cent. of regional programmes should be made in the regions. However, let us be clear that regional programmes—again I speak from memory—may involve as few as five or six hours a week, although the bigger London stations may make more. Nevertheless, the lion's share of the 80 per cent. requirement in the Bill will involve only local news and current affairs. Therefore, some regions could be left with little more than a news studio.

Mr. Lloyd: I am sure that there will be much greater variety under the new arrangements. There will certainly be greater use of independents. Rather than programme-producing companies, we shall see publishing companies but, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) knows, 25 per cent. of ITV output will have to be taken from independents. Where those independents are based will be for them to decide. They will choose wherever they find it most convenient to be located and that is something that we cannot determine, nor should we seek to do so.

Although I understand the fear that the independents will inevitably gravitate to London, it will not necessarily prove to be soundly based. First, there are production facilities around the country. Secondly, other parts of the country are cheaper and thirdly, there is no doubt that a relationship with a regional licensee will be of interest to some independent contractors. Those factors will militate against the counter-attraction of London. However, the hon. Gentleman is right: the independents will locate themselves where, in business terms, they find it most sensible to be.

I deal now with the provisions in the order relating to further concentrations of interest in Channel 3 and Channel 5 licences. The Broadcasting Act 1990 sets out the maximum number of such licences which any one person may hold. The order introduces some additional restrictions. It provides that, once a person has acquired the maximum ownership in two regional Channel 3 licences in accordance with the Act or with the rules contained in this order, he may have a maximum shareholding of 20 per cent. in one further regional Channel 3 licence, provided that that does not constitute a controlling interest, and thereafter, no more than a 5 per cent. shareholding in further such licences. Similar rules apply in relation to national Channel 3 licences and Channel 5 licences.

The order also deals with newspapers shareholdings in broadcasting licences. It provides that national newspaper proprietors will not be permitted to have more than a 20 per cent. interest in any local radio licence, and that national or local newspaper proprietors will similarly be forbidden to hold more than 20 per cent. interest in a Channel 3, Channel 5 or domestic satellite service licence.

During the passage of the Broadcasting Bill through both Houses, there was considerable debate as to whether this rule should be extended to cover non-domestic satellite services. We argued then, and I continue to argue now, that it is neither necessary nor desirable for it to do so. Our policy rests on the fact that non-domestic satellite services have developed under different ground rules from terrestrial or domestic satellite services.

Domestic satellite services use broadcasting frequencies allocated by international agreement, of which only a small number—five at present—are available to the United Kingdom. In contrast, non-domestic satellite services like BSkyB face virtually open-ended scope for competition from a diversity of different channels in different hands transmitted from satellites such as Astra, which use telecommunications rather than broadcasting frequencies.

The relative ease with which new non-domestic satellite services can be introduced means that there is little danger of such services being controlled by a few major interests which might represent a threat to plurality of information sources. For that reason, we see no case for limiting

[Mr. Lloyd]

newspaper investment in them. Were we to do so, of course, we should risk ending the extension of choice already brought about by such channels and jeopardising the 1,000 or so jobs which they have created in this country.

BSkyB does not have a monopoly on television services and we believe that competition among the terrestrial channels, BSkyB and other existing and future satellite televison services is sufficient to ensure editorial diversity.

Under the order, no public telecommunications operator will be permitted to have a controlling interest in any Channel 3, Channel 5, national radio or domestic satellite licence. I believe that it will be generally accepted that it would be undesirable to permit major telecommunications operators like British Telecom to control those key broadcasting licences.

Finally, the order makes provision for a points scheme to determine the maximum permitted ownership of local radio stations. All stations will be awarded points on the basis of their audience reach. It will be permissible to own stations which correspond to a maximum of 15 per cent. of the total number of points in the system, subject to the overall limit of 20 services contained in the Act.

This arrangement, which was announced in the course of proceedings on the Broadcasting Bill, is intended to take account of the likely growth in the number of local radio stations over the next few years, and of the great variety of individual stations, from the major ones such as Capital Radio and other large metropolitan stations, to the smallest community or ethnic services transmitting to a local neighbourhood.

These supplementary ownership rules, contained within the order, represent a reasonable and practical framework for regulatory control over the services which the ITC and Radio Authority will regulate. If the rules are approved by this House and in another place, we intend that they should come into effect as soon as possible. I commend the draft order to the House.

8.19 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I congratulate the Minister belatedly—referring to the date of his arrival rather than my congratulations. I believe that I am right in saying that this is the first broadcasting debate which the Minister has taken without someone whom I shall describe in a kindly way as his Svengali friend, who has now gone off to labour in the bowels of the Treasury as a reward for some small assistance that he rendered the Prime Minister during some stormy days in November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: He is lurking about.

Mr. Corbett: I do not doubt that he is lurking about somewhere.

I thank the Minister for outlining the principal effect of the order. I wish to put three points to him. Of course it is true that the Independent Television Commission is advertising the Channel 3 regional licences on the basis of the existing map. However, there is no guarantee that each of the areas will attract bids. I say that seriously. It would be invidious to name areas which might attract negative bids. What thought, if any, has the Minister or, indeed, the ITC given to that possibility? It touches on the changes that he has made in the rule on contiguity.

I understand the protection which the Minister has put in place and which will remain until the bidding system is over. But the risk must remain—this was touched on in some of the interventions that the Minister was kind enough to take—as my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said, that, if ownership of a certain type prevails in adjacent areas, there will be pressure on those Channel 3 regional licence holders who are producing to make some economies in, for example, production and studio facilities. This is not guesswork. It has already happened in Birmingham and the west midlands with Central Television, which, by and large, has moved its major production facilities to an extensive site in Nottingham, which the Independent Broadcasting Authority encouraged it to build.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Quite rightly.

Mr. Corbett: As my hon. Friend said, that was quite right, in the context in which the company took over the franchise. There must be a risk if a company has two sets of production facilities and one is used more than the other. I do not argue with the commitment to fulfil the 25 per cent. quota for the independents, but it also has ramifications.

We have had experience, especially in the London area, of some of the television stations wanting to start to meet the 25 per cent. production quota. They talked to the independents about making programmes but used their muscle to insist that the independents use the production facilities of the commissioning company rather than their own facilities. So there are some risks.

The other point that I wish to put to the Minister is about something that already happens and which may fit with what he has in mind with economies of scale. To my knowledge, at least three television companies share a joint advertising sales force. That is happening now, before any other alterations have come about. If one company ended up owning two Channel 3 regional licences, its advertising sales force would be one area which it would immediately look at. To that extent, I can see that it makes commercial sense. Is the Minister sure that that would not run foul of competition policy? Has the point been put to the Office of Fair Trading? If not, perhaps it might be, so that everyone might know where he is going.

It is fair to say that in all our debates in the House on broadcasting during the past two or three years there has been general and cross-party agreement that democracy is at risk if too much media power is concentrated in too few hands. Indeed, we know that. In spring of 1989, 62 Conservative Members were among 87 Members of Parliament who signed an early-day motion calling for an extension of controls on ownership in the media.

In January 1989, the then Home Secretary, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), seemed to anticipate that demand, when he said:

> "We will propose extensive and effective rules to prevent concentration of broadcasting ownership and unhealthy cross-media ownership . . . It is crucially important that we should have such rules . . . Real choice would be undermined if British broadcasting were allowed to be dominated by a handful of tycoons or international conglomerates."

If only the wish had been the father to the deed. But it was not, as we shall see.

In November 1989, a Gallup survey of 141 Members of Parliament found that 112 of them—roughly eight out of 10—believed that it was wrong for the same proprietor simultaneously to control newspapers and television stations; and seven out of 10 believed that safeguards should be applied irrespective of the transmission method used. Again, what a pity that those voices were not listened to when it came to the ownership proposals in the Bill, and now in the order.

Those opinions did no more than echo the claimed aspirations of the Government. In their White Paper of November 1988, right at the beginning of the process, they asserted their determination that ownership in the independent—that is, commercial—sector should remain widely spread and unhealthy concentrations of ownership and excessive cross-media ownership should be prevented. Again, those sentiments were widely accepted, although on this side of the House we question whether ownership is sufficiently widely spread now. However, this order, like the Broadcasting Act 1990, makes a small attempt to honour those ambitions.

Under the order, a company making the highest bid for, and obtaining, a regional Channel 3 licence can end up buying a second franchise after the auction round. But that is not all, as the Minister explained. A Channel 3 licence holder with a non-controlling interest in a second Channel 3 company can go on to have a 20 per cent. holding in a third such company, provided that it is not a controlling interest, and, indeed, a 5 per cent. interest in a fourth company. Again, that underlines the possible danger that a company in that position will look to see what it can do on the basis of the Minister's economies of scale to rationalise the individual facilities within those four companies. The order will not ensure that ownership in the commercial sector is, as the Government's White Paper hoped, widely spread. Nor does it properly protect against unhealthy concentrations of ownership or excessive cross-media ownership.

I believe that the Government looked at the fast changing media industry and the rapid growth of the media mammoths and decided that it was all too complicated. It is late enough as it is to introduce these orders to settle the position finally, just 21 days before the Channel 3 auction bids have to be lodged. We agree that matters of media ownership and cross ownership are complicated and that the commercial arguments for global empires which span print, video, film, television and sound recordings are at one level persuasive, especially in the cut-throat international market. But *The Economist* of 23 September 1989 had the answer to that. It said:

"The media have moved beyond being mere providers of entertainment and information. They have become a forum that rivals Parliaments. A plurality of opinion in that forum is as essential to democracy as the ballot box."

That language may be a little high-flown, but the sentiments are exactly right, and ones which Opposition Members certainly share.

We have had experience, following newspaper takeovers, which should teach us that it would be quite wrong to accept the mere words of safeguards offered by either a powerful media owner or a transnational giant when it comes to the ownership of such a powerful, instant opinion-shaping medium as television, with its easy and quick access to every home in the land.

We in this House have a duty to protect and promote our liberties, not to entrust them to hands that have no other motive than the use of them to generate personal and corporate wealth and power. We need ownership and cross-ownership rules that encourage the range of voices and opinions that our democracy needs to hear and listen to. I find it slightly ironic that, just as the formerly monolithic media monopolies of eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and elsewhere are being broken up, we are headed for a concentration of ownership that few other advanced democracies would countenance.

I do not want to disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), but I have to say that no discussion of media ownership would be complete without a mention of those who use the non-DBS satellite, first among them British Sky Broadcasting. It was bad enough that the Government, in schedule 2 of the Broadcasting Act, provided powers to bring the non-DBS satellite services into scope of ownership provisions but then declined to use these powers. That was bad enough when there were two competing satellite services—one controlled, the other not controlled. There was then the takeover of BSB by Sky, done with the reported knowledge of the then Prime Minister, who somehow forgot to tell the then Home Secretary. That deal was stitched together within 48 hours of the Broadcasting Act's getting the Royal Assent—the most noble snook that has ever been cocked at any legislation going through this House.

As a consequence, British Sky Broadcasting now has a satellite monopoly. It is aiming for 1 million viewers, two to three years ahead, rivalling the audiences—indeed, exceeding the audiences—of most the Channel 3 stations. Yet it remains splendidly untrammelled by any of the ownership and cross-ownership restrictions that even this order provides.

There are dangers to democracy here, as *The Observer* reported on 23 December 1990. That newspaper claimed that Mr. Rupert Murdoch—the person who owns newspapers that sell 35 out of every 100 bought each day in Britain, and half of British Sky Broadcasting—had been refused a knighthood in the resignation honours list of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) by the august honours scrutiny committee.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Ah!

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman may be interested in the reason that was put forward. That was said in the context of a report that Mr. Murdoch had given funds to an extreme right-wing magazine called *British Briefing*, which attempted to smear my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and others at the time of the last election. Behind *British Briefing* was the right-wing loony David Hart, a former close aide of the former Prime Minister. That is why I say again to the Minister—and I hope that none of us will have reason to recall these words—that the medium of television, whatever the means of its delivery, is far too powerful and far too instant to be left, like those using the Astra satellite, outwith any meaningful ownership controls.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I waited deliberately before intervening, as I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would qualify or justify his statement that BSkyB has a monopoly. There are 16 channels on Astra, with another 16 to come, and with a further Astra satellite planned. On the Marco Polo satellite, five channels are available but are

[Mr. Roger Gale]

not used. In these circumstances, how can the hon. Gentleman possibly say that BSkyB has a monopoly in satellite broadcasting?

Mr. Corbett: In reply to the hon. Gentleman I shall now say something that I would have said later. Were I an original BSB subscriber—and I believe that it launched some kind of founders' club—I should be mindful of the fact that in return for my subscription it had promised me five channels. From 15 April, BSB subscribers have had three channels. Nobody could pretend that that widens opportunity or choice.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: That does not make it a monopoly.

Mr. Corbett: It makes a monopoly in one sense. For reasons that I understand, the ITC has required BSkyB to keep broadcasting on the Marco Polo satellite. That makes sense, but its net effect, in popular terms, is that, to all intents and purposes, there is now a monopoly.

There is one consequence of the Sky takeover of BSB to which I want to draw the Minister's attention.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: My hon. Friend has said that there are dangers in monopoly, in concentration of ownership in the press and television. If that is a danger to freedom, what are the measures to deal with the problem, if they too are not a danger to freedom? How does my hon. Friend propose to end that monopoly? Does he propose to shoot down the satellites? Does he propose to prevent people from having receivers in their homes? Does he propose that public money should be provided to support competition? How is the press situation to be dealt with when some of that power comes from continuing newspapers that were failing? The classic example is *The Sun*. Who gave *The Sun* to Rupert Murdoch? There is also the example of *Today*. How are we to solve those problems without restricting freedom?

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that little GCSE question. He tempts me to go a little wider than this debate. If he is patient for a couple of minutes, his questions may be answered. I have no ambition to send Corbett storm-troopers into any studio at any time for any purpose. Of course, there is no such thing as a Corbett storm-trooper.

There is one consequence of the Sky takeover of BSB to which I should like to draw the Minister's attention. The then Independent Broadcasting Authority, BSB and Sky reached agreement on 20 December 1990 that BSB's licence to broadcast would not be revoked until a suitable alternative user of the Marco Polo satellite could be found. There is some hope that that will happen. Many of us have been fairly surprised, but there are some very exciting ideas for the use of that satellite. However, the understanding was that there would be no material change in the BSB service for another two years.

BSB's licence can be terminated as soon as June of this year, and will be terminated by the end of next year. Is the Minister in any position to require BSkyB, as the successor company, to undertake that all of the BSB equipment sold after 20 December—the date of the agreement—will be covered by a guarantee of exchange for Sky equipment when the change over is made? The Minister and the House will recall that, when that takeover happened, the immediate reaction of the new bosses of BSkyB was to give that assurance. But, unknown to many people, there was the cut-off date of 20 December.

I am told that BSkyB had earlier tried to persuade retailers to offer the BSB equipment for sale, knowing that it would not be covered by any guarantee of automatic exchange. Quite rightly, both retailers and manufacturers rejected this as being against the best interest of consumers. I wonder whether the Minister is able to persuade BSkyB to give this assurance of automatic exchange to those who want it. As I said to the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), it is bad enough that, from 15 April this year, the BSkyB schedules have been changed so that all channels will be transmitted on both Marco Polo and Astra satellites. The original BSB subscribers will be robbed of three of the five channels that they thought they had bought.

Let me now reward the patience of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby. There is nothing new in what I am about to suggest as we said it throughout the passage of the Broadcasting Act. What the Government should have done—they started with the Sadler inquiry, until they turned it into a BBC-bashing exercise—was to have used the time between the publication of the White Paper in November 1988 and now to ask the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to report on media and cross-media ownership. That embraces all the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby.

As I said earlier, it is an extremely complicated subject. One could take the purist view of one man, one newspaper and one television station, but that would be rather too simplistic. That is why the advice of a body such as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission could have helped the Government and the House.

The Government did not take that chance, but the next Labour Government will consult the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and will legislate on the basis of its proposals well before the new Channel 3 regional and national licences become due for renewal. We shall insist that licences are bid for again in open competition with more stringent quality and regional programming commitments. Even before that date, we may have some proposals to protect and promote public service broadcasting to offer viewers and listeners.

Our view is that the Government are taking a needless risk with our democracy because they declined to ask for the advice of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The order enables a dangerous concentration of television and radio ownership to grow, although it may not quite match that of the press. That is why we shall oppose it tonight.

8.41 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I should like to pick up a couple of points that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) made at the start of his speech. First, he referred to the need to protect the two-centre franchises. It may gratify the hon. Gentleman to know that I agree with him entirely and share his concern. I think particularly of two such franchises. Central Television has studios in Birmingham and Nottingham and, in my own area, TV South has studios in Southampton, and built very fine studios at Maidstone as part of the honouring of its franchise undertakings when it took over from Southern Television.

It is a great sadness for those of us who live in Kent and Sussex that those studios are now lying idle. Although they produce an excellent nightly regional news and magazine service, the production capacity is largely wasted. There is real concern that, when the franchise comes up for renewal, is auctioned and perhaps taken over by another company, or if TV South wins a renewal of its franchise, it might be economically attractive to close the studios altogether or to hive them off so that they become simply an independent production centre. Many of us who live in and represent that area feel that that would be a great shame.

I was encouraged by the emphasis that my hon. Friend the Minister put on the provisions that have been laid down by the Independent Television Commission for local production. It is extremely important that the ITC insists that those undertakings are not simply given in franchise bids but are honoured in the realisation of the franchise. I hope that my hon. Friend and the ITC will keep a watchful eye on the amount of investment in local production once franchises have been awarded. I very much hope that they will insist that production centres such as those at Nottingham and at Maidstone are maintained and developed.

My second point concerns provision for local radio, to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred fleetingly in his opening remarks. The concerns expressed about the cross-media control of local radio when we were debating the Broadcasting Bill in Committee are academic.

Since the Bill was enacted and since the award of wavelengths began, it has become apparent that there are far too few frequencies available for the comprehensive community radio service that many of us envisaged to become established, at least in the short term. The authority has advertised relatively few and will supplement them a little by the end of the year. More stations will certainly be established in the north of Engalnd than in the south.

I am reliably informed today that, in the south-east, the scarcity of frequencies is such that there will be very few community radio stations. That means that stations such as Radio Cabin in Herne Bay in my constituency, which was mentioned frequently during the passage of the Bill, and Radio Woody, immortalised during our deliberations in Standing Committee, will remain a dream in the eyes and minds of programme directors.

I therefore urge my hon. Friend to pay particular attention to the need to release the necessary frequencies as quickly as possible and to encourage those currently occupying them to move to other wavebands, so that the Radio Authority can get on and do the job that those of us who served on the Standing Committee believed that it would do and to enable the development of a genuine community radio service as widely as possible throughout the country.

I now turn to the main thrust of my brief speech—the development of satellite broadcasting. It always saddens me when the hon. Member for Erdington finds it necessary to indulge in the regular bout of Murdoch-bashing. It has become something of a blood sport among the Opposition and no doubt we shall hear more of it before the end of the debate. The hon. Gentleman did not answer the questions put to him by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and myself.

No reasonable person could say that British Sky Broadcasting has a monopoly of satellite broadcasting in the European skies. The Astra satellite carries a number of channels and more will follow. During the passage of the Broadcasting Bill, I mentioned the fact that the Hughes Corporation of America has plans to launch in 1993 a digitally transmitting satellite carrying 104 televison channels. That will horrify many people, but it is planned.

In that context, it is not realistic to say that Mr. Murdoch and his channel have a monopoly. Sky Television blazed a trail that would otherwise have been followed probably by Ted Turner and his company. Given the choice, I believe that the satellite viewer in the United Kingdom would prefer the offerings of Sky Television—a largely British company—to those broadcast by Ted Turner or any other American company. Sky Television, in its merger with BSB, has not killed off three channels of Marco Polo transmission, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, but has rescued two which otherwise would have gone into the bin. There was no question of both those companies surviving. The merger was no part of a plot to jump on the back of the Broadcasting Act 1990 immediately it became law.

About two years ago in this Chamber on a Friday morning, we had a brief debate on the future of broadcasting. I had the temerity to suggest that, unless those two companies got together, neither would survive. It gives me no pleasure to say that that is exactly what has happened. The choice, as in so many cases, was not between maintaining both channels or allowing one to take over the other. Those companies had to merge, or both would have gone under. If that had happened, we would have had no satellite television service on offer to the United Kingdom viewers. No satellite service would have been provided for the investors in squarials and the receiving equipment already referred to today. The failure of those companies would have meant that we had no satellite service to compete with those services already offered by our continental competitors and American companies.

I find it sad that, in this Chamber and in Europe, we continually debate the control of television, when we should be debating the future development of television and satellite services.

The development of digital transmission was debated in Committee on the Broadcasting Bill. The European Community has spent a great amount of time and wasted effort on pursuing high definition television with a MAC —multiplexed analogue components—transmission system. That system is already virtually obsolete; as obsolete as the Marco Polo satellite which relies upon that transmission system.

It is an absolute certainty—recent demonstrations in America have proved this—that digital satellite and terrestrial transmission will be with us by about 1993. That is the television of the future. However, the Opposition are seeking to stultify that development by continually seeking to control.

What those behind Sky Television, and now BSB, have done is to take a major step forward. Those same people have invested and lost vast sums of money on satellite technology, but they are still prepared to look one stage ahead. People in this country and in Europe should be prepared to take that step. In Europe, those who have invested heavily, with large pots of socialist money, in high definition television should be prepared to cut loose from that and invest in the development of digital picture transmission.

[Mr. Roger Gale]

Unless that happens, the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe will be left out in the cold as the Americans, who have already developed this technology, take the lead. That is the choice we face. That is why I believe that, for all its many faults, the role that Sky Broadcasting, and now BSB, are playing in the development of television towards the 21st century is so important.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the order carefully, and to consider one important fact. Under the order, BSB must divest itself of its broadcasting capacity on the Marco Polo satellite. Unless the House of Commons is mug enough to use that archaic form of technology to transmit the proceedings of the House to those non-existent people who will be able to watch it, the Marco Polo satellite will be a dustbin floating around the sky.

If BSB is not allowed to continue to use Marco Polo because of tonight's order, that company, which has already invested huge sums of money in the development of satellite in the United Kingdom, will have to give to every owner of a squarial a receiver capable of receiving the Astra signal. That would be a complete waste of money, money that would be much better spent investing in the development of the technology of the 21st century. I urge my hon. Friend to reconsider the order.

8.54 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I suppose that many people would share the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) for the development of satellite television, which will widen consumer choice. I am not sure, however, that many would agree with the hon. Gentleman that those who took the decision to buy a squarial should have been the victims of the collapse of BSB two days after the enactment of the Broadcasting Act 1990. Although I share the view that it is not quite precise to describe BSkyB as a monopolistic entity, it has been exercising its market power in a rather unattractive way with respect to its obligations—moral, if not legal—towards those who had already acquired a squarial.

I should like the Minister to answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) who alleged that the company invited retailers to put BSB equipment back on the market so as to avoid having to pay compensation. That is quite a serious charge and it merits a response from the Minister. The Minister may say that he has no control over the situation, but that only demonstrates some of the weaknesses of the regulatory framework in protecting the consumer interest —a Government responsibility.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I can give the hon. Gentleman some reassurance. As I understand it, the ITC has agreed with BSkyB that it will replace the squarials that were functioning before the merger took place at no cost to the customers.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that Ministers do not have the power to require any business to compensate its customers in any particular way. It may have a moral obligation towards its customers, in which case that is a matter for the company. It may have a legal obligation, and that is a matter for the law. The hon. Gentleman will understand, however, that in this case, as with any other commercial undertaking, it is not a matter on which Ministers can rule. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be somewhat reassured, however, by the agreement that has been reached for BSB customers.

Mr. Maclennan: I agree, but I think that that point was fairly widely known. The hon. Member for Erdington was making a new point, which was that BSB had apparently attempted to encourage retailers to continue marketing equipment for which the consumer would have no necessity, in order to avoid its undertaking to replace equipment acquired at an earlier date.

I accept that Ministers have limited power, but if they look with a drooping and inauspicious eye on what important men of commerce do, the men of commerce will notice that. It is not a matter of leverage; it is just a matter of disapproval. If the allegations made by the hon. Member for Erdington are true, they are pretty disreputable.

Mr. Lloyd: Perhaps I can say sufficient to enable the hon. Gentleman to move on to another point, even if it is not to his complete satisfaction. I listened to what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said and I took due note of it. It is not a matter of which I have knowledge, but it is something with which I intend to acquaint myself. From the way he put it, it is certainly not a matter for me, whether I would like it to be or not.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) say that the old squarials are no use and that anybody who is foolish enough to buy one would be making a huge mistake. I hope that that will not be the case. If the hon. Gentleman had any of the optimism of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and looked ahead to the further development of satellite television, he might make a good bargain with what now looks like redundant equipment. It is for him as a customer to make his own judgment and to make up his mind.

Mr. Maclennan: I have made the point. The Minister may be wise to encourage me to move on to another point, so I shall do so.

The background against which the order is being debated is not quite the same commercial background as that which greeted the Broadcasting Bill in its infancy. It is fair to say that we are now in a more competitive situation than we were at that time. Advertising revenue is substantially reduced and those companies which are contemplating bidding for the franchises for Channel 3 are doing so in a cold climate. That makes the cross-ownership provisions that we are considering tonight perhaps more significant. There may be those who are less enthusiastic about bidding than they were. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Erdington is right in speculating about negative bidding—I hope not—but undoubtedly it is a cold climate.

That moves me to ask the Minister about the outcome of the representations that were made to him and other Ministers on 8 April at a meeting with representatives of the Independent Television Association led, I believe, by Sir Brian Bailey, about the severity of the impact of the levy on the revenue of the company. It would be reasonable for the Government to make clear their conclusions on that point before the date of bidding. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity of this debate tonight to give some idea of the Government's

thinking on that point. I understand that there have been discussions between his Department and the Treasury about it.

I come now not just to the circumstances but to the terms of the order. It may be appropriate to begin by saying that I acknowledge, and with some satisfaction, the fact that the Home Secretary did in part reverse his position as a result of pressure put upon him not only by me but by a number of other hon. Members and companies in respect of the contiguity principle.

It must be said that, when the Bill was enacted last year, it was without any expectation that its provisions, and the assurances that had been given during its passage through the House, would be so radically changed as they were by the present Home Secretary, almost as the first act of taking office in November.

Those who participated in the protracted debates know that the importance of regional television dominated our discussions of Channel 3—who was to acquire the licences and what standards would be required of bidders. It was with those concerns in mind that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who was then the Minister responsible for the Broadcasting Bill, gave a clear undertaking to the House that the contiguity rule—not a very elegant description, but it is clear—would be maintained. It was intended to prevent a process of consolidation in regional television production which would lead to the disappearance of the characteristic qualities of the 15 regions.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North spoke about the problems of TVS and told us what was happening to the studios in Maidstone and Southampton—and in Nottingham too, with Central. Hon. Members of all parties were anxious that such pressures should be held at bay. We were all eager to maintain the regional basis of television, especially with Channel 3—that was really the sole justification for its separate existence. I am glad that the Minister found it possible at least to reach this compromise. It is an important step in the right direction and will give the companies in the bidding process the opportunity to establish themselves. It will prevent them from being tested by hostile predatory bids before the end of the moratorium provided for under section 21 of the Broadcasting Act.

It is likely that many of the companies, probably most of them, will put this period to good use by fortifying themselves against unwanted attention from predatory neighbours. However, it would have been wiser to have stuck to the Government's original position. It is hard to believe that that could not have been done by way of an amendable order. Then, if the feared adverse circumstances arose, and some of the farthings in the penny-farthing relationships got wobbly and might not be salvageable, the orders could be amended. I assume that this order could be withdrawn and a new order introduced if it were found unsuitable or inadequate, so I shall not press my point too hard, but it would have been sensible to have removed the uncertainties that the threat of acquisition by a hostile neighbour will still pose after 1993.

The provisions concerning the sharing out of companies do not depart fundamentally from the measures that we debated at considerable length during the passage of the Broadcasting Bill. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I expressed at the time our fears about the concentration of ownership. We said that we wanted diversity and plurality of ownership, and that the present arrangements allow too great a concentration of power. We would have welcomed a report from John Sadler or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, for example.

I do not go along with the Opposition's Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Erdington, in believing that it would be sensible, following a general election, to set in train yet again the entire bidding process. That would run counter to the interests of television. We must be mindful of the upheaval that the companies face and the concentration of effort that goes into preparing the bids. It is an irresponsible undertaking of the Labour party to suggest that it would relaunch the process if, by some chance, it were to form the next Government.

Mr. Corbett: There has been some misunderstanding. I did not say what the hon. Gentleman suggests. I said—this is what I meant to say or what I thought I said—that at the end of the licence period, on which we are just about starting, we would go through a bidding process again, and not as envisaged under the Act. The only things that would come under the Act would be via the stock exchange. That is all I said.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful for that clarification. If I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman's proposal, I readily withdraw. I am bound to say that I thought that he was talking—I think that others reached this understanding—about relaunching the bidding process on the basis of new ground rules as soon as he became the responsible Minister. That would clearly be adverse to the interests of television.

If the arrangements for television cannot be entirely welcomed, the arrangements for radio seem to be considerably worse. It is clear that radio is operating within tight commercial constraints, with limited prospects of profits. The competition that we are witnessing makes the probability of concentration much greater for radio than for television. It is all too likely that the proposal that one company should be allowed to own up to 20 local stations, so that costs and programming will be shared, will be the pattern. I fear that we shall see the disappearance of the diversity of stations that has been held out to us, tantalisingly, as the object. It is not possible within the scope of the debate to deal with possible remedies for that. I merely note what is proposed in modification of the general principle in applying a point system for independent radio.

I fear that the result of the proposals will be the loss of local services. Most stations will be bland and will offer the barest minimum of local news and stories. As soon as a station starts to attract listeners, one of the giants of local radio will seek to take it over.

That is a pattern that we watched with dismay in France. I guess that we cannot prevent it occurring in the United Kingdom, but it is a reason for taking the view that the order is inappropriate to deal with the problem.

It is deplorable and regrettable that community radio is likely to be the first in line for the chop. In the current climate, it is virtually impossible to set up new and specialised services that will attract advertising while audiences are accumulated. Again, if community radio breaks through, it is likely to be quickly swallowed up by one of its larger commercial rivals. We should have built-in protections for community radio, whose function is quite different from that of local radio.

[Mr. Maclennan]

On previous occasions, I have said that the 20 per cent. limit was inappropriately large for television and radio stations, and that a smaller limit would be wiser in a pluralist society. We have missed an opportunity to make competition more effective by holding the reins in a different way. I am disappointed that thinking on that matter has not developed with the advent of the new Home Secretary.

The issue of non-satellite broadcasting divided the House on a previous occasion. Only domestic satellites are mentioned in the order. Now that Mr. Murdoch has reduced his holding in BSkyB, perhaps the personal reasons for exempting him from the rule of law have disappeared. It might be appropriate to go back to the drawing board and consider introducing legislation consistent with that for other sectors, and so remove the special favours for non-domestic satellites that have shown the lack of power of the Independent Television Commission to protect consumers' interests within hours of the enactment of the Broadcasting Bill. I do not expect the Government to move instantly on that matter, but I should like them at least to think about it. It would make sense in the longer term and it would be in the consumer interest.

The order does not reflect the sort of priorities that we believe should have been protected, and for that reason we shall not support the Government tonight.

9.6 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I declare an interest as an adviser to Yorkshire Television.

Our debates on the Broadcasting Bill over the past 18 months have been characterised by the shedding of more light on what the future broadcasting scene is likely to be. There was a good example of that a moment ago in the exchange of views between the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). There will be rejoicing throughout independent television, not least in the Independent Television Commission, that the hon. Member for Erdington has at least clarified his party's position on the allocation of licences—that in the unlikely event of a Labour victory at the next general election there will not be a wholesale reallocation of licences. That is of some relief to us.

I have some sympathy with what the hon. Member for Erdington said about the risks facing Channel 3, and especially regional television. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) put his finger on the root of the problem when he referred to the position of newspapers. Certain national daily newspapers have survived only because of the entrepreneurial investment of certain so-called media tycoons. Whether it is commercial television, commercial radio or newspapers, there is no guarantee of commercial success.

Throughout our deliberations on trying to set in place a proper framework for the future of Channel 3, the real difficulty was that we needed a structure that dealt with the most profitable regions such as Thames Television, TVS and London Weekend Television, but also provided a sensible framework for the future of Grampian Television and Border Television in Scotland. That was at the heart of concern over the future of the ownership of Channel 3 licences and explains why we were unable fully to resolve those matters in Committee, on Report or even on Third Reading of the Broadcasting Bill. Therefore, there was a need for further reflection and consultation on the best framework.

I hope not to appear modest when I suggest that the order, in relation to Channel 3, broadly reflects the compromise proposal that I put to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary shortly before Christmas. I remain disappointed that there was no agreement between the two adjoining licensees to allow mergers to take place even before the licences are reallocated—but that is history.

Now the bids are about to be submitted. By the end of the year the licences will be allocated. In terms of future mergers or takeovers, the draft order provides a sensible compromise between the conflicting and competing commercial interests of different television stations and the crucial ingredient of protecting the regional commitment of whoever has that licence. That involves protecting not the commercial interests of a specific television station, but the regional arrangements and the regional map of Channel 3—there is a fundamental difference between those two.

Mr. Maclennan *indicated assent.*

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland nods in agreement because he knows that those matters largely affect his constituents. I am glad that he agrees with me on that.

I take the point of the hon. Member for Erdington that the framework provided by the Bill leaves us with much meat to put on the bones. However, my reading of the Channel 3 licence applications suggests—I think that this is accepted throughout independent television—that those who will be granted licences in the allocation, whether existing Channel 3 licensees or new players, will have a stronger regional commitment to Channel 3 as a consequence of the Bill and the order than was the case under the old arrangement. That is largely to the credit of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who was responsible for guiding much of the legislation through the House. He responded well to our concerns in the regions about the future of regional television.

We cannot emphasise too much the fact that Channel 3 will represent regional television in the future. I have grave doubts about whether it will be possible, in the greater competitive world of television in the next century, for the British Broadcasting Corporation to maintain the sort of regional television and local radio service that it has at present. I am not suggesting that it will not fight hard to maintain those services, but Channel 3 is the one television channel required, by statute, to provide a regional service. That is why it is important that we place in perspective the issue of who should in future own some of the smaller licences should the cold competitive world of the future mean that their viability is threatened. That is where I part company with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland. I cannot and never could see the logic of the distanced penny-farthing. I cannot see why Central Television should want to bail out Border Television should Border Television get into financial difficulties.

I can see a considerable advantage, however, in suggesting that Granada Television may wish to bail out Border Television. The hon. Member for Erdington says

that that threatens to undermine the regional service. It does not, because it is clear from the legislation and what has been said about Channel 3 licence ownership that any company that takes over a neighbouring licence, or any other licence, would be required to honour all the licence obligations, including regional commitments. Those must include the arrangements which the Bill requires and which the Independent Television Commission has strengthened in its draft licences, for the licensees to demonstrate how they will meet the regional programme.

Economies of scale can be beneficial, but there can also be commercial benefits and benefits to viewers. The whole of my constituency in north Yorkshire is one of the overlap areas. Neither Yorkshire Television nor Tyne Tees Television has universal coverage. As we all know from past arguments, that is because of transmission arrangements. However, where a larger licensee acquires the interests of a smaller neighbouring licensee, there can be considerable advantage for viewers in the strengthening of local and regional services. That must not be underestimated.

It will be clear from my comments that I strongly support the order. I shall not mention all the matters with which it deals but will continue to confine my remarks to Channel 3 licensees. In that context, will my hon. Friend the Minister consider the fact that everyone's attention is currently focused on the bid for Channel 3 licences? It is an historic moment for the future of independent television. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Erdington said, we are about to allocate the licences for a period of some 20 years and set the framework for the future of our main terrestrial commercial television channel.

That is why we were right to spend so much time trying to get that framework right. In Committee and on the Floor of the House we argued about the need to maintain quality while not inhibiting commercial opportunity. I believe that we have got the framework right, but it rests on the exceptional circumstance arrangement in the scheme of bidding. None of us wants the highest bid to win at the expense of quality. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the exceptional circumstances provision is there to be used? The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, whose constituency is as far as anyone else's from London, will agree that the further one is from London, the more important is the regional concept of Channel 3 television. The provision deals with the quality of Channel 3 and its commitment to the regions. I believe that the regional commitment can be considered an exceptional circumstance in the scheme of bidding.

On local radio, the ownership arrangements in the order are complex. I hope that my hon. Friend can confirm that he does not accept any argument that those ownership arrangements would hamper commercial investment in local radio because local radio will not be involved in big megabucks, money-spinning activity. Many people will have to put much effort into providing independent radio competition locally against the BBC structure. In rural areas there will not be large audiences and some people many well be investing almost on a wing and a prayer. We should not discourage that investment by ownership rules which are too complex.

9.30 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I declare an interest, in that I present a programme for BSkyB. It is an excellent, high-quality programme of great intellectual rigour in which I speak for freedom, truth and justice and the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) dissents, when he can get a word in. That ends the commercial break.

The order closes the stable doors after the horses have bolted all over the place. There is an incantation of magical formula of 5 per cent. of this and 20 per cent. of that being introduced, long after the brew has curdled and all the decisions have been taken. The Radio Authority and the ITC are both trying to catch up and cast a cloak of rationality over the undesirable situation that has developed in television and radio. They have been cogitating for months and now we have their recommendations.

During that time—indeed, over the past couple of years—the whole position in radio and television has changed, in my view for the worse, as a result of commercial decisions. In order to accumulate war chests, the ITV companies have drastically reduced staff levels, and therefore their ability to produce high-quality programmes for their regions. As I argued in an intervention in the Minister's speech, the strength of ITV is that it took television production out of London and established centres of excellence in all the regions—in Manchester, in Leeds and in Tyne Tees, for example. The position of those centres has been undermined, and they are now threatened by the contract allocations.

We want to maintain those centres. As far as I can see, there is no requirement in the regulations that the centres of excellence or the network of skills be maintained. The companies can simply become publishers, farming out programmes to independent companies as long as those independent companies produce in the regions. In a sense, that is wishful thinking in areas like Tyne Tees or Yorkshire, where there is not a vigorous network of independent companies to carry on the responsibility if it is not fulfilled by a strong production centre in Newcastle or in Leeds. Therefore, I see a real threat.

I also see a farcical position developing because of the ludicrous system of bidding. If a regional company is not challenged and simply puts in a bid of a penny or a ha'penny, what will happen? If the Government's greedy aspirations cannot be fulfilled because there is not a challenge, what control will the Government or the ITC have? I should like to know, because my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and I will almost certainly be putting in applications for licences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: So long as the applications pass the quality threshold in the circumstances that he describes, the hon. Gentlemen will get a good bargain.

Mr. Mitchell: They say that they are a Government of business and commercial rigour, but they have created a daft situation like that. A company that makes an excellent contribution to a region, has a good reputation is not challenged, because of the strength of its productions and what it has done for the region, can get away with making a bid of one penny. The Minister has told us that that is the case. If that is the eventuality, it is daft.

Mr. Lloyd: If a company wanted to bid in that way, it would get a good bargain, but I do not believe that it would win if it bid only one penny.

Mr. Mitchell: In some areas, it is difficult to get bids because expectations are low and the commercial reality is difficult. Money is tight at the moment. In that situation, if a competing bid is not put together, the company would get a bargain. It is folly on the part of the Government to provide them with that opportunity. However, I shall not grumble. If it puts more money back into television production, it benefits viewers in that region, it benefits television and therefore I welcome it.

The second major deterioration that has taken place in the intervening period is in radio. I am saddened by what has happened in commercial, independent, local radio. Companies are gobbling each other up. They are forming bigger and bigger blocks, providing more and more programmes on a network basis, not for a locality or a community, but for an amorphous, much wider entity. Concentrations of shareholdings are taking over companies.

That saddens me because, in 1975, I was involved in the foundation of Pennine Radio in Bradford, which started out as Bradford community radio. We fulfilled to the letter the IBA's then intentions, which were that there should be locally based radio stations, serving the community, with local shareholders, and with local figures taking an active part, providing a vigorous local news service and a talk opportunity for people in the locality. That is all going by the board.

The regulatory authority has watched over the undermining of every one of the principles under which it insisted that people should bid in the first stage in the 1970s, when those stations were set up. The authority has seen the principles undermined, frustrated and overturned and has witnessed the creation of commercial blocks which are nothing more than juke boxes established in a series of localities, over a wider region. That frustrates the purpose of local radio, which is what it is all about, and we have watched it happen.

These regulations are closing the stable door on that process. Indeed, they are closing the stable door in an incomprehensible fashion. I see that section 12 of the regulations entitled "limits", states:

> "Subject to the following paragraphs, a person shall not at any time hold licences to provide national, local or restricted radio services such that the total number of points applicable to such services, calculated in accordance with article 11, exceeds 15 per cent. of the total number of points so calculated applicable to all such services in respect of which licences have been granted and have not ceased to have effect."

What does that mean? How is that an effective base on which to provide a genuine local radio service of the type that I and the people at Pennine Radio were so proud to establish in 1975, when—we struggled to fulfil the requirements that were then imposed by the IBA—we set up a local radio station serving a genuine community which was run by people from that community and had a shareholding in the community.

The matter has become a joke, and it is not helped by a regulatory authority which we were told would be a light touch authority—in radio as in television—but which is now going in for more heavy-handed regulation than anything that preceded it.

I have had a long brush with that authority over their regulations, which state that politicians shall not present their current affairs programmes. It seems to be all right for politicians to preside over radio authorities, but not for them to appear on a radio programme that it is nominally supervising.

One expects a bureaucracy to justify its silly or irrational decisions. It is a civil servant's job to put "Not unwelcome" on the doormat and to phrase things to defend the status quo. However, in my correspondence about that decision, which seems to me to be an unnecessary interference with the freedom of radio stations, the authority has not even understood the point at issue. The intellectual level of the replies is very worrying. If that is the regulator, it is now in an impossible position because of the differentiations in the national radio stations that we are now setting up. If it is true that the authority has received no applications for the first national non-pop radio station and has had to extend the date for applications in the desperate hope of receiving some, how will that body be regulated if the authority has to beg for applicants to fulfil the intentions that the Government have foisted on it? How will it be regulated if the Government are desperate for bids?

Mr. Corbett: Shall we spend another penny on a radio station?

Mr. Mitchell: I am always happy to co-operate with my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington. Let us extend our talents not only to television but to radio stations.

The Radio Authority's intervention in LBC is another classic example. LBC spent a small fortune splitting its frequencies and providing two radio stations. Then, along comes the Radio Authority, which is committed to diversity, to ask it to put them back together again. That is heavy-handed and elephantine regulation, when we were told that the touch would be light. Frankly, the intellectual level is depressing.

We are dealing with regulations that try to freeze a mess, especially in local radio, where the only effective competition now comes from BBC local radio, which provides diversity and an alternative service. I am thinking especially of BBC Radio Humberside. It provides a magnificent service in the area where allocations by the BBC have been cut because it is kept on such a tight financial string. Local radio is therefore less able to serve its community, so competition is being undermined. The intentions of the system are being frustrated and will not be upheld by the regulations.

The third change is the collapse of British Satellite Broadcasting, which was the biggest disaster after the poll tax. That was a tragedy and a folly, because we had an opportunity to get into the satellite market early with a high technical capability, which would have established us as leaders and provided a system that could have been expanded and sold in Europe. The Government's indecision, dithering and inability to decide who should run it meant that the launch was put back again and again. They considered different companies and danced a series of marital gavottes with different partners, all of which broke up.

Engineers imposed standards that were technically too high and therefore, more expensive, thus reducing again the range of choice of those who could provide the service. The Government delayed and British capital, which is

conventionally nervous in such a situation, was very slow, so the service came too late. It was launched years after it should have been launched, whereas it was vital to get into the market early. It lagged behind and staggered. It went in, even then, with expectations that were too grandiose and with a structure based on the BBC and run by people from the BBC who were used to overspending and to grandiose expectations. It was like the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) hang-gliding. It was overstaffed, top-heavy and bound to crash because it paid no attention to commercial realities.

BSB failed for two reasons. First, it spent too much money and was too grandiose. It had no idea about commercial realities. Secondly, Rupert Murdoch got in first and scooped the market. Who can blame him? Capitalism is all about taking a risk. Rupert Murdoch got in and did it—successfully. In those circumstances, BSB was bound to fail. It is silly to start complaining—as my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington did—as if Sky had taken over and strangled its opposition. That was not what happened. The shareholders of BSB, alarmed at the scale of their losses, took the baby out of the management's hands and dumped it on Rupert Murdoch's doorstep. That is literally what happened.

How can we then—as my hon. Friend the Member for Erdington did—blame what happened on the man on whose doorstep the baby was dumped? He had taken the risk. About £1·5 billion has been spent so far on the satellite venture. That was enormous expenditure, to provide more choice and diversity for viewers in Britain. So why are we going in for this chorus of blame, praising with faint damns? We

"assent with civil leer,
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer."

That is our attitude.

I should have preferred a fight—a conflict in which the viewers could have chosen. I should have preferred competition to provide better programmes. That is not what happened, but it is not realistic to blame Murdoch for a situation that was not of his making. The merger was cleared by the Office of Fair Trading, so it is churlish to carp. I do not come to praise Rupert Murdoch but I do not come to bury him either.

The order is a fig leaf to conceal the Government's impotence in the Sky-BSB merger. Our position is intellectually disreputable. However desirable it might be, it is not possible to prevent concentrations of ownership in the media unless the freedom of the press is restricted and the Government close off people's opportunity to enter the market and require people to get out of the market. That is the problem. It is a problem which we must solve if we are to say that the market must be regulated. If we cannot do so, we should not imply that we would deal with the matter.

I have never particularly liked *The Sun*, but I do not read *The Sun*. In the heart of every Labour Member of Parliament there is a C. P. Scott struggling to get out. The ethics of *The Sun* are a matter of taste, but that is not a justification for legislative intervention to expropriate newspapers. *The Sun* was handed to Rupert Murdoch by whom? We must take that into account. He saved it from closure. The same applies to *Today*. It is unrealistic to say that we will deal with the monopoly by taking papers away and allowing them to fail. That would be irrational.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erdington said that we would refer newspaper ownership to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation. That is the classic formula for any party that cannot decide what to do. It passes the matter on to a Royal Commission, to take minutes and waste years, or to the MMC. However, if we say that, it is irrational also to say that the 20 per cent. ceiling on, for example, Rupert Murdoch's participation would be enforced at the same time, even before the investigation was complete. What is magical about 20 per cent.?

We have here a system that provides more choice and allows the viewer to choose. That is important. More diversity has been provided. Murdoch has taken a risk and I hope that he will succeed. It is churlish to carp and drag sulkily behind saying, "Naughty, naughty." That is not intellectually credible. In focusing on that issue, we have lost sight of the real issue, which is the undermining of the local roots of production in both radio and television. We are fiddling while the position deteriorates.

I am terribly worried that the failure of the Government to provide in the legislation for local production in centres of excellence, which are the basis of ITV's federal system, will mean that the people bidding for contracts do not establish production centres but farm production out. They will farm that out and become publishers. It may be that they will farm it out to independents in the regions, but those people will not encourage the skills, or establish the centres of training and excellence, in the way that ITV has.

I am particularly worried about the maintenance of centres at Border, Grampian and Tyne Tees, where they are important, and about the erosion of local bases in commercial local radio. Local television and radio have been the pride of our system. We are sabotaging the local basis of electronic communications, and this order will do nothing to stop that process.

9.50 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): There is a perfectly respectable case for saying that we should have none of these regulations or controls, but leave it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to step in if competition is being stifled or undermined. However, I accept that, on balance, it is probably right that we should support this order to ensure that, from the word go, no such reduction in competition takes place. I see no justification whatsoever in the cross-media ownership controls relating to newspapers and satellites. They are wholly unnecessary.

I am a little surprised that the Labour party should be making a fuss about Rupert Murdoch's ownership of a satellite television station. I am surprised to see them engaging in another round of Murdoch-bashing. The last time we discussed this issue—during the debate on the Broadcasting Act 1990—the Labour party clearly lost the argument. The speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), in which I think he was arguing that a Labour Government would force Mr. Murdoch to divest himself of either his satellite interests or his newspaper interests, was, to say the least, extremely unconvincing. I was astonished when the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) appeared to suggest that he had some sympathy with the case being made by Labour Front-Bench Members.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) used the word "disreputable" to describe the approach of

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). I shall be a little more rude, although it is not always easy to be less polite than the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. Clearly, there is one source of motivation for everything that Labour Members say about Rupert Murdoch and his interests. That motivation is spite—sheer spite. It was Rubert Murdoch who destroyed the stranglehold that the print unions—some of Labour's paymasters—had over the newspaper industry, and Labour wants to get even. It was Rupert Murdoch who got rid of the restrictive practices in newspapers, which were doing so much damage to the industry. A political party whose policy is based on spite does not deserve to be taken seriously.

I am no longer surprised that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the shadow Home Secretary, for whom the hon. Member for Erdington has been acting as mouthpiece in this debate, should behave on the basis of spite. Last year, he said that he would never again write for the Murdoch newspapers. That was a spiteful decision, but one which, as a regular reader of *The Times*, and the *Sunday Times*, and, I confess, as an occasional reader of *The Sun*, I welcome entirely.

Applying Labour's approach could be justified only if there were a monopoly. The hon. Member for Erdington tried this evening to argue that there was, but the truth is that there is no monopoly. Mr. Murdoch's newspapers operate in a highly competitive environment, a highly competitive marketplace. Each has robust competition, and nobody forces anybody to read any of them.

It is quite clear that Mr. Murdoch's satellite investment is highly risky. Nobody forces people to watch those satellite television stations. The suggestion that Rupert Murdoch has a satellite monopoly is complete nonsense. Mr. Murdoch now owns only 40 per cent. of British Sky Broadcasting and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) pointed out, there is great choice on the Astra satellite system. There are already five English language channels on Astra. More importantly, British Sky Broadcasting is providing competition for the duopoly that has existed in Britain for so long in the BBC and ITV companies.

The real power in broadcasting is not Mr. Murdoch but the BBC. Measured by revenue, the BBC is the largest media enterprise in Europe. It enjoys monopoly access to the licence fee; it has half the terrestrial broadcasting spectrum at its disposal; it has the lion's share of the radio frequencies; it employs 27,000 people and it is the second largest publisher of consumer magazines in Britain; yet Labour does not advocate dismantling the BBC. Apparently, Labour likes the BBC. I am not suggesting at this stage that we should dismantle the BBC.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Opposition want to dismantle the Broadcasting Standards Council? They complain about the amount of sex and violence that appears on television, yet at the same time they want to abolish the very body that sets and controls those standards. It does not line up.

Mr. Riddick: My hon. Friend is right. The Labour party is very partial in its approach to these matters. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, the Labour party wishes to abolish the Broadcasting Standards Council. It would also reverse the impartiality clauses contained in the Broadcasting Act, which I hope will ensure greater impartiality in broadcasting in the months and years to come.

Tonight we have seen an exercise in Labour hypocricy. The Opposition do not like Mr. Murdoch, and what they have been saying about him tonight is motivated purely by spite. The hon. Member for Erdington, who is no longer in his place, should be thoroughly ashamed of himself for that.

9.57 pm

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): I regret that I missed the opening Front Bench speeches in the short debate this evening. That was not because, as a television viewer, I detest repeats and it was quite clear that the Labour party would wheel out a repeat of an old show that had failed to improve its audience ratings before, but because the business came on a little earlier than we had expected.

I should remind the House of my personal interest in these matters as a working television journalist employed by British Sky Broadcasting, and of course as the co-presenter of a programme with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). It is most agreeable to have got through three sentences in his presence without having been interrupted. As those who watch our programme will know, that is extremely rare—as rare as my letting him have his say without interrupting him.

I share the concerns which have been expressed this evening about the possible growth of monopoly or dominance within the media, but I see it at a slightly different angle for some Opposition Members. The order does not relate to the printed media—the newspapers—although there is a clear connection because of the provisions relating to ownership. But for the activities of Mr. Murdoch and his company, aided and abetted by Mr. Maxwell—a former Labour Member of Parliament who is rumoured to be a Labour supporter to this day, and who has been almost as forthright in breaking the monopoly power of the trade unions in the print business—I very much doubt that we would see *The Independent* or several other titles today. It is possible that *The Guardian* would have gone under—a tragedy that I would have borne nobly and stoically, without too many tears, I must confess. None the less, one should provide a wide range of choice even for those who are obviously fundamentally unable to take advantage of it.

Any suggestion that the activities of Mr. Murdoch in this country have been monopolistic are misplaced. I find it particularly odd that there should be a suggestion that there is any form of satellite television monopoly. There are plenty of channels available at the moment on satellite that could broadcast into this country. It is up to those bold enough to come forward.

If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) could raise a couple more pennies—like him, I am, at times, overwhelmingly tempted to spend a penny on some of our broadcasters, to use his phrase—and some cash, he could have a channel on one of the satellites. Whether or not anyone would want to watch it is another matter.

Mr. Corbett: Rather like Sky.

Mr. Tebbit: Well, I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman would normally find a million or so viewers. I suspect that, if it came to it, his hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby would have a lot more viewers than the hon. Gentleman. We might have a few more viewers for this debate if the two of them transposed their positions. As we all know, however, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby was sacked from his Front Bench position, for taking a job with British Sky Broadcasting. That was done, I presume, so that we should not have any censorship in the media. It does not matter if one writes for *The Times*. That is not an offence—well, not if one is senior enough; it is only if one is a junior, and when one works for Sky, that one gets fired from the Opposition Front Bench. The gainers from that encounter were my hon. Friend—I mean the hon. Gentleman; I must remember the proprieties of these things—the Member for Great Grimsby, my co-presenter, and the viewers of Sky.

By far the most dominant force in television today is not Mr. Murdoch, but the BBC. That poses the danger of a monopoly. It still has half the terrestrial channels, apart from its publishing activities. My hon. Friend the Minister should keep a close eye on how well the BBC is doing in the process that was set in train by my hon. Friend and others of contracting out more of its programmes to independent producers.

If my hon. Friend considers what is happening, he will discover that many of those contracts are awarded on a sweetheart basis. Some of the restrictions that are placed on the tenderers for those contracts make it plain that it is the intention of the BBC that nothing shall change whatever, except that the cost of the productions shall increase because former BBC employees will be doing that production with an added fee. That was not the intention of placing a requirement on the BBC to contract out some of its work to independent producers. *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) is muttering from a sedentary position. Perhaps he can tell me how the BBC has done in reducing its prices to the consumer, just as British Telecom has reduced its prices to the consumer. If the hon. Gentleman knows the answer, he might have something to say. Would he like to tell us what has been happening to the licence fee, as opposed to telephone charges?

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Can the hon. Gentleman tell me how it is just that people all over Britain are having to pay 17·5 per cent. VAT on their telephone charges when that 17·5 per cent. VAT was not in existence from January to March this year?

Mr. Tebbit: That is a little bit off the broad scope of the debate. I will only say briefly that, so far as it is possible to do, those consumers are not being charged that additional VAT unless it is proper and appropriate that they should be.

Mr. Worthington: It sounds like a racket to me.

Mr. Tebbit: I would be happy if my hon. Friend the Minister were able to tell us tonight that in future the BBC's licence fee would be linked to the retail prices index in the same way as British Telecom's prices—RPI minus 6·5 per cent. It would no doubt please everybody in the House to see prices coming down in that way—or would it? Perhaps not.

But as I have said, the principal threat to competition in television is, first, the continuing dominance of the BBC and secondly, and more seriously perhaps in many ways, the threat to the independent sector which is coming from the present dearth of advertising revenues. That is the problem which may well force under some of the smaller independent companies, particularly those in radio.

There has been a lot of talk this evening about the dangers of successful companies in television and radio being taken over in predatory bids. But in my experience, it is not successful companies that are taken over, but unsuccessful companies. If there is a danger at all at the moment, it lies first in the lack of advertising revenue, which springs from the considerable expansion in the number of stations spreading the revenue too thinly, and, secondly, in the recession reducing the amount of revenue available. That is where the danger lies, not from the activities of the strong, powerful and well-financed companies.

I hope that my hon. Friend, when he looks at those matters, will be entirely firm and stick to what he has said about the manner in which the restrictions will be applied to cross-media ownership. There is no requirement to strengthen the regulations beyond those which he has proposed. If anything, in the longer term, we should be looking at reducing those restrictions.

I do not find it acceptable to see that there is a monopoly because somebody is a significant operator in the printed press and the electronic media. Those are not the same areas, and I do not think that we should worry too much about it.

10.8 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We began the debate earlier than we expected, so we have taken considerably more time to debate considerably more points than we might have expected to do. As a result, I have covered six or seven sides in closely written hieroglyphics which, if I tackled each one fully, would require a long speech. The House will be glad to hear that I can never read my own handwriting at this time in the evening, so I shall be brief and will refer only to the points that were directed at me which I can remember. My handwriting was rather better at the beginning of the debate when a number of points were put to me by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

The hon. Gentleman asked what happens if there is no bid in one region. I am not as pessimistic as he is, but if that should happen the ITC would have to advertise again. As it would have allowed the region to continue only on the basis that it was a viable one, it would be a clear signal that here was an opportunity for the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) to buy, if not for a penny, for a lower sum than he might have thought it would have cost him if he had made his bid in the first place.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: This is monstrous. The Minister is now changing what he said originally. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and I have begun to formulate our bid. Is the Minister saying that if the terms of the Act were fulfilled by a sole contender company putting in a bid of one penny that bid would be rejected?

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) had listened to his hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Lloyd]

Erdington, let alone to me, he would have realised that his hon. Friend was talking about a region where there was no bid at all. What would happen then? I see that the hon. Member for Erdington is nodding in agreement. What I am saying now is on all fours with what I said before. If no second bid is made, if the hon. Member for Great Grimsby realises that he cannot manage something as complex as putting in a bid that would satisfy the quality threshold, the ITC would have to look to neighbouring licensees to run a temporary service until a satisfactory licensee could be found for the region.

The hon. Member for Erdington was worried about production facilities in the regions not being used. There is bound to be less use of production facilities of contractors and licensees because of the 25 per cent. rule, which means that 25 per cent. of output must be provided by independents. Of course, the 80 per cent. for specific contracted regional broadcasting will have to be made in the appropriate region, but the price that one pays for having independents is that they be independent enough to choose where they can best make their programmes.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby deviated into sense when he talked about the real pressures on an organisation such as Sky, and the lack of realism shown by his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench. However, he shared their inpracticality when he said that there should be a rule about where independents should produce programmes. The whole point about independents is that they are independent people who will produce programmes that they believe are wanted, and they need to produce them as competitively as possible. It must be up to them to decide where they should do so. I am less pessimistic than the hon. Gentleman about the possibility of their not doing so in the regions.

Contrariwise, the hon. Member for Erdington was worried that the broadcasters would force independents to use facilities in the way that the broadcasters wanted them to. However, the order that we have just published on the definition of an independent—no doubt we shall debate it soon—makes it clear that such pressure must not be applied. If it were, that would be a matter for the regulatory authorities. Independents must be seen to be independent as well as actually being independent.

Mr. Tebbit: If an independent must be seen to be independent, is it reasonable of the BBC to specify to independents which might contract with it who should present a programme, and to reserve the right to approve of the choice of editor, or even to appoint the editor? Is it right that the BBC should reserve the right to approve the panellists on a programme, or that it should insist that the existing music and graphics of a programme be used, and so on? That does not leave a lot of independence, does it?

Mr. Lloyd: My right hon. Friend is extending an argument in particular directions that he was advancing generally in his speech. He has raised exactly the sort of matter that we shall consider when we debate the order that defines independents. As the evening grows late, even though we started to debate the order fairly early, I shall leave the matter until we debate the independents order, if my right hon. Friend will forgive me.

The hon. Member for Erdington wondered what would happen if broadcasters made arrangements together to sell advertising. It was part of his generalised worry about concentration of power. That would become a matter of interest to the Office of Fair Trading. The OFT has a role to ensure that real competition exists, and that extends to advertising. When the hon. Gentleman says that he is worried about concentration of ownership of the press and of television licensees, I remind him that the rules provide categorically and clearly, as does the Act, I believe—having sat through the consideration of the Bill that became the Broadcasting Act 1990, he will probably know this better than most—that no British press proprietor may own more than 20 per cent. of the shareholding of any television company. If there is any suggestion that the 20 per cent. may be a controlling interest because of the make-up of the company, the percentage holding will have to be reduced. There is no question of a concentration of power in that respect.

The hon. Member for Erdington wondered whether we would have to accept somebody's word. It is not a matter of accepting anyone's word, and that is why we are debating the order. The order stems from the Act and the rules are before us. The hon. Gentleman said that he felt that BSkyB had a monopoly of satellite broadcasting. It does not have a total monopoly because other satellite channels are available. When there is only one player in the field, that player is the monopoly. A succession of opportunities are available on Astra 1 and 2 and, it is mooted, Astra 3, for other players to move on to the field. That means that there is no monopoly in any accepted sense of that word. It is easy for competition to materialise if there is a willingness to invest resources. If that is done, the competition will find an audience.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): What would happen if there were a shareholder with a 20 per cent. holding, it was decided that there should be a rights issue and the other parties could not afford to take advantage of that issue? The holdings of the other parties would be diluted and the 20 per cent. holding would be worth more. What would the Government do in such circumstances?

Mr. Lloyd: They would not do anything. The Independent Television Commission would ensure that the 20 per cent. which had risen to whatever level was reduced at least to the previous level of 20 per cent.

Mr. Dickens: Would it buy?

Mr. Lloyd: How it reduced the holding—by giving it away, selling it or whatever—would be a matter for the commission to decide. The major requirement is that the holding should be reduced, and that it would be.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Erdington accepted—my handwriting is still quite good quality—that it was sensible for the ITC to enable BSB viewers to continue to receive broadcasts. The arrangements are temporary and the commission has some imaginative proposals for securing more programming on the Marco Polo satellite. The success of what it intends to do will depend upon individuals willingly coming forward. I hope that they will. There is no monopoly in any reasonable sense of the word because we cannot separate satellites from the rest of broadcasting that is available. Satellite broadcasting represents an extremely small proportion of broadcasting as a whole.

The hon. Member for Erdington thought that the Government should refer the BSB-Sky merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. If the hon. Gentleman reflects upon the matter, he will recall that it was considered by the OFT, which found no basis whatever for a reference to the MMC. That is hardly surprising, as the combined satellite broadcasts account for far less than 10 per cent. of all broadcasting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) expressed similar concerns about the decreasing use of production facilities in the provinces. I hope that he accepts that the points that I made earlier apply very much to what he said. He is being too pessimistic. We must accept that the independents, as well as the licensees, should make those programmes where they think that they can best make them.

My hon. Friend said that there was an insufficient number of radio frequencies. The Radio Authority intends to advertise 30 new franchises a year. That would be quite demanding of the skills and experience available in the industry. I doubt whether it would be practical or sensible to go very much further, but that is a matter for the authority. It is important, and will be in the coming years, that more frequencies are released. I have that very much in mind in my discussions with the BBC and my colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry, who have responsibility for the distribution of wavelengths.

My hon. Friend was right to say that Sky has extended, at great cost, the choice available to viewers and that further advances such as digital, which is on the horizon, will not be made if those willing to take that sort of risk did not have the freedom to do so. Many of the Labour party's suggestions for further restrictions would make such advances impossible. I noted what my hon. Friend said about the televising of proceedings in the House. That is a matter not for me but for the House.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and I have had a sufficient number of exchanges about BSB dishes for me now to pass over that point. He asked about the levy, but it would not be proper for me to comment on that at any length. I hope that Mr. Speaker will prove a light-handed regulator and will allow me to say that there is great concern in the television industry about the weight of the levy bearing down upon it at a time when advertising revenue has been reduced. I keep that matter in mind in discussions with Government colleagues. We have not yet reached a conclusion, but I hope that we will do so soon. The levy does not directly affect the new licences and the bidding for them. By the time that the new licences are on the air in 1993, the levy will be a thing of the past.

I was pleased that the hon. Gentleman was pleased with the changes in the continuity rules, even if he would have preferred us to go further. I do not accept his fear that radio will be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Advertising on radio has been maintained at a rather better level than on television. He referred to the rule in the Act that no one should own more than 20 stations. I draw his attention to the rule that does not alow anyone to own stations that would give them more than 15 per cent. of the totality of points, which are calculated according to the reach of the stations that are operational, and which, as new stations come along, will tend to increase.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) spoke, as usual, knowledgeably and wisely. I am glad to have his support for our arrangements under the order. I confirm that the provision in the Act for exceptional circumstances is there to be used. The Independent Television Commission knows that, and will use it as it judges appropriate. It is not for Ministers to say when it should do so. However, I confirm that it is well aware that it has that power and a duty to use it whenever it considers it necessary.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby was excited and entertaining, and I enjoyed listening to him. Some of his remarks related to the order. All hon. Members, especially Opposition Members who expect to remain in opposition, have the failing of wanting everything both ways—or even three or four ways. The independents have been given the opportunity to make programmes and have been given a space in the BBC and ITV to make up to at least 25 per cent. of those companies' programmes. Inevitably, they will choose where and how to make the programmes. If the hon. Member for Great Grimsby feels that the Labour party should be more sensitive to the realities of the world of Sky Television, I suggest that he should be more sensitive to independent production.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: That was not the point that I was making. I asked what happens to the existing centres of production run by existing companies.

Mr. Lloyd: Some will be sold and others will be used. Any superfluous assets will be dealt with by the owners in the best possible way. It is not for the Government to lay down prescriptions. Even if I had an idea about how they could best be used, I am sure that the companies would feel that they knew better, and I would not argue with them about that.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby said that the rules were extremely complicated. They are quite complicated and he should read them carefully. He would need to read them several times but, if he did so, he would find that they were quite clear. They would assure him that there was not the concentration of power in radio or television that Opposition Members fear. I have no such fears, not because I am in favour of concentration—I am emphatically against it—but because the rules will guard effectively against it. I therefore commend them to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 163, Noes 102.

Division No.127] **[10.27 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Brazier, Julian
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bright, Graham
Amess, David	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Amos, Alan	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Arbuthnot, James	Buck, Sir Antony
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Budgen, Nicholas
Arnold, Sir Thomas	Burns, Simon
Ashby, David	Burt, Alistair
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Butterfill, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Bellingham, Henry	Carrington, Matthew
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Carttiss, Michael
Benyon, W.	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Bevan, David Gilroy	Chapman, Sydney
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Chope, Christopher
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Colvin, Michael
Bottomley, Peter	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Cope, Rt Hon John
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Cormack, Patrick
Bowis, John	Couchman, James
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Cran, James

Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Fearn, Ronald
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Lamond, James
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Thomas McAvoy and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991, which was laid before this House on 28th March, be approved.

PETITION

Cosmetics (Animal Testing)

10.34 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to present a petition given to me by four pupils from Whitburn comprehensive school in my constituency, Louise Freeman, Marit Hudson, Angela Patterson and Rachel Green.

They told me when they came to my office on Saturday that they were so appalled at the thousands of animals that suffer and die each year to test cosmetics, and toiletries such as lipstick that they went out each night after school and each weekend and collected more than 1,000 signatures from people in my constituency.

Their petition tells of cruel tests involving rabbits having shampoo injected into their eyes, or guinea pigs having their skin shaved off and products applied to their raw flesh. The petition also asks for legislation to protect these animals and to make illegal the use of animals for the testing of cosmetics and other household products.

I congratulate these girls on their endeavours, and I fully support the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

NHS Trust (Bradford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.40 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am extremely pleased to introduce this short debate, for which I have applied for the past six weeks.

The recently published Bradford health plan outlines a number of overall health priorities: mothers and the newborn; infants; toddlers and children; adolescents; people requiring acute services; people with chronic diseases; people requiring rehabilitation and stroke services; and, elderly people.

About 80 women in every 1,000 of child-bearing age have a baby each year, which provides Bradford with one of the highest birth rates anywhere in the country. Projections show that there will be some 5,300 to 5,600 births each year, yet there has been a relative decline in expenditure in maternity care services, which has fallen from 10·5 to 10·1 per cent. of total expenditure, during the past five years.

Bradford has the highest proportion of children under 16 years old anywhere in the country—23 per cent. of our total population—and by the year 2001, the five-to-14 age group will have increased by 10 per cent.

The health plan says:

"The health of children in Bradford is poor and presents a greater challenge than for most other health districts. Children between the ages of 0-14 years have a 42% increased risk of dying in Bradford than elsewhere in the country . . .

Deaths in children under one year old are particularly high . . .

The different levels and patterns of death amongst different ethnic groups is relevant to Bradford's multi-racial population. Death rates for babies of mothers of Pakistani origin for example, are 16·9 per 1,000 total births, compared with a rate of 9·4 for babies born to mothers of British origin . . .

Serious congenital malformations are more common in Bradford than elsewhere in the UK."

Yet expenditure has again fallen from 5·5 per cent. to 4 per cent. in the past five years.

There are about 45,000 disabled adults in Bradford. Of those, 18,500 have severe disability and 9,000 very severe disabilities. Of all day hospital attendances, stroke is the most common condition. Deaths from stroke are about 20 per cent. higher in Bradford than should be expected. Heart disease is a major killer.

The plan goes on to say:

"Generally the population of Bradford is younger than the population of England and Wales. It is predicted that in Bradford the number of people aged 65 and over will reduce from 46,000 in 1985 to 44,600 by the end of the century. However, within this figure the number of people aged 85 and over will increase by 27% from 4,000 in 1985 to 5,100 by 2001."

The Bradford hospitals trust became fully operational on 1 April, although it has clearly been in the driving seat for several months, having been formally established in mid-December. Its official aim is to provide

"high quality health care, promptly and equitably for the people of Bradford."

Sadly, public confidence in the Bradford trust achieving its aim has been seriously undermined. In January, constituents who wanted operations at Woodlands hospital were told that operations had been cancelled on the Government's instructions because of the Gulf war. It

[Mr. Max Madden]

has since become clear that patients awaiting operations at the Bradford royal infirmary and at St. Luke's hospital were also refused admission on identical grounds.

The trust cancelled all operations for which patients required a long stay for five days at the start of the Gulf war. In doing so, it acted without authority or instructions from the Government. I understand that Bradford health authority ordered the trust to reopen the list, yet it took a further six to nine days before operating lists were working normally again. Even by the middle of February, operations requiring long stays in surgical beds—especially for hip replacement operations—were still being refused.

One constituent, outraged at being refused his double hip replacement operation in Bradford, thought that he had obtained his operation by going to Scotland. However, his consultant in Scotland wrote saying that he could not be admitted, as neither Bradford nor Tayside health authority was willing to pay for it. So much for patient choice and for the Government's claims that, under the new reforms, money will follow patients. Now, four months later, my constituent is in Bradford and I wish him a full and speedy recovery following the operation that he should and could have received in January. If he had not had the confidence to protest, I wonder whether he would now be having the operation that he badly needs.

Over Easter, ward 16 of Bradford royal infirmary, which treats young people for ear, nose and throat illness, was closed for a fortnight. It is believed that the primary reason was that the four consultants responsible for the specialty chose to take their holidays simultaneously. Nurses were redeployed as a result of the closure, but those who could not be found alternative duties were forced to take unpaid leave. It is also clear that paediatric staff at St. Luke's hospital are now working under extraordinary pressure.

In February, an internal memo was leaked. It is strongly believed to have been written by Dr. Mark Baker, chief executive of the trust and former district general manager for Bradford health authority. The memo, which is dated 25 January, stated that overspending on the budget was running at 2·5 per cent. to 3 per cent. and that there should be an immediate reduction of 6 per cent. in current expenditure and a reduction of 3·5 per cent. against budget. Strategy should be based on reduced staffing, reduced plant and overheads and marginal cost limitation.

The memo stated that emergency action should include

"total immediate recruitment freeze until further notice . . . except for junior medical staff . . . an absolute ban on use of nurse agencies"

and

"a ban on all purchases unless essential for emergency medical purposes."

It went on to say that there should be planned restriction on the volume and range of activity, for example pathology, X-ray and surgery, help for sick staff to retire and honesty about redundancy. It states that that could result in a rise in the waiting list.

The memo also said that there should be

"an absolute freeze on development until further notice"

and

"no upgradings except for new jobs or as part of total reprofiling."

It also stated that no promises should be made, and that

"staff whose employment is to be terminated should be identified early and released at the beginning of the financial year. Situation is partly the result of HQ profligacy, partly due to creepage but also significantly due to loss of management control. Some directorates have taken positive action to reduce cost but we are now in a different scale of crisis altogether. For all directorates, getting a grip on spending now is the only relevant measure of performance.

In addition to taking the action I have outlined, I want formal feedback by next Wednesday on what can be achieved and what the service implications are."

I gave a copy of that memo to the Minister when I met him, together with colleagues, in March of this year.

Dr. Baker, at the time of writing that memo, had been district general manager less than 12 months previously. He was also the senior manager and the architect of the budgets that he is now busily cutting. Paragraph 6 of that memo says:

"If action leads to ward closures, manage them right—we will help. Use the crisis to achieve goals."

On 30 January, staff on ward 6 at Bierley Hall hospital were told that their ward would close. I shall not pursue that matter, as I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), in whose constituency Bierley Hall is located, will deal with it later.

It is clear that expenditure cuts will have several knock-on effects. Not least will be the blocking of acute beds, thereby defeating throughput, without which the trust cannot succeed. Dr. Baker admits that longer waiting lists will result. The Bradford health plan says that waiting lists are high on the political agenda.

Then, in a delphic paragraph, the memo says that waiting lists are

"as much about the way doctors work as they are about unmet need. It is clear that both the purchaser and the provider will need to discuss the management of waiting lists and targets set for different conditions, dependent on the availability of resources. The purchaser may well have to decide to limit activity. This will in practice either change the way services are provided or clarify the need for additional NHS funds."

In late February, there were rumours that the special care baby unit at St. Luke's hospital in my constituency was to close. My opposition to the closure was dubbed "scaremongering" by leading local Conservatives. I wrote to Dr. Baker on 15 March. He replied:

"The proposal to close the SCBU at St. Luke's hospital is still under consideration. The proposition was made by the consultants who run the unit, not by management. Should it be pursued, an operational policy would be developed which ensured that both outcomes would benefit not deteriorate.

A small number of items of equipment, which were funded by public donation, would naturally be retained and used at the Bradford Royal Infirmary."

By 10 April, the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* was reporting:

"A special care baby unit at Bradford's oldest hospital will definitely close it was revealed today.

Health chiefs at the city's new Hospital Trust said a ten-cot ward at St. Luke's Hospital—which looks after premature and sick babies—will shut within four months."

I pay tribute to a campaigning group called Baby Unit Regional Parents Society, which has done an excellent job in campaigning to keep this unit open. It fears that sick babies could be at risk if they have to be transferred across the city from St. Luke's to the special care baby unit at BRI. The intention, as the Minister will undoubtedly tell us later, is to centralise maternity services at BRI. I appeal to him not to allow the closure of the special care baby unit at St. Luke's until that centralisation has taken place. I understand that it could be two or even three years ahead.

It would be wrong to put the life of any child at risk by transferring it when it was extremely sick across several miles of what is often a congested inner-city centre. It would be much better to keep the unit until centralisation can take place, with proper and adequate accommodation at Bradford royal infirmary.

Also in February came news of a £5 five-year trust hospital catering contract awarded to a company called Taylorplan Services of Chiswick in London. Catering staff at BRI and St. Luke's will be made redundant as a consequence of this contract. I sponsored three early-day motions—Nos. 544, 545 and 546—on the subject.

The first of these reveals that, according to Taylorplan's latest accounts, the firm is technically insolvent. It has very large pre-tax losses, and its assets exceed its liabilities by a considerable amount. The other two motions refer to the company's extremely poor past performance, especially in cleaning contracts, not least at Airedale hospital, a neighbour of Bradford, where, in the first four months of the cleaning contract, there were 450 complaints; and to the company's low rates of pay and poor conditions of employment.

Again I wrote to Dr. Baker on that matter. In a letter of 19 March, he replied as follows:

"The catering service was tendered for in the usual way and Taylorplan Services Limited are on the approved list of contractors. They currently hold a large number of public sector contracts, including one in our Trust, and we have no concern over their work quality nor their corporate security.

As you know, the pay rates for NHS ancillary staff are generally low and I understand that Taylorplan's basic wage rates are competitive.

The new contract will save the NHS some money and most staff can expect to be reemployed by Taylorplan as well as receiving redundancy payments."

Last month came news that mothers and toddlers using the child development centre at St. Luke's were to lose their own transport because the Spastics Society funding had ended and there was no money to secure independent transport. I am very grateful for the efforts of the current district general manager, who has been desperately trying to find the necessary funds to allow independent transport to continue.

A friend of the centre described the importance of transport in the following way:

"We need transport which has proved fundamental for getting children into the centre. They are heavy and it is difficult for mums to use local transport. Many of our mothers, especially the Asian community, have other children under school age. Bus stops are not always near home and adverse weather conditions can affect the health of the handicapped child. It is difficult to collapse a buggy when a handicapped toddler cannot stand or even sit on a pavement. We have come to the end of our money raised for transport and are now without any means of bringing children in."

Incidentally, those people also need money for equipment and toys. Under the trust, no money was available, and they faced the prospect of losing their transport.

It is now very clear that, given the financial crisis in Bradford, the establishment of the trust this year was a tragic blunder. The Government were advised by Bradford community health centre and others to defer the trust for at least a year to enable the financial situation to be clarified and experience of trusts in other parts of the country to be obtained. However, as the Government, for reasons of political dogma, were determined to see a trust established in Bradford this April, they owe it to my constituents and the constituents of other Bradford Members of Parliament to inject extra funds now to restore the services that have been cut already and to avoid other cuts that are threatened.

Bradford needs about £5 million if those cuts are to be avoided. It was not given Government money that was available to cover deficits at 31 March last year. It has a deficit of about £1 million as at 31 March this year. In the past six years there has been no pattern of underlying deficit in Bradford, so why has Bradford been denied the Government funding which could and should have been provided? I hope that the Minister will say that that money will be forthcoming.

My constituents should not be penalised by enduring diminished standards of health care. It does not matter how the present situation came about—whether it was by resources being switched wrongly from community health to acute services, by management losing control or by profligate spending. That is irrelevant to Bradford. It is essential that money is made available now to ensure that those cuts are not made and that the standards of health care in Bradford are maintained.

A senior nurse wrote to me in early February:

"The Health Service in Bradford is being dismantled and no one has the power to call a halt."

I receive many reports showing that staff within the trust and throughout the national health service in Bradford are extremely demoralised. They do not believe that anyone cares or that any action is being taken to remedy the faults that they see around them. They are fearful for the future and they are afraid that they will be sacked if they stick their heads above the parapet. Even now, with the trust formally established on 1 April, there is no trade union recognition, or even a handbook on the terms and conditions of employment.

The Government have the power to do something about the situation. If the present Government refuse properly to fund the new trust in Bradford, the people of Bradford have the power to vote in the next general election to return a new Labour Government who will end the Bradford trust and others, stopping the spread of a two-tier health service in Bradford and throughout the country, and the drift towards the privatisation of the national health service. By restoring proper funding, we shall create a new national health service dedicated to offering care free at the point of delivery. That is what the people of Bradford want and deserve. I very much hope that the Minister will give us some assurance that the money we pressed him for in March and which we shall continue to press him for will be made available.

11.2 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and congratulate him on obtaining tonight's Adjournment debate. I should say as briefly as possible that the people of Bradford regard the Bradford national health service trust as the enemy within the national health service.

My constituents are concerned that Bierley Hall hospital, which is being taken over by the trust, has faced two ward closures. One of those wards was refurbished at a cost of £100,000 to the national health service. Surely that is a waste of resources, as is the sacking of newly qualified nurses, trained by the national health service. Surely it is wrong that those skilled and caring staff are facing the dole queue.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

The Minister will have received a letter from me about Westwood hospital, which is not part of the trust but is proposed as a section for another trust. I ask the Minister carefully to consider the letter that I sent him and to ensure that Westwood hospital is not sold off for building development but that instead a village complex is built there for mentally handicapped people. The patients at that hospital, their relatives and the staff want such a concept to be applied to Westwood.

I hope that, before a trust is established, the Minister will take positive action towards a village development at Westwood. Those representing the Labour party and the Conservative party in Bradford and elsewhere will very much welcome such a development.

11.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): In response to the debate, I had hoped to enlarge upon the answers that I gave to the hon. Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in a recent Question Time. In the time left, however, I may have to précis those answers rather than enlarge upon them.

When the hon. Member for Bradford, South came to see me, I undertook to consider what he had to say about Westwood. The proposal for a village development on the site of a mental handicap hospital is not unique to Westwood, but we are prepared to consider it for that hospital.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West presented us with a strange amalgam of a speech. When he started, I thought that, at last, the Government were winning. The hon. Gentleman couched the argument that he wanted the House to consider in terms of the public health outputs achieved by the NHS in Bradford. I should be more than happy to enter into a debate on that, as I believe that that is the way in which health debates should be run.

The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the fact that there is an unusually high birth rate in Bradford and to the fact that health managers should address the problem of perinatal mortality and that associated with the incidence of congenital malformations. That is precisely why we have changed the way in which the health service is managed. That will ensure that Bradford health authority, the purchaser authority, is charged with the use of public money to achieve the public health objectives of the city. It is to that authority that the principal responsibility for commissioning and designing health care provision in the city falls.

Although the management of hospitals is an important part of the responsibility of the health service managers, it is essentially a secondary function. Their primary responsibility is to use the resources available to the NHS to meet the kind of public health objectives that the hon. Member for Bradford, West defined. However, having started so well, it was sad that the hon. Gentleman then veered off into oldspeak and engaged in a prolonged discussion of the range of inputs into the health service. He then went on to give a party political broadcast about how all the problems would be solved with the election of a different Government. History does not bear out the claim that a change of Government from one party to another, either way, provides such a solution.

The hon. Gentleman made an unfair attack on the management of the new trust for decisions that they were alleged to have taken in response to the outbreak of the Gulf war. It should not have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice that that trust started to operate on 1 April. That fact will not allow the hon. Gentleman to sustain an argument about decisions taken in January and February. The trust was established on 1 April 1991. The decisions taken were reached on the basis of the old health service structures, not on the basis of the trust and the distinct purchaser authority.

I shall use the specific changes that are being made in Bradford to rebut absolutely the charge that there is a lack of interest in health care or that there is any reason for a decline in morale in the health service, if such a feeling exists.

It is important to consider the changes in the revenue budget of the Bradford trust. I will repeat the explanation that I gave to the hon. Gentleman for Bradford, West when he came to see me, as it is important. By setting up the acute sector as an independent management unit of the trust, in Bradford, we have obliged managers in the trust to address the overspend that has gone for some time in that sector. The managers are committed to reducing that overspend by tackling overspending in the support service and administration costs. The trust intends to maintain the existing range of services and activity levels by focusing on improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness within the acute sector. It has no intention of cutting services.

The greatest criticism of the traditional system of managing health care in Bradford is the fact that, for several years now, the acute sector has been allowed to raid the budget that was originally allocated to the community services, as the barons of the acute sector have been living over budget and the community services in the city have not had the level of spend that the health authority originally planned for them.

If the new arrangements for health care in Bradford do no more than ensure that the acute sector effectively lives within the prioritised budget of the health authority and the resources that the authority plans to use for community services are in fact used for community services, that outcome alone in my book would justify the changes that we have introduced.

However, that is not the only justification. Once again, the hon. Gentleman neglected to draw to the attention of the House the fact that the Bradford trust has allocated to it the largest capital budget of any trust in this financial year. I listed the figures in the answer that I gave him on 16 April, in column 147 of *Hansard*. There is an investment budget in prospect for Bradford's hospitals in this decade of £110 million. That is not the outcome that one would have expected if the health service managers were not committed to the future of Bradford's health service.

The new arrangements and the people in charge of them in Bradford intend in their plans to provide a new model of health care in Bradford which will be better attuned to the health needs which the hon. Gentleman rightly itemised at the beginning of his speech. I look forward to seeing the results of that flow through to the people of Bradford.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 25 April 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KILLINGHOLME GENERATING STATIONS (ANCILLARY POWERS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 2 May.

Mr. Speaker: As the next eight Bills have blocking motions, I shall put them together.

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (LEWISHAM, ETC.) BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (KING'S CROSS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 3) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (SAFETY MEASURES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 2 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Miscarriages of Justice

1. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to update the Home Office response to the 1982 report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on miscarriages of justice in the light of recent events.

4. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans to deal with miscarriages of justice.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): On 14 March, my right hon. and learned Frind the Lord Chancellor and I announced the appointment of a Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, with very wide terms of reference. It would not be right at this stage to try to anticipate the outcome of the royal commission, but the Government will be submitting evidence to the commission and will introduce such measures as are considered necessary in the light of its report in due course. In the interim, I remain prepared to consider very carefully any representations alleging that there has been a miscarriage of justice.

Mr. Garrett: Does the Home Secretary agree that if the Home Office had listened to the unanimous report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs 10 years ago, in which it stated that the Court of Appeal was incapable of dealing with miscarriages of justice and that there should be an independent review body, most of the disasters of the past few years would not have happened?

Mr. Baker: The Government accepted several of the recommendations of the 1982 report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, especially those relating to the Crown prosecution service. As for miscarriages of justice, an undertaking was given that the Home Secretary would in future be prepared to exercise his powers of reference more readily. That has happened. The hon. Gentleman will know that the royal commission's brief goes much wider than the findings of the Select Committee in 1982.

Mr. Grocott: I very much welcome the Home Secretary's assurance that he will listen carefully to any further evidence on cases. Does he agree that following the Birmingham and Guildford cases, all instances where the prosecution depended on uncorroborated confessions must give rise to great anxiety? Although we welcome the royal commission, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will not use it as a reason for delaying consideration of other serious allegations of miscarriages of justice? Will he confirm that where there is new evidence, especially in cases of uncorroborated confessions, he will take them seriously and deal with them speedily?

Mr. Baker: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. While the royal commission is sitting, deliberating and formulating its proposals, I shall consider any cases put to me that concern miscarriages of justice

and give them the scrupulous attention which I and all my predecessors have exercised. That applies to the cases to which the hon. Gentleman referred and to all other cases that may be referred to me.

Mr. Lawrence: Does my right hon. Friend agree that while it is an undoubted miscarriage of justice for the innocent to be convicted, it is as much a miscarriage of justice for the guilty to be acquitted? Will he ensure that the Runciman inquiry considers that as well as the other matters to which he referred?

Mr. Baker: The introductory words of the terms of reference of the Runciman committee refer specifically to that. The purpose of justice is to ensure that guilty people are found guilty and that the innocent are not. I fully support what my hon. and learned Friend said. The Runciman committee will consider specific matters of concern, including the way in which the right of silence is treated by the courts.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Home Secretary make it a little clearer than he has that when he receives new evidence which casts doubt on the safety of convictions, such as those of the people who were held responsible for the terrible Bridgwater crime and those of the Tottenham Three, he will seriously consider the evidence and argument without waiting for the outcome of the Runciman inquiry? Will he give the House an assurance that he will pay special attention to cases of that sort where serious allegations have been made against police officers or where investigations are under way?

Mr. Baker: I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. He will know that since I have been Home Secretary I have referred to the Court of Appeal one convicted prisoner in the Broadwater case to see whether the sentence was still safe in the light of evidence which was sent to me and which I examined carefully. If additional evidence is provided in relation to any prisoner in Britain I shall certainly examine it carefully and if I am convinced that there should be a further hearing I will refer it to the Court of Appeal.

Estate Security Schemes

2. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individual estate security schemes have received Home Office grants in the last two years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Home Office grants have been given for 135 separate crime prevention schemes to increase security on housing estates during the past two years. All those grants were made under the safer cities programme for the 16 towns and cities in which crime prevention projects have been established.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that the North Lynn industrial estate security scheme in my constituency, which was one of the first in the country, has had the effect of almost completely eradicating break-ins and crime? Is he also aware that the local borough council of Kings Lynn in west Norfolk, is setting up a town centre security scheme to cover car parks and housing estates which local industrial estates will also be able to join? Will my hon. Friend congratulate that excellent Conservative-controlled council?

Mr. Lloyd: North Lynn is an impressive example of what can be done. It is not part of the Home Office safer cities programme. As my hon. Friend implied, it is entirely the idea of the local authority, local business men and the local police. It is a good idea which has been well carried through and I hope that it will be copied by other local authorities.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister agree that the amount of grant should be based on the level of crime in a particular area? He will know that Leicestershire has the highest crime rate in the country. Therefore, does he consider it necessary to increase the amount of money payable under the schemes—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the Home Secretary will allow me to ask my question without talking across me.

Would not it also be appropriate to increase the number of police officers in areas such as Leicestershire to administer the new schemes that have been implemented? Will the hon. Gentleman look again at the figures requested by Leicestershire county council and award the county more officers, because that is the best and most effective way of tackling crime?

Mr. Lloyd: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, the safer cities scheme is directed to areas, particularly inner city areas, where rates of crime are particularly high. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, my right hon. Friend takes his decision on the number of police officers required for Leicestershire on the need as assessed and the priorities stated by the inspector of police. The figures for this year have already been decided, but I am sure that if next year there are good reasons for increasing the number of police, my right hon. Friend will be anxious to do so.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my hon. Friend confirm the importance of the secure by design schemes entered into by a number of police forces with house builders as a means of preventing crime? Is not it important that secure by design is dovetailed into the initiatives of the National House-Building Council so that most house builders can offer such improvements to potential purchasers?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If we can build out to some extent—sometimes even to a greater extent—the possibilities of crime in the way that an estate is designed, it will be valuable. That is something which the Department of the Environment bears very much in mind in its estate action improvements. It includes exactly the sort of thing that my hon. Friend is thinking of—lighting, secure doors and improvements in the design of footpaths and in layout—so that crime is discouraged and much more difficult to perpetrate.

Sunday Trading

3. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about reform of the law on Sunday trading.

8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his consultations with retailers on the reform of Sunday trading laws.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Since my reply on 15 November to a similar question from my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), up to 23 April we had received about 570 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and about 362 against.

I have now begun my extensive programme of separate discussions with bodies representing retailers and other interests to assist the possible development of acceptable proposals for reform.

Mr. Cartwright: May I wish the right hon. Lady well in her difficult task of trying to find a workable compromise or solution to the problem? Does she accept that a key element in that compromise must be effective statutory protection for the rights of shop workers? Any system of Sunday trading that left shop workers vulnerable to pressure and to exploitation would not be likely to carry a majority in the House or, indeed, outside.

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes for my endeavours. I assure him that I am discussing any possible solution and compromise that we could reach with the relevant organisations, with my colleagues in the Department and with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment so that the issue that the hon. Gentleman raised can be safeguarded. As he knows, there would be no sense in bringing to the House a proposal that would not be enforceable and would not command a majority in the House.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a matter of deep regret that many people still believe in the nanny state and, therefore, do not allow the people of this country to have the freedom to choose whether to shop? Is not it time to change the law and bring it up to date?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will know that, following the Auld report and the introduction of the Shops Bill in 1986 which would have met his criticisms, the House decided to reject total deregulation. It is because of that rejection that I am now trying to find a practicable solution—a compromise—to resolve the anomalies in Sunday trading, a compromise that will command the support of all hon. Members and be enforceable outside.

Mr. Duffy: The Minister and certainly the Home Secretary know that it is precisely the ideological approach to deregulation expressed by the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) that has put the Government in some of their recent trouble. The Keep Sunday Special campaign has produced some detailed ideas for reform in its REST proposals. Is she aware that a Harris poll shows that 88 per cent. of consumers believe that most of their shopping needs could be met by those proposals?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for letting me know about the Keep Sunday Special campaign's proposals and I shall, of course, study them carefully. I have not yet had an opportunity to discuss the matter with that organisation, but I look forward to meeting its representatives shortly.

Mr. Stanbrook: Do I gather from what my right hon. Friend said about the 1986 Bill that the Government are still committed to a policy of total abolition of all Sunday trading restrictions, or have they come to their senses and realised that a compromise is likely not only to achieve success, but to correspond to what most people want—a special status for Sunday?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend knows that I am in discussion with many different people at the moment. Since the Shops Bill failed in 1986, we have sought to find a compromise between total deregulation and the current position in which there are many anomalies, which is most unsatisfactory and which leaves people uncertain. At this stage, I cannot give my hon. Friend any greater assurances.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that, notwithstanding the statements that she has made so far, there is still deep concern about the mess that the Government are in over the Shops Act 1950? *[Interruption.]* The Government are in a mess. Is she further aware that the Labour party is prepared to co-operate with the Government in a responsible, constructive and positive fashion to push sensible, amending legislation through the House at the earliest opportunity? I wish to ask the Minister one simple question—what target date does she have in mind for pushing a new Shops Bill through the House, or will she continue to dither?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am riveted to hear that the Labour party, which introduced the Shops Act 1950, is offering co-operation with the Government. It has not been forthcoming in offering co-operation at any other stage. Frankly, I am not certain that I should want to take that poisoned chalice. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want the Government to step into the arena of introducing legislation until we were certain that there were agreed grounds for legislation that would meet the requirements of the largest number of people.

Mr. Randall: Dithering.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am not prepared to go further than that. It is outrageous for the hon. Gentleman to say that we are dithering. If he does not wish the Government to consult, that is an amazing position. I should be very interested to read specific proposals from the Labour party which would reassure the many people who have different ideas.

Mr. Latham: As a fully-paid up member of the nanny state, may I commend to my right hon. Friend the thought that if 500 representations are one way and 300 are the other, the best thing to do is to push the ball down the pitch?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend has been very helpful. I do not intend to push the ball down the pitch, but to continue my consultations and discussions with interested parties to try to reach a compromise.

Detective John Brand

5. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to whether detective John Brand is still on duty.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No, Sir. It would not be right for my right hon. Friend to do so.

Mr. Meale: Will the Minister confirm that, so far, none of the officers accused of perjury has been suspended? Is not that silly, especially in the light of the seriousness of what occurred in relation to the Birmingham Six? Is not it about time that the Government ensured that such an action is carried out immediately?

Mr. Lloyd: The chief constable of the West Midlands has asked the Devon and Cornwall police force to investigate what evidence there is against the officers connected with the case. When that evidence is available, it will be a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions, not for my right hon. Friend. Meanwhile, it is entirely a matter for the chief constable of the West Midlands whether those officers are on duty or not.

Slopping Out

6. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reduction in slopping out in the three prisons in the Isle of Wight.

Mrs. Rumbold: Work is already in hand to provide access to night sanitation at Camp Hill and Parkhurst and work will start at Albany early next year. Slopping out is due to end at Camp Hill and Albany in 1993 and at Parkhurst by September 1994.

Mr. Field: I thank my right hon. Friend for that excellent answer. Will not the ending of those degrading practices facilitate the excellent work of prison officers at the three prisons on the Isle of Wight in humanising some of the most evil men in our society? Can my right hon. Friend tell the House how that work has been recognised by a number of improvements in our island gaols? Will she ensure that those who continually criticise the prison service are manacled to the facts for a change, rather than to their own rhetoric?

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for those comments. I recognise that, with three prisons on the Isle of Wight, he is in constant contact with the prison service. I also support what he says about the extremely difficult job that prison officers have to carry out, working with people who may not be the most willing group in the world. The officers do a good and sound job and I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that since "fresh start" they have been well recompensed for that work.

Terrorist Offences

7. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will bring forward proposals for reform of the constitution and procedures of the courts for the trial of terrorist offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans at present to do so.

Mr. Trimble: Will the Minister consider having plans to do so? Will he look at the examples that could be drawn from the other legal jurisdictions in the United Kingdom where there are procedures that would be of assistance in dealing with these matters? I refer especially to Scotland, where the inquisitorial system in pre-trial procedures would help to avoid some of the problems that have recently been encountered in England. I also refer the Minister to the procedures in Northern Ireland, where juries have been dispensed with in terrorist cases because of their inappropriateness. That has advantages in dealing with miscarriages of justice because the inscrutability of the jury verdict is not an obstacle.

Mr. Lloyd: Juries have been dispensed with for the present in terrorist cases in Northern Ireland because they are frequently intimidated there. That does not apply on this side of the water. As for the hon. Gentleman's general question, no doubt a number of possible changes might be considered, but that could most sensibly be done by the royal commission that has been set up to look specifically at the working of the criminal justice system.

Young Criminals

9. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reduce the level of juvenile and youth crime.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government have several programmes to divert young people from crime. Some safer cities schemes focus on alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour. Some youth crime prevention panels aim specifically at reducing vandalism and graffiti. We are also working with the Department of Education and Science on its measures to deal with truancy. Several police forces organise activities for young people in the summer holidays. However, some parents could do more to influence their children's behaviour and the emphasis on parental responsibility in the Criminal Justice Bill will encourage them to do so.

Mr. Greenway: With those under 21 responsible for half Britain's crime and with young people so often being the victims of crime, must we not involve our youngsters more in crime prevention measures, so that they understand their responsibilities in society and are encouraged to believe that they can play an active role in combating crime, making for a safer society? Against that background, will my right hon. Friend warmly welcome the youth crime prevention scheme launched last week by Crime Concern and give youth crime prevention his full support?

Mr. Baker: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. The rise in crime committed by young people is very disturbing. It is a long-term trend. One has to do everything that one can to combat it. As he rightly says, one of the best ways is to engage young people to help to solve the problem rather than being part of it. The scheme that he mentioned—youth crime prevention panels—and the work of Crime Concern are important. During Crime Prevention Week last week, there were literally thousands of schemes involving young people in fighting crime.

Mr. Hood: Last week's statement by the Secretary of State that a third of all crime is committed by under 17-year-olds will have shocked many who are trying to come to terms with such a statistic. Will the Secretary of State support tomorrow my Bill on under-age drinking, which will make it an offence to drink alcohol under the age of 18 and will give law enforcement officers powers to enforce some discipline in our play parks and housing estates, to stop the dreaded anti-social behaviour of young kids who become involved in alcohol abuse?

Mr. Baker: Alcohol abuse is a serious aspect of criminality for young people and for people of all ages. I

shall certainly look at the terms of his Bill, although I cannot say whether I shall support it. Anything that can be done to get the dangers of alcohol abuse over to young people is to be welcomed and some crime prevention panels do that. In some city centres efforts are being made to ensure that there is no open drinking of lager—it has now been banned in the city of Coventry—as very many young people were doing so. One must use efforts of that sort to try to reduce the attraction of alcohol to youngsters.

Mr. Favell: My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) mentioned that 50 per cent. of all crime is now carried out by juveniles. Is not it apparent that the soft approach that has been advocated by the so-called experts for years has patently failed, that the day that we abolished approved schools and borstals was a sad one for this country and that we should look back to it?

Mr. Baker: Let me make it clear that some juveniles certainly have to be held in custody because of the nature of their crimes, their inherent violence and the threat that they pose to society. In the past four or five years the number of juveniles—14 to 16-year-olds—held in custody each year has declined from about 6,000 to 2,000 because we believe that it is easier to help them grow out of crime if they are kept out of custody. I assure my hon. Friend that the different alternative sentences now available must be administered in a tough and realistic way. They must not be seen as a soft option. Those young people who have to be locked up should certainly continue to be locked up.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Home Secretary confirm that a large proportion of the crimes committed by juveniles is associated with motor cars? In the light of that, why will not the Government limit the sale of duplicate and skeleton keys to those who can demonstrate a legitimate use for them?

Mr. Baker: First, I agree with what the right hon. Gentleman said. It is true that a large amount of juvenile crime, especially among young males, is associated with motor cars. Indeed, the motor car is involved in some 24 per cent. of all crimes. The evidence that we have from a wide survey is that there is little use of skeleton keys in breaking into, and stealing, cars. The youngsters who get up to these practices have simpler tools and have become experienced in breaking into cars. That is one of the reasons why yesterday I met the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. Next week, I am seeing the car manufacturers to encourage them to design cars in a way that makes them safer and more secure.

Prison Building

10. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of his review of the prison building programme.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I are reviewing the prison service estate. We hope to be in a position to announce our conclusions later this year.

Mr. Wilshire: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is she aware that the continuing uncertainty about what will be done with the sites is causing considerable concern among those who live close to the sites? Therefore, will she undertake to clear up the uncertainty at the earliest possible moment, rather than later this year? In the case of the site at Ashford in Middlesex, while local people are grateful for the short-term help that has been given, will she take the opportunity this afternoon to put them out of their misery and announce that she no longer requires that site?

Mrs. Rumbold: As my hon. Friend will know, we are undertaking the prison estate review as quickly as possible. As he will be aware, there are some 150 prisons. When we prepare the White Paper, we shall certainly seek to incorporate in the review the best way to meet some of the requirements in the Woolf report.

I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that we are about to agree a lease on the land at the Ashford site for the local authority for the next three years. At this stage, I cannot commit us any further than that because we could not then conduct a proper review of the whole estate.

Mr. John P. Smith: Does the Minister have any plans to build a training prison in Wales to help to alleviate the suffering of families of prisoners who are serving long sentences?

Mrs. Rumbold: That is one of the issues. We are considering, not necessarily a training prison in Wales, but whether people are sufficiently close to their families when they are put in prison. That is particularly necessary for young offenders. We are aware of the importance of access to families and relatives while young people are serving sentences. The matter will be part of the review.

Mandatory Life Sentences

11. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the retention of the mandatory life sentence for murder.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The arguments for maintaining the mandatory life sentence for murder still seem to us to be very strong. Other matters were raised in the debates in the House of Lords and we will, of course, consider them.

Mr. Lawrence: Is not this a matter of maintaining public confidence in the criminal justice system? Surely the public are more confident in a system that uses a unique sentence to mark out the most heinous of all crimes—the deliberate taking of the life of another individual. The public are overwhelmingly in favour of capital punishment. They were given assurances, when capital punishment was abolished, that it would be replaced by a life sentence marking out the uniqueness of the crime. If that were taken away now, public confidence would be substantially undermined and the public would feel betrayed.

Mr. Baker: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the issues raised in the capital punishment debates before Christmas. Many hon. Members clearly expressed the view that if there were to be no capital sentence, society should show its utter condemnation of the appalling and dreadful crime of murder by a mandatory life sentence.

Mr. Bernie Grant: I refer the Home Secretary to the case of the Tottenham Three—three young men currently serving a life sentence for the murder of P.C. Keith Blakelock. Could I ask the Home Secretary about the case

of Mark Braithwaite, which went before the European Court last week and in which the British Government successfully argued that he had not exhausted the internal machinery of appeals? If that is the case, will the Home Secretary now give us an undertaking that he will refer to the Court of Appeal the cases of Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott so that they can go through the internal appeals mechanism?

Mr. Baker: I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a great personal interest in this case and I believe that he is coming to see me quite soon about it. He will know that I referred one of the sentences, that of Mr. Raghip, for consideration by the Court of Appeal when I received further evidence. If I receive fresh evidence in relation to the other two who have been convicted, I will, of course, consider whether their cases should be so referred.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Mr. Silcott has been found guilty not of one murder but of two murders and was indeed tried for a third murder?

Mr. Baker: I believe that was so, but that is not strictly relevant in relation to the Broadwater Farm case. If evidence is brought before me as Home Secretary in relation to this particular case, I will look at it.

Superintendent Richard Bryant

12. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to whether Superintendent Richard Bryant is still on duty.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As I said earlier, it would not be right for my right hon. Friend to do so.

Mr. Madden: Is not public confidence in the police and in British justice undermined if police officers who may have committed serious offences remain on duty, in this case duty within the police complaints procedures? Will the Minister make representations to the chief constable of the West Midlands that he should suspend all officers who may have committed offences, until conclusions have been reached as to whether charges are to be brought?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman is in danger of adding to a major injustice, about which he is quite rightly most concerned, a series of minor injustices to police officers by pillorying them in public before the Director of Public Prosecutions has had the opportunity to see all the evidence that there may be against them.

Auto Crime

13. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce the incidence of crimes involving the taking of or from motor vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Last week I published a car theft index to draw attention to the vulnerability of certain models. Yesterday I met the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and the Association of British Insurers to discuss car crime.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend, while deploring the commission of 1·3 million thefts of or from motor vehicles every year and while urging motor manufacturers to improve the security of their vehicles, confirm that a large proportion of those thefts take place when the cars are left unlocked? What advice can he give the public to prevent those thefts?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right in that the record shows that in London, for example, 27 per cent. of all cars broken into last year were unlocked. Given the value of the car or the possible value of the various pieces of equipment that may be in the car, this is most regrettable and careless. We are trying to ensure that people take much greater care of their cars, but it is also up to the car manufacturers to put higher priority on the design of more secure cars, and some car manufacturers are doing this.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Home Secretary ask his Department and the police to report on the effectiveness of car alarms? These ear-splitting instruments, which make the night hideous for the general public, have no justification if they do not lead to apprehension of offenders or prevention of crime.

Mr. Baker: There are many types of intruder alarms and car alarms and some insurance companies give rebates off the premium for cars equipped with them. I think that people should appreciate more keenly that a car is a valuable asset, worth something between £5,000 and £10,000. Cars are often left in streets, some of which are unlit, and that is an opportunity for casual crime.

Mr. Gregory: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the reasons why we have such a high incidence of theft and unauthorised use of motor vehicles is that those who take them think that they can get away with it? Will he issue a circular to the chairman of the Magistrates Association confirming that the penalties are up to £1,000 but penalty points can be added to a driving licence and the facility to drive a vehicle can also be removed? Magistrates in many cities, including York, are sentencing those without insurance to only one quarter of the penalties that they could suffer.

Mr. Baker: We can certainly draw the attention of the magistrates to the range of penalties available. The maximum penalty for taking a vehicle without authority is a fine of £2,000, six months' imprisonment, or both. Many of the people in young offenders' institutions and juvenile prisons are there because they have committed crimes related to cars.

Mr. Sheerman: The House will know how fond the Government are of a week of exhortation and glitz as a substitute for real policies. Rather than the expenditure of £4·5 million on a Crime Prevention Week, we need properly resourced, properly thought-through crime prevention programmes. Is it not a fact that the Government have dithered for five years, when they could have introduced decent minimum car security standards and imposed them on the industry? If they had done that, we should have a much better situation now.

Mr. Baker: The country may want carefully thought-through proposals on crime prevention, but it will not get them from the Labour party. The Crime Prevention Week last week was very successful, and I am not the least bit surprised that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are a bit sour. I can tell the hon. Gentleman

that we are pressing our European Community partners to accept our proposals for a Community directive on car security. Any such measure will have our support.

Crime Prevention

14. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on new crime prevention initiatives.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Last week we held the first-ever national crime prevention week. We launched the Home Office car theft index, which provides valuable advice to car owners, car buyers and car manufacturers on which cars are particularly attractive to car thieves. In addition, the safer cities programme will be brought to its full complement of 20 projects later this year, when those in Derby, Hammersmith and Fulham, Leicester and Middlesbrough come into action.

Mr. Thompson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that there has been a positive response to recent crime prevention initiatives in Norwich? In particular, will he commend the work of the crime prevention panel, crime stoppers and the neighbourhood watch scheme? Does he agree that deterrence and sentencing policy should play a very real part in crime prevention, and that we should not calmly accept the present level of crime?

Mr. Lloyd: We certainly do not accept the present levels of crime. Nor, obviously, do my hon. Friend's constituents in Norwich, who have been so active in crime prevention measures. The value of Crime Prevention Week is that we have put the problem high on the agenda. There were about 5,000 local initiatives during the week. These will be valuable in crime prevention activities over the coming weeks, months and years.

Miss Lestor: Does the Minister accept that the reoffending rate is greater among juveniles than in any other group? As was underlined earlier, there is some evidence that, in the case of young people, non-custodial sentences are more effective than any other sentences. Does the Minister agree that, as truancy may be linked to juvenile crime, it is important to remember that truancy has its roots in the lack of appropriate education and training for many young people? Unless that problem and the rising rate of unemployment among young people are tackled, juvenile crime will continue to increase.

Mr. Lloyd: I accept the hon. Lady's first point. Indeed, it reiterates the Government's policy as set out in the Criminal Justice Bill that is before the House. It is true that the tendency to reoffend is greater among young people. It would be surprising if it were not so. The in-community penalties that are now being introduced are clearly a better way to proceed than were the actions of previous Governments.

POLNET Computer Network

15. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the implementation of the POLNET computer network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Representations about the POLNET computer network have been received from members of the Hampshire police authority and from a number of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Havant district of the Hampshire police authority has conducted a successful experiment with a POLNET computer network over the past few years and now wishes to extend it county wide. For that purpose, it has applied for approval for £5 million expenditure over three years. Will the Home Office give favourable consideration to that application, which would save Hampshire the equivalent of the work of 400 policemen a year and help to combat the 22 per cent. increase in crime in the county last year?

Mr. Lloyd: Nationally, the equipment grant is up by about 25 per cent. this year, which is not sufficient, I am afraid, to meet all the information technology schemes that have been put forward, so we are currently considering a specific grant for IT projects. We shall not be in a position to decide priorities until the police national network for communications between police forces, into which the POLNET scheme would need to fit, has been evaluated later this year.

PRIME MINISTER

Agriculture Spending

Q1. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the discussions of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on the level of agriculture spending in 1991.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): The Agriculture Council is currently considering proposals to keep spending on the common agricultural policy in 1991 within the agricultural guidelines. I hope that the issue will be resolved before the meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Prime Minister accept that, despite the brave battle that is being fought alone by Britain and Holland to maintain the legal limits that his predecessor fought hard to achieve, Brussels will inevitably find some device or accountancy fiddle to break through, as has happened before? As the agricultural policy is causing damage to taxpayers, consumers, the third world and, now, to farmers, and as we are suffering from an uncontrollable protection racket which is riddled with graft, will my right hon. Friend consider suggesting to Brussels that it would strengthen the Economic Community and everyone else if agriculture were repatriated to individual member states?

The Prime Minister: I confirm to my hon. Friend that we shall continue to insist that the guidelines are respected. I am not sure that it would be in the interests of the United Kingdom to see the break-up and repatriation of the common agricultural policy. The danger I foresee is that separate national agricultural policies would lead to increased protectionism and considerable distortions of trade. I believe that our interest is best served in this area by common policies and by seeking to improve them. In essence, we need to win the match in Brussels, and that we shall seek to do.

Mr. Cryer: It is outrageous that the British Government are allowing to continue a common agricultural policy that is costing every family in this country £16 a week as part of the policy of the Conservatives, who have handed over in 10 years more than £40 billion to the Common Market. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is time that the food mountains were made available to the starving nations of Africa and to help the Kurds? Instead of that, the CAP ensures that food is bought on the open market. Stocks continue to soar and the Prime Minister is doing nothing about it.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have been in the forefront of the battle in the Community to impose guidelines and to prevent unnecessary agricultural production. The answer to his second point about food mountains being used to assist people in need is that I agree that whenever that can be done, it should be done.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: In his consideration of United Kingdom agriculture within the context of the European Community, will my right hon. Friend continue to bear it in mind the remarkable contribution that has been made by agriculture to the rural economy? Will he also bear it in mind that farm incomes are now about half what they were two years ago and that the Samaritans have expressed grave concern about the increase in suicidal thought in the farming industry? Will he bear those points in mind at all stages because we must protect the foundation of our rural economy?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that we will continue to bear those matters in mind. He will know that some of the direct assistance that we have been able to give within the common agricultural policy has been aimed at areas like hill farming, where there are particular difficulties.

Engagements

Q2. **Mrs. Irene Adams:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: We had better have the answer.

The Prime Minister: I made the mistake because of the tedious aspect of the regular questions that I am asked.

This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I will be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Adams: Has the Prime Minister seen the letter in today's *Evening Standard* from the private secretary of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) which says that the Government's new local tax is

"not fair—grossly inequitable and hurtful"?

The lady goes on to ask why she should pay more for a small, one-bedroomed flat on her own in one part of London than the entire family of the Secretary of State for the Environment will pay in his luscious home in the west end? What answer will the Prime Minister give to that lady?

The Prime Minister: The answer that I will give to the lady is that she lives in one of the most expensive houses in London. The hon. Lady and her hon. Friends need to make up their minds. They allege with one breath that the council tax will benefit the rich, who, they say, are Conservative voters, and with the next breath that it will hurt Conservative voters.

Mr. Fry: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to examine the illustrative bills for the new council tax for those authorities where householders will pay substantially more than under the existing community charge for two people? Will he note, for example, that for the dearest house in Westminster, the tax will be less than for the cheapest house in Wellingborough? Whereas Westminster has benefited from large Government grants, Wellingborough has been penalised by loss of grants because it has traded profitably and passed the profits on to its charge payers. If I am to propose that the new tax is fair to my constituents will my right hon. Friend initiate an investigation without delay into Wellingborough's position?

The Prime Minister: If councils spend at the same standard spending assessment, they will pay the same in each band. That is the essential equity of the scheme that we have proposed. Over 70 per cent. of people will be gainers under the scheme that we have proposed. Where there are losers, there will be transitional protection and, for people on low incomes, the generous rebate scheme. That is by far the best deal that the ratepayer, the community charge payer, or in future the council taxpayer, has ever received.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister agree with the considered view of the Governor of the Bank of England, who recently testified that Britain's deep and worsening recession is, in his words, "home grown"?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, for he has asked me that question on previous occasions, I do not accept the proposition that the recession is home grown. There are a variety of causes of the downturn in world trade here and elsewhere and we cannot be immune from all those.

Mr. Kinnock: Did not the Prime Minister notice the comments of the Governor of the Bank of England on the subject of the recession's origins? He said that, while Britain

"is in recession, Japan and Germany undeniably are not and our other EC partners"—

[Interruption.] Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will permit me to quote the Governor of the Bank of England, who is not yet a member of the Labour party. He said that, although the economies in the remainder of the European Community have slowed down, they are not in recession.

Is the Prime Minister aware that that view is borne out by the International Monetary Fund and that Britain's condition is the direct result of the Prime Minister's policies? Why will he not accept his responsibility or, better still, take action to reverse the recession that he has caused?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman had examined the matter more carefully, he would have seen that the United Kingdom is coming out of its economic difficulties, while other countries are still facing deepening difficulties. He might also have observed that we have been

in a position, since joining the exchange rate mechanism, to make five cuts in interest rates—four in the past 10 weeks. At the same time, we have seen an appreciation, not a depreciation, in sterling.

Mr. Kinnock: I wish that the Prime Minister's optimism was well placed. However, the Chancellor of the Exchequer testified to the Treasury Committee a few weeks ago, rather diffidently:

"I think that there are cautious grounds for believing we, somewhere about the middle of this year, may begin to come out of recession".

The Confederation of British Industry, the Engineering Employers Federation, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Institute of Directors, the International Monetary Fund and anyone else with eyes to see, and who is concerned about the condition of our economy, knows that the right hon. Gentleman has plunged Britain into deep recession. What will he do to combat the rises in unemployment and the depression of our economy?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman, who has policies for a minimum wage that will create another million unemployed, has nothing to say about that. With interest rates and inflation having fallen and being set to fall significantly further, and with a balance of trade gap narrowing, it is difficult even for the right hon. Gentleman to deny the improvements now coming about.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: In the course of his busy day, might my right hon. Friend find a moment to visit the organ transplant exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall? If he does so, he will be told that there are 5,000 people awaiting transplants in this country and that current organ donation must double to meet that demand. In those circumstances, will it be possible to include an item on organ transplantation and the increase in the programme at the weekend meeting at Chequers that my right hon. Friend is having with health service managers?

The Prime Minister: I hope that, at my weekend meeting in Chequers, I shall be able to discuss with health professionals a wide range of matters and I shall endeavour to include that subject among them.

Q3. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Prime Minister aware that last year, in a secret ballot supervised by the Electoral Reform Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the employees of the North of England building society voted by 257 to 81 to join the Banking Insurance and Finance Union? The response of the management was to embark upon a programme of intimidation designed to get employees to resign from that union. Will the Prime Minister confirm that it is Government policy that employers as well as employees should be bound by the outcome of properly conducted secret ballots? Or am I being naive?

The Prime Minister: I would never accuse the hon. Gentleman of being naive. The strict answer to the first part of his question is that I was not aware of that incident. However, if it is as he describes, I can confirm that both sides should be bound by the agreement.

Q4. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arbuthnot: What would happen to the figures produced for the local council tax if we were to abolish capping and competitive tendering, and raise a higher proportion of local funding from local taxes—the policies of the Labour party? Would the figures, like those in the Labour party's unfair rates proposals, go through the roof?

The Prime Minister: There is absolutely no doubt about what would happen to council tax bills under Labour's proposals—that is precisely why the figures that it has produced are wholly bogus.

Refugees (Kuwait)

Q5. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards receiving ecological refugees from Kuwait and surrounding countries into the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: All applications for entry to the United Kingdom are individually considered against the requirements of the immigration rules and in the light of compassionate considerations outside the rules.

Mr. Dalyell: Are not thousands of Kuwaitis now taking residence in countries as far away from the photochemical smog and respiratory diseases as they can, and is not the root of the problem that, frankly, Kuwait is so paralysed that Kuwaitis cannot tackle the oil inferno? In those circumstances, would the Prime Minister consider the advice from the Saudi sources that I have named that, with the Americans and the Saudis, we should step in and tackle the oil fires, as we did with operation Desert Storm?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of the point that he wished to raise. I can assure him that the United Kingdom Government are treating the matter of the oil well fires in Kuwait very seriously. The United Kingdom industry, together with officials from both the Department of Energy and the Department of Trade and Industry, are examining how best to contribute to the resolution of the problems faced in Kuwait. A number of possibilities have been identified and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will tomorrow lead a delegation of key British industrialists to Kuwait to pursue the specific proposals that have already been put to the Kuwaiti Government.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 29 APRIL—Second Reading of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill.

Motions relating to the Education (National Curriculum) Orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 30 APRIL—Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

Debate on motions on estimates and supplementary estimates relating to the community charge and related grants. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY—Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate to approve the first report (Session 1990-91) of the Select Committee on Broadcasting (House of Commons Paper No. 11), followed by a debate on the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 2 MAY—Debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 3 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

TUESDAY 7 MAY—Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (No. 3) Bill, followed by progress on Committee stage of the Finance Bill.

The House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the spring Adjournment on Thursday 23 May until Monday 3 June.

[Monday 29 April

Education (National Curriculum) Orders

i Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in Geography) (England) Order (S.I. 678).

ii Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in History) (England) Order (S.I. 681).

Tuesday 30 April

Estimates and supplementary estimates: Relevant documents:

supplementary estimates for class VIII, vote 14 (community charge and rate rebate grants, emergency assistance to local authorities, non-domestic rates outturn payments, etc, England); class XV, vote 22 (Rate rebate grants transitional relief and community charge reduction grants, Scotland); class XVI, vote 11 (Rate rebate grants and community charge reduction grants, Wales) (HC 377); and

the corresponding main estimates (contained in HC 236-VIII, HC 236-XV and HC 236-XVI respectively).]

Mr. Grocott: I thank the Leader of the House for agreeing to arrange a debate on the work of the ombudsman next week. In view of the fact that the ombudsman is empowered to inquire into cases of maladministration where people have been misled about the likely cost of Government action or have been overcharged because of Government departmental incompetence, would not the prime target for the ombudsman be the shambles of the poll tax?

When may we have a debate on the criminal justice system, particularly in the light of the royal commission that has been announced?

When will we have a debate on the public expenditure White Paper? We have asked for it many times and it is long overdue. We know why the Government do not want to debate the economy and, in view of this week's information, I cannot say that I blame them for not doing so, but it is high time that we had a debate.

Will the Leader of the House confirm that, apart from the poll tax panic Bill that we had just before Easter, the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill to be debated on Monday is the first piece of new Government legislation to be introduced into the Commons since the Finance Bill was presented on 25 March? Is not that absolutely clear evidence that the Government are running out of steam?

If all the press reports are correct—that the Prime Minister is running away from a June election and talking about one in the autumn, or maybe next year—what on earth shall we find to do to fill our time here?

Mr. MacGregor: I know that the hon. Gentleman is standing in for his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), but that was a most tedious, irrelevant and feeble set of questions. They were irrelevant both to the real issues and to the business of the week. However, I shall endeavour to answer them.

First, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome of the debate on the parliamentary ombudsman, as recommended in the report of the Procedure Committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). I cannot promise that there will be regular debates, because of the pressure of business on the House every year. Those debates will not therefore be automatic. However, it is desirable to have a debate at this stage, in particular because my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) played a distinguished part as Chairman of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee. He will be leading in that debate and it will be an important parliamentary occasion.

As for the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on the criminal justice system, I have already said that there is considerable pressure on Government time in the parliamentary timetable. However, I have noted his request. A large number of Government days are taken up with legislation at this time of the year, including Report stages and Third Readings. We have seen that this week, and the same will apply both next week and for some time to come. That is why I cannot promise an early debate.

That also demonstrates the utter nonsense of the point that the hon. Gentleman tried to make about the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (No. 2) Bill being the first Government Bill since 21 March. He knows very well that most Government Bills are introduced early in the Session, as we have done. This is not a light Session for Government legislation. Already, 35 Bills are going through both Houses—rather more than in the last two Sessions. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's point was totally irrelevant to what is happening in the parliamentary timetable.

As for the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on the public expenditure White Paper, I confirm that I hope to arrange such a debate reasonably soon. I have already made that clear. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of legislation to be got through.

The hon. Gentleman was again off beam when he suggested that the Government do not want to debate the economy. During the last few weeks, we have debated the economy on many occasions, and there will be an opportunity to debate it again for a full day next Tuesday. That will provide us with the opportunity yet again to deploy our arguments as to why our economic policies are right and to expose the total inadequacy of the Opposition's economic policies.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend will have noticed early-day motion 667.

[That this House notes with grave concern the findings of a survey by the National Association of Taxi and Private Hire Licensing and Enforcement Officers which revealed that in the 136 councils that replied 486 criminal records had actually been discovered in a 18 month period, none of which had initially been declared during the interviews which took place under the provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 which required a district council not to grant a licence unless they are satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a taxi driver's licence; calls upon the Home Office, the Department of Transport and the Association of Chief Police Officers to co-operate in the release of past criminal records of all new applicants to the chairmen of district licensing committees in a confidential file, so as to prevent any recurrence of what occurred in Southampton where a licence was given to a convicted rapist; and calls for a similar system to be introduced as that practised in London where the Metropolitan Police have access to criminal records when determining applicants for Hackney carriage driver's licences to be expanded to all district councils in the United Kingdom.]

It points out that people in the London area are fully protected because the Metropolitan police use their police records to vet taxi driver applications, whereas outside London there is no collusion between the police computer and the chairmen of the licensing authorities. Many anomalies are growing up whereby rapists and people accused of causing grievous bodily harm, exposure and molesting young children, as well as of other offences, are managing to get a taxi driver's licence. May we have a debate as early as possible about this most serious national issue?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in the issue and I have seen early-day motion 667. Recently the Home Office discussed with the Association of Chief Police Officers whether the police could take on the task that is mentioned in the early-day motion. The question will be looked at again in the light of the forthcoming report on Home Office scrutiny of criminal records. I suggest that that is the time when we ought to consider whether there might be some way of raising the matter in the House, although I cannot promise a debate.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Leader of the House will be aware that in its report on Ravenscraig the Select Committee on Trade and Industry recommended that there should be an early debate on the steel industry in the United Kingdom as a whole, since British Steel is now apparently engaged on dismantling the steel strip mill at Ravenscraig and transferring elements of it to south Wales. Is the Leader of the House able to say when it will be possible to have a debate on the steel industry so that both those issues, and others that affect the industry in the United Kingdom as a whole, may properly be discussed?

Mr. MacGregor: The Government are carefully considering the Select Committee report, including its recommendation for an early debate on the future of the steel industry, as the hon. and learned Gentleman requested. We shall respond in the normal way. I cannot give an undertaking that there will be an early debate in Government time, because, as I said a moment ago, there is considerable pressure on Government time. It is always open to those who have time available for debates to raise the matter.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): As the recession appears to be much worse in the south than in the north, and as the strip mill to which the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East referred is moving to Teesside, is it not high time that we had a debate on the north-south divide? We could then discuss the excellent Government policies which are regenerating our regions, and which are being so ignobly glossed over by Opposition Members who wish to ignore that transformation.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend about the excellent Government policies that have made such a difference to areas such as his. There will be opportunities when we are debating economic affairs—including, perhaps, next Tuesday's debate—for him further to develop the points that he has made.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 691 on the import of Japanese tosa dogs?

[That this House draws attention to the proposal to import a second Japanese Tosa dog for breeding purposes; notes that this species of dog grows to 17 stone and was originally bred for fighting; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to propose amendments to the law so that the import of new breeds of dog may be prohibited if it is against the public interest by virtue of the size, nature and purpose of the animal and so that, where appropriate, even where dogs are imported conditions may be attached to import licences as to the custody and breeding of such animals.]

They are the sumo wrestlers of the dog world. They can grow to a weight of 17 stone, and can stand 6 ft. on their hind legs. They are absolutely lethal, having been bred to fight to the death in public. In view of the frightening attacks on children in recent years, and as last year there were 7,400 dog attacks on postmen—leading to 5,300 days of absence—will the Leader of the House ask the Government to make a statement and to introduce early legislation to ban the import of such dogs?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the concern about those dogs, as I said last week in response to points raised by a number of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members. I have raised the problem with the Home Office, and I have nothing to add to what I said last week.

Sir Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): As my right hon. Friend is aware, one of the most appalling events in Kuwait during recent months was when Iraqi scientists,

[Sir Timothy Raison]

doctors and academics went to Kuwait university and the medical school—which I have just visited—and took away masses of equipment, fine libraries and so on. May we have a statement from the Government setting out what can be done to restore those objects to their rightful owners in Kuwait?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand my right hon. Friend's concern, and I shall draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friends in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 726, which I tabled last week, referring to the closure of two factories at Pilsley and Stonebroom in my constituency?

[That this House is appalled at the announcement of the closure of the Reeve Burgess bus factories at Pilsley and Stonebroom, in the constituency of Bolsover, with the loss of more than 160 jobs; notes that the letter signed by the Chairman of Reeve Burgess blames the Government for failing to respond positively to the proposals of the Bus and Coach Council to encourage the development of the bus as the major means of tackling congestion in our towns and cities and providing effective public transport; and calls upon the Prime Minister and his colleagues to reverse the dole-creating policies that bring so much misery to thousands of families in every area in Britain.]

The firm of Reeve Burgess is more than 100 years old, and 160 workers have been thrown on to the scrap heap by Plaxton plc, which is transferring the work to Scarborough. May we have a debate on that matter—or, better still, a debate on unemployment—so that we can discuss the issues?

Will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and ask him to meet the workers at Stonebroom and Pilsley so that they can put their case for saving their factory and their jobs?

Mr. MacGregor: As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, the closure of the Reeve Burgess bus factories in the east midlands—whose impact on local employment is to be regretted—is part of a rationalisation of bus manufacturing——

Mr. Skinner: No.

Mr. MacGregor: It is part of a programme of rationalisation of bus manufacturing capacity by the parent company, Plaxton, to its more modern Scarborough plant that is currently under-utilised. That is a commercial matter for the company to decide.

We welcome every opportunity to debate the Opposition's alternative employment policies and to draw attention, as I did last week and as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did earlier, to the impact on and the great increase in unemployment that would occur if the Opposition were able to implement their proposals.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, last Saturday, the Woolf report on prisons was discussed at a seminar held in All Souls? Will he consider providing time to discuss the findings of that seminar, which offer a way forward on several aspects of the Woolf report, such as a pilot scheme and experimentation? Some of the findings were very interesting.

Mr. MacGregor: I have not had the chance to acquaint myself with that seminar. I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I do not see an opportunity in the immediate or early future for a general debate on these matters because of the pressure on the parliamentary timetable.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Will the Leader of the House raise with the Foreign Secretary a matter of major importance to the whole House? Nine days ago there was tabled by the Luxembourg presidency the draft of the treaty on political union which will affect the rights of this Parliament and which seeks greatly to extend the area of control and competence of the European Community over the affairs of this nation. The treaty has not yet been made available to the House, despite many queries by hon. Members. Will the right hon. Gentleman please ensure that the draft treaty is made available without delay—there have been delays on these matters previously—so that we can study it and, if necessary, raise it with him and his colleagues at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. MacGregor: Of course I recognise the importance of the issues that the right hon. Gentleman is raising, and I shall look into the matter straight away.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend will be well aware of the growing distaste of our fellow citizens for those who have deliberately not paid their share towards the cost of local government finance by not paying their community charge. Will he arrange as a matter of urgency for a statement to be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that these lawbreakers will be pursued in the near future and until the provisions of the council tax are in place and operating?

Mr. MacGregor: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance now. It will not be necessary for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that there is great public disquiet among all those who pay the community charge—this issue is raised all the time in our constituencies—and complaints about those, often among the better-off, who do not pay their community charge and thus run the risk of causing higher charges to be imposed on those who are law-abiding and who pay. We have consistently drawn attention in the House to Labour Members and Labour councillors who have not paid. There is a great deal of criticism of them. I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that those who do not pay and who should be paying will be pursued. He is right to say that they should continue to be pursued until the new council tax takes effect.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Is it possible to have a debate next week to consider the implications now that there has been official acknowledgment that the civil service review board that heard the appeal of Colin Wallace was improperly approached by senior officers of the Ministry of Defence? Until this moment, the Government have pooh-poohed the allegation that this happened and have pushed it to one side. Now that we

have an official acknowledgment that the board was improperly approached—undoubtedly by members of MI5—may we have a debate so that everything comes out into the open?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot promise that there will be a debate on the matter in Government time. There are so many requests for debates on other matters that it is not possible to accommodate them all. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are other ways of pursuing issues of concern to hon. Members.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): May we have a debate as soon as possible on the true cost of eating out in London? Has my right hon. Friend heard that the Labour party plans to hold a £500-a-head dinner in London? Should it not be obliged under the Sale of Goods Act 1979 to say on its invitations that, if the dinner helps to get a Labour Government elected, it would end up costing people very much more than £500? Would those who attend be entitled to ask for a refund if they found themselves sitting next to the hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)? Is not the case——

Mr. Speaker: Order. How does the hon. Gentleman relate his question to Government responsibility?

Mr. Oppenheim: During a debate on the matter, could not Conservative Members argue that the fact that people can afford to pay so much money for such a daft dinner shows that 12 years of Tory rule have not been in vain after all?

Mr. MacGregor: I should like to be in a position to promise my hon. Friend such a debate so that he can elaborate his case even further. I am sure that we would all be pleased to hear what he had to say and many of us might think that he would make many pertinent points, but I cannot find time for that next week.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Ron Brown—do better than that.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Since Gerald Ratner has made a fortune selling "total crap"—to use his words—may we have a debate next week on consumer protection?

Mr. MacGregor: I have seen the hon. Gentleman's early-day motion and I have equally seen that the gentleman in question said that he made his comments, which were meant to be amusing, in jest, at a time when he thought that his audience was rather sleepy. It reminds me of the comments that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) sometimes makes in the House, which I have to assume that he too is making in jest.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that questions should be about business for next week.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon Friend will, like the rest of the House, have thought that the Cleveland child sex abuse saga was behind us. Does he find it disturbing, as I do, that my constituents, whose children were kidnapped and withheld from them for such long periods, are still awaiting compensation as a result of the reluctance of those acting on behalf of the doctors and Cleveland county council who perpetrated the kidnap? Is it not time that something was done in the House of Commons so that compensation due to such unfortunate children and their parents was paid quickly and not when the lawyers finally got round to settling it?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not know the precise details of the compensation aspect, but I am sure that my hon. Friend understands them well, and I understand the importance of the point that he makes. I shall raise it with my right hon. Friend, but I am sure that he too will be pursuing it.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the multi-fibre arrangement to clarify whether the Government intend to support the EEC view that the MFA currently in force should be extended for a minimum period of 17 months in order to provide proper protection for the textile industry which, as the Leader of the House knows, is suffering from short-time working and unemployment, with mills facing closure in west Yorkshire and elsewhere? The textile industry is one of the most important industries in Britain in terms of employment and negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade will not be concluded before the MFA expires and will probably go on well into 1992. This is an important matter on which a statement should be made next week, and I hope that the Leader of the House will arrange for it.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point on the need to extend the MFA. We have discussed this at business questions on other occasions, and I will not go into the background of the GATT talks now. The Government accept the need to extend the MFA pending conclusion of the negotiations.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have an early debate on events connected with horses and ponies taking place this coming weekend, so as to draw to the attention of the nation the horror of the appalling suffering of horses and ponies exported for slaughter in European abattoirs that we shall see after 1992 unless something is done? Would it not be appropriate to have a debate on early-day motions 2 and 3, which have been signed by about 150 hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[That this House abhors the prospect of a resumption in the export of horses and ponies to continental abattoirs after 1992; urges the European Community (the European Commission, European Parliament and all member states) to recognise that the ending of British export controls linked to minimum values would mean the rounding up of Dartmoor and other wild ponies for degrading and wholly unfamiliar transport to and across Europe; and calls for changes to proposed European Community measures on the protection of animals during transport, in order to maintain restrictions which avoid cruel treatment to British horses and ponies during long journeys and at continental slaughterhouses.]

Mr. MacGregor: I am well aware of the importance of the points raised in the early-day motions. I think that my hon. Friend knows that the Government remain fully committed—I stress—fully committed to retaining control to ensure that horses and ponies are not exported from Britain for slaughter abroad. I know from the many conversations that I have had with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the matter that he takes it extremely seriously in the negotiations. He has made that clear in innumerable letters

[Mr. MacGregor]

on the matter, and many of my constituents have raised the matter with me. Therefore, even if I could find time for such a debate in the forthcoming week, I do not think that such a debate is necessary. The Government's determination to go on fighting this is clear.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am sure that the Leader of the House will wish to join me in congratulating Manchester on winning the bid for the Olympic games. Is he aware from early-day motion 744 that the Minister for Sport has not yet answered an oral question in the House of Commons?

[That this House regrets that the Minister of Sport, although appointed in the summer of 1990, has yet to answer a single oral question on sport in the Chamber; and calls on the Procedure Committee to arrange for sport to have a question time allocation, as do the Arts and Overseas Development.]

If a statement is the only way for us to discuss sport, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for one to be made, particularly so that we can look at the Government's strategy towards building support for the British city for the Olympic games in the year 2000?

Mr. MacGregor: Hon. Members who have put down questions to my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport have not been successful in the ballot shuffle. I am sure that my hon. Friend feels that that is unfortunate because he is unable to answer oral questions. It is purely a matter of the ballot shuffle. There are ways in which the position could be made clear other than by oral statements. However, I will draw to my hon. Friend's attention what the hon. Lady has said.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Has my right hon. Friend noticed the press speculation that the Ministry of Defence has decided to buy Challenger 2 as its replacement tank? That follows from the superb performance of Challenger 1 during the Gulf war. Can my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made in the House as soon as possible? It is vital to many of my constituents who work at David Brown Gears, because their jobs depend on that decision.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot make any promises at this stage about when a statement might be made or whether it would be appropriate, but I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks and request for a statement to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): As tomorrow will be five years since the nuclear explosion and fire at Chernobyl, which was not only the worst peace-time nuclear accident—equal to 90 Hiroshimas—but the worst official cover-up, will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made to allay the fears of the Ukrainian community in this country that 300,000 children and adults will die from radiation-induced cancers? Will the Government increase direct medical aid to the Ukraine and introduce in this country a programme for treating Ukrainian children?

Mr. MacGregor: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman means about a cover-up. We all recognise the serious——

Mr. Nellist: By the Soviet Government.

Mr. MacGregor: I assumed that that was what he meant. I dealt with various aspects of the Chernobyl disaster and I can assure him that there was no cover-up here.

Mr. Nellist *indicated assent.*

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman accepts that. Complete information was given to the public. The point that he raised is not for me, but I shall draw it to the attention of my appropriate right hon. Friends.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I do not know whether my right hon. Friend has driven through Stockport, but if he has he will have had plenty of time to admire my constituency because the busiest non-dual carriageway—the A6—runs north to south—or south to north if one is going to Manchester to see the Olympic site there. May we have an early debate on the disturbing news that the A6(M) bypass, which two weeks ago the Department of Transport said was about to be started, is now likely to be delayed or even scrapped because of a Brussels directive which states that there should be environmental consideration of the project? Is not that intrusion into Stockport—and indeed, British—affairs unnecessary, unwarranted and cheeky?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not know the details of the case, but I understand my hon. Friend's concern about the road improvements. I cannot promise a statement for the reason that I have already given—there is great pressure on the timetable—but I am sure that he will draw the matter to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House reflect on his answer to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about the unemployed? Does he agree that there are more than 2 million reasons why the House should debate unemployment? His words will bring anger to the unemployed because of the way in which he has virtually disregarded the appeal for a debate in the House on such an important and serious matter.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can have been listening not only to what I have said on many occasions about unemployment issues, but to what many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have said. As we are discussing the business statement, all I will say now is that there have been many opportunities to discuss employment and unemployment issues. I have welcomed those opportunities because I believe that our policies have ensured that our unemployment levels are still below the European average, and that the number in employment is higher than in most other European countries and a good deal higher than it was even four or five years ago. We have plenty of opportunities to make those points. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no lack of concern. The fact that we can debate the issues so often shows our concern for employment policies to be debated properly. In the coming week, there will again be opportunities to do so.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Would my right hon. Friend arrange for an urgent debate on the restructuring of local government so that we can make it clear to the electorate, before the elections for borough and district councils next week, that this time the Government intend to listen to the voice of the people rather than to the petty

political posturings of councillors who hope that their councils will survive? A debate would especially make it clear to constituencies such as Isle of Wight, that have already had a Boundary Commission recommendation, that the elections are nothing to do with the restructuring of local government because that restructuring still requires primary legislation in the House, which will not happen before 1992?

Mr. MacGregor: It is not necessary to have a debate, because my hon. Friend has made the point clearly himself. To make it clear yet again, I point out that we have, as my hon. Friend knows, issued a consultation document on restructuring, and there will be consultation over the summer on that. The intention is that there will be legislation on that issue. As my hon. Friend rightly says, the restructuring cannot take place until that is done. He is right to say that it is not an immediate issue in the forthcoming local elections. What is far more important in those elections is which councils are more likely to deliver the best services at the best value for money, and therefore at the lowest cost to the community charge payer.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Following the happy and successful visit to this country of President Lech Walesa of Poland, may we have a debate on the help that not only Poland but other eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Soviet Union need from us? Bearing in mind the fact that a group of Members of Parliament will shortly go to Poland to visit, among other places, Auschwitz, and that they are very concerned about the growth of anti-semitism in those countries, will the right hon. Gentleman ask his colleagues who deal with those countries to emphasise to them that it is important to the House that, if they want that help, they should look to human rights in their own countries and not least to the rights of the Jewish communities?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have the pleasure of being with the President this evening. I am sure that the point is frequently made that the United Kingdom has given considerable aid to Poland. That includes the cancelation of a large element of the debt that Poland has incurred, which is an important contribution in itself and is well recognised. However, I cannot promise the hon. and learned Gentleman an early debate on the matter, for the reason that I have already given.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement next week on the progress that has been made into the claims of the nuclear test veterans? He will know that I have raised the case of John Hall, a constituent of mine, on a number of occasions. We have tabled an early-day motion and I met the Prime Minister to discuss the case. I had a call today from the royal infirmary in Leicester to say that Mr. Hall's condition has deteriorated rapidly. We are in a race against time. Will the Leader of the House please arrange for a statement next week, and will he bring my comments to the attention of the Prime Minister?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that I cannot comment on the merits of the individual case, although I am very sorry to hear the information that he has just given to the House. I cannot make any promises about a statement next week, but I will, in the normal way, draw the attention of my appropriate right hon. Friend to his comments.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have a debate on the first report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests on the question of Committee chairmanships? May we have an assurance that we shall have a debate before the end of the Session?

Mr. MacGregor: I would not wish to give an absolute assurance because of the pressures on the timetable. As I hope is clear from the two debates on one day which we shall have next week, I am anxious to find time for debates on parliamentary matters. Next week's debate on broadcasting is the urgent one because we need to get on with the arrangements for the permanent televising of the House; that is why that debate is first. I know of the other Select Committee report and I am in the process of studying it. However, I cannot be sure when we will debate it.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May we have an urgent debate on the housing crisis that continues unabated, especially in London? Because of the Government's policies, council rents have gone up by three times the level of inflation. The Government allocation for repairs and decorations in my borough has been cut by 30 per cent. this year, virtually no new homes are being built, and people who have huge numbers of points are still stuck on the council waiting list and cannot get a home. Ministers are well housed; why do they not care about those who are not?

Mr. MacGregor: For reasons I have already given, I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman that there will be an opportunity for a debate on those matters, but there are plenty of opportunities to question Ministers on housing policies generally, and we have very good and robust responses on them.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Cabinet has discussed the replacement for the Chieftain tank, and that the Challenger 2 tank will be the preferred replacement? Will there be an announcement on that next week, or is he going to tell us that, as Leader of the House, he does not know?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot add to what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) a few moments ago.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We welcome the provision for a debate on the omsbudsman next week, but can the Leader of the House confirm that that debate will also include the Northern Ireland ombudsman and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints, who is responsible for complaints?

Is the Leader of the House in a position to respond to the report of the Procedure Committee on Select Committees? Is he in a position to provide for Select Committees for all the Government Departments? Does he agree that it is quite wrong for the internal procedures of the House not to be considered on their merits but to be left open to the influence of political horse-trading elsewhere involving foreign countries?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first point, I shall have to check, but obviously we want the debate on the ombudsman, since it is an important debate, to range over as many ombudsman issues as possible. If I may, I shall check exactly what motion we will put down and let the hon. Gentleman know.

On the second point, I hope shortly to give the response of the Procedure Committee's report on Select Committees.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): May I press the Leader of the House again for a debate on the deepening recession all over the country, not least in the west midlands, where hardly a day goes by without news of further redundancies and, in some cases, closures? How many more people must suffer as a result of Government policies—policies which, to use the phrase of a certain store owner, may well be described as crap?

Mr. MacGregor: There is to be a full day's debate on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill next week, and as the Bill contains a number of tax measures of great importance and help to companies, it will be possible to raise economic issues in that debate.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Before the debate on community charges next week, will the right hon. Gentleman direct the Government's attention to the perverse effect of the so-called council tax on one Welsh council where, according to the preliminary figures, virtually half the bills will go up substantially? Detailed analysis has proved that, in Monmouth, bills will go up by a ferocious amount. Monmouth constituents will be the worst hit in Wales as a result of the Government's proposed changes. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider that as a matter of urgency?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will make clear responses on that matter. I hope to be visiting Monmouth shortly, and I shall do the same.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Leader of the House allow time for a serious and urgent discussion on the provision of a heart research centre in the Leeds area to serve the Yorkshire and south Humberside region? Eight months ago, a fund was started to raise money for the heart research centre, but it has now been scrapped. The future of services at Killingbeck hospital hangs in the balance because of the attitude of the Yorkshire regional health authority. This is a serious and urgent matter and the campaign that has been announced by the Secretary of State for Health makes it more urgent. May we have a debate on the provision of a research centre, which is needed in the Yorkshire and Humberside region?

Mr. MacGregor: From what the hon. Gentleman says, that is primarily a matter for the regional health authority. I simply cannot say that there will be time for a debate in Government time. The hon. Gentleman will know that there are opportunities for Members to raise in other ways in the House issues which cause them concern.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is it part of the Leader of the House's thinking to have a debate on the extremely well written report by the Select Committee on rain forest destruction? Is there any possibility next week of a statement in response to the moving report by the Quakers from Baghdad which foreshadows hepatitis, meningitis, cholera, diphtheria and typhoid and in particular, the moving statement of a Karbala doctor who needed water. He said:

"To get water I need electricity. To get electricity I need a generator. To work the generator I need fuel. To get fuel I need a tanker. There are no tankers."

We are facing a health disaster. May we debate it?

Mr. MacGregor: On the latter point, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we have had a statement recently on some of the subjects that he has raised. I will draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. On the Select Committee report, the hon. Gentleman will recognise from the many pressures on me for debates in the House on many different subjects, including matters dealt with by other Select Committees, that it simply is not possible to accommodate them all in the near future.

Mr. Dalyell: On the Consolidated Fund?

Mr. MacGregor: If the matter can be debated in a Consolidated Fund debate, it certainly will not be the Consolidated Fund debate that we shall have on Tuesday week. That relates to the motion that we shall debate on Tuesday evening. Perhaps this is an opportunity to say that the Consolidated Fund debate in the following week will follow from that motion and will be mainly automatic. It is not possible to debate the Select Committee report.

I have noted the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on the Select Committee report to which he referred.

BILL PRESENTED

Social Security (Contributions)

Mr. Secretary Newton, supported by Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mr. Nicholas Scott and Miss Ann Widdecombe, presented a Bill to introduce contributions under the Social Security Act 1975 in respect of cars made available for private use and car fuel: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 145.]

Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

POWERS OF SNH WITH REGARD TO STORAGE OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE

'(1) It shall be an offence for any person to store radioactive waste under the land without first informing SNH of their intention to do so.

(2) Where SNH are of the opinion that any such dumping could result in damage to the natural heritage they shall serve notice of that fact on the person proposing the storage.

(3) Where such notice has been served it shall be an offence to commence or continue with the storage without the permission of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

(4) The Secretary of State shall not give such permission without first consulting SNH.

(5) For the purposes of this Act "radioactive waste" has the meaning assigned to it by section 18 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. "Land" includes land covered by water and the definition of land in section 21 of this Act shall not apply for the purposes of this section.'.—*[Mr. Wilson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.11 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am glad that we have begun the debate early. The Opposition certainly do not intend to prolong the proceedings unnecessarily. However, in the spirit of our proceedings in Committee, I hope that we can have a series of fairly short but substantial debates before we come to Third Reading.

New clause 1 is of tremendous importance to the Scottish environment and will attract a great deal of interest in Scotland. I hope that at the end of the debate, we shall hear from the Minister something of substance about the Government's attitude towards adopting Dounreay as a site for nuclear dumping. There is no doubt that there is overwhelming opposition in Scotland to that proposal. It would be no bad thing if the Government, who this week have made some efforts to get on the right side of public opinion, came out and said that they, in common with every other party represented in the House, will have no truck with the proposal.

It may be worth pointing out at the start of the debate what a lonely figure the Minister poses. This may be the only Scottish debate in which the Minister replying to the debate is the only Scottish Tory Member in the House of Commons. I do not know where the other Scottish Tory Members are. The mind boggles about where they might be. As our discussions proceed, I hope that there will be some evidence that they exist and have some interest in these matters. We are discussing a matter that may be peculiarly of interest to the Highlands but is also of great interest to all parts of Scotland, including several of the constituencies represented by Conservative Members. I know that one has to trail around a little to find any Scottish Tory Members, but in this matter the Perthshire constituencies at least are directly affected by the transport issues. We shall be watching closely for the presence of those hon. Members as our discussions continue.

This is an important debate, with four purposes. The first is simply to give an airing on the Floor of the House of Commons to the prospect of using Dounreay or perhaps Caithness for deep nuclear storage. I think that it is overdue and I am pleased that, by tabling the new clause, the Labour party has succeeded in having a debate that will be noted by all parties and people interested in the issue.

4.15 pm

The second reason for having the debate is to flush out the Government's views on deep storage at Dounreay and in particular to force them to defend their apparent willingness to trample upon local democracy. In particular, I should be grateful if the Minister would tell us today whether it is the Secretary of State's intention to overrule the planning authority on the latest application by Nirex for 6,000 test bores in the same way that he overruled that authority on the issues of both the structure plan and the initial test bores. It would be helpful for guidance if the Minister told us whether it is once again the intention of the Secretary of State to thwart local democracy and to overrule the planning authority.

A frisson of excitement has run through the House as a second Conservative Member has entered. We all know of the interest in these matters of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), so we are not surprised to see him.

The third reason for having the debate is to state unequivocally that the possibility of Dounreay being used as a nuclear dump will immediately vanish with the election of a Labour Government. The fourth reason for having it, particularly appropriate in the context of this Bill, is to encourage—I hope that the Minister will join in this encouragement—the new Scottish Natural Heritage to express a view on this and other enormously important environmental issues, rather than steer clear of them, as has sometimes been the practice of the Nature Conservancy Council, for fear of offending its political masters. It was remarked at a meeting that we had with the Highland regional council yesterday, when some people were down from Caithness, that it was deemed very odd in Caithness that the Nature Conservancy Council is prepared to tell people where they can and cannot cut peat but at the same time desists from taking or expressing a view on the desirability of having a nuclear dump on their doorsteps.

The transport issue is also important, apart from the immediate impact within Caithness. This is where the whole of Scotland becomes directly involved, because part of the price that would be paid, if by any chance this were allowed to go ahead, would be that nuclear loads would be passing through Scotland on an extremely regular basis. There is no need to take my word for this; I have a letter from Nirex which was sent to Mr. Mervyn Rolfe, the excellent Labour candidate for Perth and Kinross. Mr. Rolfe had asked Nirex how many trainloads would be passing through Perth in the event of deep underground repositories being established at Dounreay.

I am sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) is not present to hear this information, but Mr. McInerney, the managing director of Nirex, was nothing if not frank. He said:

"Consultants acting for Nirex are carrying out assessments of the transport implications of moving radioactive wastes to Dounreay or Sellafield. Should the repository be sited at Dounreay, we estimate that about 15 trains a week would pass through Perth. Road transport would be used infrequently to Dounreay . . . Should the repository be sited at Sellafield, only waste generated at Dounreay would pass through Perth. This would amount to around one small train load per week."

Mr. McInerney went on to say:

"the likelihood of an accident involving a train carrying radioactive waste of sufficient severity for the release of radioactivity from a waste container is extremely remote."

It is only fair for me to place that caveat on the record.

I should have thought that the great majority of the constituents represented by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, and those in all points north and south who are threatened with the prospect of 15 trainloads per week of radioactive nuclear cargoes passing through their communities, would, to say the least, be disturbed by that prospect. It is not a regular trade that Scotland wishes to see. In addition to the security and safety problems that would immediately be created in Caithness itself, monumental problems of security along the route would be created. We have it on the authority not of any political scaremonger but of Nirex itself that that is the volume of cargo that would be involved if Dounreay were selected and approved by the Government for this purpose.

I was astonished to read in the *Glasgow Herald* of 23 January 1991 the headline

"Nuclear dump safety 'cannot be guaranteed'".

Once again, it might be supposed that this was scaremongering by some vested interest opposed to the selection of Dounreay. Not so. With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I shall quote a little of the report. It states:

"The nuclear waste agency Nirex will not be able to guarantee that Britain's first national nuclear waste repository will be completely safe until after it has been built.

This was confirmed yesterday"—

not by a scaremonger—

"by a Nirex spokesman at the agency's headquarters at Didcot in Oxfordshire. The admission astonished Highland region, the planning authority which would have to consider any planning application for a nuclear waste repository at Dounreay."

I have no doubt that it will astonish hon. Members who are hearing it today.

The report continues:

"The Nirex spokesman said the company would select Dounreay . . . or Sellafield . . . as its preferred site for a national repository for low and intermediate waste some time between November and the beginning of 1992.

'After that we would submit a planning application'."

In this remarkable statement, according to the *Glasgow Herald* the spokesman went on to say

"the regulatory authorities, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Pollution, would be able to form a provisional view of the acceptability of the repository, but Nirex would not be able to present its full safety case."

The newspaper goes on to quote the Nirex spokesman directly:

"We will only be in a position to do that once the repository is actually built and we have managed to established quite conclusively if there are any problems with the geology of the site.

Only then would the regulatory authorities be in a position to inspect everything before granting an operating licence."

I have no need to embellish or embroider, because the case is here in black and white from the Nirex spokesman. He continued:

"With the present schedule that might not be until the year 2003 or 2004, and we"—

that is, Nirex—

"might have spent up to £500 million constructing the repository but we could still end up walking away from it. That's the risk."

The report continues:

"Highland regions vice-convenor, Councillor Peter Peacock, said yesterday:

'It beggars belief that Nirex could suggest going forward to a planning enquiry without considering fully the safety case, probably the most worrying aspect to the public.'"

Hon. Members on both sides of the House would be astonished if the proposition were that any Secretary of State should give planning approval, in any shape or form, for Nirex to go ahead at Dounreay on such a basis.

I was most interested to read in *The Daily Telegraph* of 11 March 1991 a report under the heading

"Nuclear chief attacks lack of information on dump's safety".

Once again, I am pleased to quote the source. Here too, it is not some over-enthusiastic anti-nuclear person, but Professor John Knill, chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee. I quote from *The Daily Telegraph* report by Mr. Roger Highfield, the newspaper's science editor:

"The failure of British Nuclear Fuels to have a full safety assessment of £2·7 billion national nuclear waste dump ready in time for a public inquiry has been attacked by the Government's most senior adviser on the industry.

The BNF argument that safety at the site is a matter for experts rather than for the public has been branded as unsatisfactory by Professor Knill . . ..

Government nuclear waste advisers wanted a public discussion at the inquiry of the technical case for the safety of the repository, the location of which was expected to be announced later this year."

But by the time of the inquiry, according to Mr. Christopher Harding, chairman of BNFL, one of the principal shareholders of NIREX,

"we won't have the full safety case. There's a huge amount of work involved . . . . We believe it is desperately important to get on. This may be seen by the public as the industry trying to pressurise it through . . . . That would worry me."

If it worries Mr. Harding that BNFL and Nirex are seen as trying to pressurise the development through on that basis, it must be worrying to the people of Caithness and all who are living on the doorstep of the proposed development and along the transport route.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that I was late arriving because I was involved in discussions concerning the naval base at Rosyth, where we have an interest in nuclear capability. He will know that a number of his hon. Friends, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and I have today been trying to see what can be done to keep the base open.

Mr. Wilson: That is one of the most convincing notes to the teacher that I have heard for some time.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): My hon. Friend will not object to my intervening, since I have listened to all his speech. He is to be thanked for the revelations that he has produced, particularly the revelation that not only will the events he has been describing take place without guarantees about safety but that, in one case, Nirex has admitted that £500 million may be spent before the safety issue has been analysed. Did my hon. Friend go on to say that at that stage Nirex would be prepared to walk away from it? Can my hon. Friend think of any other example of an enterprise, private or public—with the exception of the poll tax—where hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent and the concern involved has walked away from that enterprise?

Mr. Walker: Ground nuts.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) suggests a strange analogy.

At least Nirex might have the grace to apologise and admit that it has done a great public disservice. It is astonishing to think that it is intending to spend £500 million on a £2·7 billion development without knowing whether the geological conditions are right and the safety conditions can be met. It would be absurd beyond belief if, while all of that was going on, the new agency set up to be concerned with all aspects of the Scottish environment was the one organisation not charged with having responsibility to comment on what was going on.

Creating the repository in Caithness—even if, at the end of the day, Nirex were to walk away from it and decided that £500 million could be written off to experience—would have an immense effect on the Caithness environment. Even more serious is the prospect of Nirex going on, after the expenditure of £500 million, to spend the entire £2·7 billion in creating the facility. Then the trains would roll and Dounreay would be identified with the nuclear dumping capital of Europe. That, ultimately, is unacceptable.

Yesterday, some of my hon. Friends and I—I should say representatives of the three opposition parties; as is predictable in these matters, no representative of the Government was present—met representatives of Highland regional council, who came to London to brief Scottish Members on the case against nuclear dumping at Dounreay.

Councillor Jim Fry, a member of that delegation, worked, until he retired, at Dounreay and by no stretch of the imagination can he be described as anti-nuclear. He said that the Caithness people had been, and remained, loyal to the nuclear industry but knew that Nirex was trying to exploit that loyalty to an end that was unacceptable to the Caithness people.

They know that Nirex is not interested in Caithness because of its geological suitability. Nirex has not gone round the country in good faith looking for the area that is most suitable geologically. When it did so, it came up with a site somewhere in the Tory heartland of middle England. We remember that, in the week the general election was declared in 1987, the Government told Nirex that it could not go there because some marginal Tory seats were involved. That was the outcome of the geological examination. A political decision was taken to tell Nirex that it could not go ahead with its choice of site.

4.30 pm

We know that Nirex has not arrived at Dounreay because of its unique geological suitabilty, which for this project above all others should be the one factor that matters. What Nirex knows is that Dounreay and Caithness have a long history of involvement in the nuclear industry. As Councillor Fry said, they have been loyal to the nuclear industry and have been good neighbours to it, as indeed the nuclear industry has been to them in the view of most people in that part of the world.

Nirex saw the difficulty of Caithness as its opportunity. It saw vulnerability in Caithness because jobs were to be lost. The place had a nuclear background. When other places said that they did not want anything to do with Nirex and deep storage, Nirex decided that, if it moved into Caithness while it was vulnerable, the people might swallow the proposition. That was the crude thinking behind Nirex's proposal for deep storage at Dounreay.

As Councillor Fry also said, the people of Caithness and, indeed, of Scotland are capable of making the distinction. There is no overwhelming hostility to the civil nuclear industry in Scotland. Certainly there is none in my constituency where a nuclear power station is the biggest employer, or in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). We live with civil nuclear power. Whatever the rights and wrongs of its emphasis in our energy programme, they are not being debated today.

The people of Caithness can differentiate between playing a positive and mutually rewarding part in the British civil nuclear programme and being used as a dump simply because unemployment looms and because they have a background in the industry. They have made that distinction successfully.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does not the hon. Gentleman also agree that the people of Caithness have, through a referendum, shown everyone how overwhelming is the opposition of the community to the use of Dounreay as a site for the disposal of nuclear waste? Is he aware that in other areas of Scotland where referendums have been conducted there has always been overwhelming democratic opposition? Is not that a strange contrast to the effect of four Conservative voices that were raised in 1987 when there was a threat to Huntingdonshire and other places in England?

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, and I agree entirely with the point that she has made. At the briefing which we both attended yesterday, Highland regional council stressed the outcome of the referendum in Caithness. Propaganda had suggested that there was majority support for the proposal in Caithness and only voluble minority opposition. That was put to the test in a local referendum and was shown clearly to be untrue there, as in other parts of Scotland. No doubt Nirex was taken aback by the result of the referendum, because it almost certainly thought that Caithness was one of the few places in Britain where it would get a warm welcome. I do not want to introduce inter-party dissent among Opposition parties, but I suspect that Lord Thurso might not have been completely dissociated from encouraging that belief.

Caithness does not want Dounreay to be the repository for nuclear waste for Britain or Europe. Scotland does not want it to be there. The Labour party says that the proposal will not go ahead when we are in office. Only the Government are ambivalent about the idea.

The new clause is perfectly clear. It states:

"It shall be an offence for any person to store radioactive waste under the land without first informing SNH of their intention to do so."

To say that it is an offence for any person perhaps draws it a little widely because the average citizen would not do that. We mean Nirex. We are using the Bill as a vehicle for a debate on this issue but it is right to stress that there is an environmental interest and that many industries in the highlands and islands depend on the image of a clean and healthy environment, which would be fatally tarnished by the presence of a nuclear dump at Dounreay. I hope that the Minister will join me in encouraging Scottish National Heritage to express views on the matter.

I do not expect the Minister to say that he will write the new clause into the Bill. However, I draw a parallel with similar debates in Committee on fish farming, shipping in the Minch, forestry and other environmental interests in

[Mr. Wilson]

Scotland, when the Minister's response was that there was no need to write into the Bill specific responsibility to make representations on those issues because the terms of Scottish National Heritage are drawn so widely that it can and will be expected to do so.

If the Minister says today that he is prepared to encourage Scottish National Heritage to come forward with views on this matter, it will be a great step forward and will embolden and strengthen the new agency from the outset. However, we stress the environmental, economic and wider national interests. To say that Nirex will provide jobs is a false bait: for every job that is gained in the short term, two or three will be lost in the long term because of damage done to the image and environmental purity of the highlands and islands.

I shall not prolong the debate, as we have made our point. We are delighted to have the opportunity to debate this subject and I hope that the Minister will take on board the strength of feeling on this subject which will be expressed in the debate and which exists throughout Scotland.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): It may be helpful if hon. Members cast back their minds to the days before the 1987 election, when the Government made the most extraordinary bare-faced about-turn that the Tory party has ever made—it was even more extraordinary than the Government's about-turn on the poll tax. The then Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) made a statement in the House on 1 May 1987 about a letter that he had received from Nirex. He said:

"Nirex . . . concludes that, although a safe near-surface disposal facility could certainly be developed at any of the four sites currently being investigated, the economic advantages of separate near-surface, low-level waste disposal are nothing like as great as Nirex earlier thought".

The four sites to which he referred are in constituencies represented by Conservative Members of Parliament. Bradwell is in Colchester, South and Maldon represented by John Wakeham; Fulbeck is in Grantham, represented by Douglas Hogg——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the hon. Lady that she should refer to the constituencies and not the names of Members.

Mrs. Michie: The third site is Estow; and the fourth is South Killingholme.

The right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury went on:

"Nirex will therefore now concentrate on identifying a suitable location for a deep multi-purpose facility for both intermediate-level and low-level waste".—[*Official Report*, 1 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. 504.]

We would do well to remember what happened then. I recall extremely well the day when I heard the announcement on the radio. Later that day, in a speech at Pitlochry, I said that the Secretary of State for the Environment had made the decision because he knew that Conservative seats would be lost unless he made this about-turn and, having done so, he need not allow Nirex to turn its attention north of the border. Nirex did just that very thing.

Although the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) spoke at length about Dounreay and Caithness, I want to make it clear that my opposition to a nuclear waste dump or deep level storage relates to the whole of Scotland, particularly the highlands and islands. The Liberal Democrats believe and have proposed on many occasions that there should be on-site, above-ground, dry storage until safe methods of long-term disposal and management are found.

I hope that the Minister will say how much money is being put into research. Nirex has been spending millions of pounds boring holes in Caithness—that money could have been used for research. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North spoke of the billions of pounds that are being used. We need to know what effort is being made in research. This is not a case of the "Not in my back yard" syndrome. We have to acknowledge that we must look after our own waste, and we do not advocate it being sent up and down the country into England or wherever for deep disposal. We know that we must look after our waste on site.

The Nirex document, "The Way Forward", identified 35 per cent. of the United Kingdom as suitable for waste disposal. I recall that the people of Argyll and Bute were alarmed, as I was, because the map in the document identified districts in my constituency such as Islay, the Ross of Mull and Iona as suitable geological sites, which was unbelievable. So concerned were local people that they organised a petition to be sent to Nirex. More than 10,000 signatures were collected in various locations in support of the policy of the local council—Argyll and Bute district council—which had already taken a decision that it would

"as a matter of policy, oppose with the utmost vigour, any attempt to place a repository within the area of Argyll and Bute district or under the seabed around the shores."

That is a quote from a so-called independent council, which is not Labour, Conservative, or even Liberal Democrat or Scottish National party—all those parties are represented on it. A cross-party view was taken on the issue.

I want to highlight the fact that I am talking about the highlands and islands and the whole of Scotland, not just Dounreay. It is disgraceful that the then Secretary of State should have overruled in such a cavalier manner the decision of the elected members of the Highlands regional council to refuse Nirex planning permission to drill test bore holes. What right had he, one man at the Scottish Office, to take such a decision? We have no way of making him account for or justify his actions. It is another reason why the Government refuse to set up a Scottish Select Committee: because they can thus get away with such decisions and nobody can question them or the Scottish Office on exactly what is going on.

We have heard much about the clean image of the highlands and islands, and I cannot stress too strongly how important that is. To go ahead with a nuclear dump in that district would destroy that image at a stroke. It would harm farming, fishing, tourism and the whisky industry—all of which depend on the district being kept pollution-free and environmentally safe.

4.45 pm

There is another threat coming down the line. In an exclusive report in the *Sunday Mail* on 21 April, Angus Macleod stated:

"A total of 17 sites around Scotland's coast are being touted as possible 'graveyard' sites for radioactive submarine hulks".

Some five or six of the districts mentioned are in my constituency—Loch Goil, Campbeltown, Rothesay, Loch Striven and Loch Fyne. Are we to be threatened with a nuclear dump and then threatened with nuclear submarines being parked for goodness knows how long in that beautiful district of the highlands?

Unless the Minister gives a categorical assurance today that there will be no nuclear dumping in this district, it makes nonsense of the Bill and its fine words about caring for and protecting the environment. The Minister has already been asked, and I push him again to answer the question—what are the views of the Scottish Nature Conservancy Council and the Scottish Natural Heritage Agency? If they have not already done so, they must make a statement; they cannot sit on the fence. If they do, their credibility will sink even lower.

As we have heard, the Government can pronounce happily about what should happen in the so-called flow country, but are they not going to make a statement on the dumping of waste in the highlands? If they do not, their membership, like the membership of the health boards appointed by the Secretary of State, must be called into question.

The dumping of waste is not a decision for the Minister, the Secretary of State or the Department of the Environment, but a decision only for the people of Scotland.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that there are a wide range of well-canvassed reasons why Dounreay would not be an appropriate site for a repository for nuclear waste. I strongly agree that there must be effective safeguards for the environment, and in every other respect.

The proposals of Nirex and other authorities for the disposal of nuclear waste are widely misunderstood. The subject needs some well-informed debate—perhaps we can start it here this afternoon. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) referred to the remains of decommissioned nuclear submarines. We already have one lying at Rosyth—HMS Dreadnought—which has been there for many years and has now been joined by HMS Churchill, which is being decommissioned. I do not know whether HMS Warspite is there too—it may be at Devonport. That is an example of what goes wrong if decisions are not taken about where such material is to be stored in the long term. At present, the submarines are lying on the dockside in Rosyth. A decision must be taken about what to do with them.

I have a particular interest in the nuclear industry, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North. He has the Hunterston power station in his constituency, while I have the Torness power station in mine. Yesterday, I received a parliamentary answer to a question that I had put to the Secretary of State for Scotland. I had asked him to make a statement on his policy for the storage of used fuel from nuclear installations in Scotland after 1993. I received the following answer from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart):

"Questions about operational aspects of nuclear installations in Scotland, such as spent fuel storage, are a matter for the operators concerned. Scottish Nuclear Ltd. have recently put forward proposals for the long-term storage of spent fuel at both Hunterston and Torness; these proposals are currently being evaluated."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 1991; Vol. 189, c. *458*.]

That is a major departure from the original planning consents for both Hunterston and Torness.

The understanding was that the intermediate waste would be stored on site in a vault that is part of the integral design of the power station and that low-level waste would be transported to Sellafield. We need not get unduly worked up about low-level waste—overalls, boots and so on—but we understood that the fuel, probably the most sensitive material of all, would be taken away either for long-term storage or reprocessing at Sellafield. The Minister's reply, however, was that there had been a proposal to store not only the waste substances but also the spent fuel on site.

I understand that, from now on, Torness will produce approximately 37 tonnes of waste fuel each year. Over the full life of the power station, therefore, that amounts to 1,200 tonnes of waste fuel. The spent fuel is not being reprocessed at present. There is no call for advanced gas-cooled reactor spent fuel to be reprocessed, as no more AGR reactors are being built. The Government are actively considering the proposal, therefore, that spent fuel should be stored in dry stores at Torness and Hunterston. That material continues to generate heat for about 50 years, after which it is possible to store it in an underground repository, were there to be such an underground repository. Nirex is considering constructing an underground repository but that will not be for spent fuel, so we do not yet know where it would go. The new suggestion is that it should be stored in dry stores at Torness and Hunterston.

This is a long-term problem. If Torness is to be decommissioned in 2030, the earliest possible date for clearing the dry store, if such a store were to be built at Torness, would be 2080, and that would depend upon whether by then a long-term store would be available for the material.

All these issues ought to be properly considered and evaluated, but the fundamental issue is whether it would be better for there to be a single national processing and storage plant, as at Sellafield—a specialist facility to handle all this material—or whether there should be a proliferation of smaller stores dotted around the country at the various nuclear installations.

What worries me about the suggestion that there should be a dry store at Torness is the evidence concerning the only dry store in the United Kingdom—at Wylfa power station in Anglesey—where Nuclear Electric has a dry store. According to an article in the *New Scientist* of 2 March 1991:

"Rotting fuel rods in the world's largest dry store for spent radioactive fuel in North Wales could cause a catastrophic fire. The manesium 'can' which surrounds the rods has corroded so badly that the radioactive metal is exposed. If water penetrates the cladding of the element it can react with the metallic uranium fuel. One of the corrosion products is uranium hydride, which can ignite spontaneously in air. If enough uranium hydride burns, it can ignite the metallic uranium and release the highly radioactive fission products 'held' in the uranium bar. This would constitute a major nuclear accident . . . The design of the facilities at Wylfa forms the basis of a new store for spent fuel from advanced gas-cooled and pressurised water reactors. Nuclear Electric has been looking at a potential site for such a store at Heysham, in northwest England. It would like to be able to keep spent fuel in dry storage for up to 100 years., removing the need for early reprocessing."

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

We understand that similar dry stores are now being suggested for Hunterston and Torness.

I recognise the value and importance of the nuclear industry to the economy of both my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North. I recognise that these nuclear installations are doing a valuable job and that they will continue to do so for a long time. However, well-considered decisions must be taken about what to do with the waste products—in particular, about what to do with the spent fuel.

We are debating the possibility of providing an underground repository somewhere in Scotland. The environmental issues must be discussed. I have yet to form a firm view about the best thing to do, in the light of the evidence. However, my instinct is to say that it would be far better to continue to reprocess the material in a specialist facility, such as that at Sellafield, rather than that there should be a proliferation of small stores at nuclear sites all over the country where things could go wrong, as they appear to have gone wrong at Wylfa.

There should be the fullest and the most open public debate about what to do with this material. All these matters could then be properly considered, and acceptable decisions reached from the point of view of the nuclear industry and the wider public.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: In supporting new clause 1, I wish to refer to amendments that were tabled but not accepted. I have been asked during the last few days why Scottish Members of Parliament should be considering the disposal of nuclear waste when dealing with this Bill. That is an absurd question. The most critical environmental question that faces the people of Scotland is the disposal and transport of nuclear waste and its management. Therefore, the amendments that my hon. Friends and I tabled dealt with the transport of nuclear waste.

Many people believe that this problem relates specifically to Dounreay and the highlands of Scotland, but the whole of the country of Scotland is affected by it. It is intended to dispose of nuclear waste created in the United Kingdom and, furthermore, in other countries. The nuclear waste from other countries would have to be transported through Scotland to a particular site for processing. If Dounreay were to be selected as the processing site, the A9—the main arterial route that runs from north to south in Scotland—would become the irradiated spine of our nation.

The debate therefore affects all the people of Scotland. I am wearing a badge that was produced by Highland regional council, which is currently spearheading the campaign against Nirex's plans to come to Dounreay. Highland regional council says that it wants a nationwide campaign to be organised against the disposal of nuclear waste in Scotland.

This is a key issue for Scotland. Earlier today, I met the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) outside this building. He referred to the badge that I am wearing and suggested that we want to close down all nuclear plants in Scotland. I had to point out to him that the words on the badge produced by Highland regional council are "Bury Nuclear Waste." Everyone accepts that there is a responsibility to dispose of the nuclear waste that is created in our country, but there is a consensus—it is certainly the view of my party—that it should be stored on site, above ground, where it can be carefully monitored and is accessible for regular checking.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am astonished by the hon. Lady's remarks. She follows the speech of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who, if I understood him correctly, said that he did not want the waste from his constituency's nuclear station to be stored on site. He said that it should go to Sellafield. That is the opposite of what the hon. Lady wants.

5 pm

Mrs. Ewing: Thankfully, I am not responsible for the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I must stress that, in the campaign against a Nirex site at Dounreay, it should not be regarded as a victory if nuclear waste is buried at Sellafield. The burying of nuclear waste is the greatest danger we face, because no one can predict seismic or underwater movements. The waste will need to be monitored for centuries, and that is why it must be stored on site and above ground.

There is an international aspect to the issue, and the disposal of nuclear waste should be dealt with internationally. It is such a major issue that one country cannot come to grips with the problem. We should consider with other countries more effective ways of disposing of nuclear waste.

Safety is critical. Highland regional council was at pains yesterday to stress that Nirex has said that it cannot put the case for safety in time for any public inquiry. In *The Independent* on 21 January, Ron Flowers—a director of UK Nirex—referred to the nuclear waste disposal company and a possible public inquiry. The article said that Nirex would

"present a preliminary safety case to the inquiry but detailed geological research will have to continue—possibly for as long as a decade after the inquiry ends—before the safety case is finished . . . Dr. Flowers believes that at the planning inquiry, the regulatory bodies—the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Pollution—will give provisional views of the ultimate acceptability of the repository, provisional views of what they expect to say by the year 2000, when the repository is expected to open."

When the residents of Caithness and the people of Scotland are being asked to accept that the disposal of nuclear waste will be safe, it is ridiculous that there cannot be a ruling on safety until the repository is open.

The Daily Telegraph in March stated:

"The failure of British Nuclear Fuels to have a full safety assessment of a £2·7 billion national nuclear waste dump ready in time for a public inquiry has been attacked by the Government's most senior adviser on the industry."

There is report after report showing that neither Nirex nor the Government can produce correct safety arguments to persuade the people of Scotland that they should accept the plans for the disposal of nuclear waste. I fully understand the reservations of the communities involved. Referendums and public opinion polls have all shown an overwhelming opposition to the idea of Nirex taking our country into its greedy hands.

I wish to stress the implications for industry. Much reference has been made to the perception of a clean environment and its importance for Scottish industries. The best references that I can cite are those from people involved in the industries of Scotland. Highland regional council produced a document following its conference on 28 November 1990. Several hon. Members attended the

conference but, as happened yesterday, no one from the Government attended, even though they had received invitations. Other hon. Members representing industries in their constituencies managed to attend.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The hon. Lady should put her criticism in context. The invitation gave only two days' notice. Many hon. Members already had fixed commitments on Scottish matters at 4, 5 and 6 o'clock on that day, so it was not possible to attend at such short notice.

Mrs. Ewing: All hon. Members have difficulty in meeting many of our obligations, but some did manage to attend the conference at short notice. Given the circumstances, it was possible for someone from the Government at least to turn up and listen to the arguments of duly elected representatives of the community.

At the conference, Mrs. Julie Crowe of the Caithness National Farmers Union made a lengthy speech about the importance of agriculture to her area. One short quote will suffice to give a taste of what she said:

"The whole world is now striving to produce the environmentally safe food so we have to compete. However, with a dump in Caithness I would suggest the playing field will not be level for us. The presence of a nuclear repository—dump—and the transport of nuclear waste through the area will blight local produce. This will mean we have a problem marketing our produce."

In referring to the fishing industry, Mr. Douglas MacLeod of the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers said:

"The clean waters of the Highlands were a priceless asset to shellfish growers and it would be a major disaster for the industry if Nirex was successful in identifying Dounreay as the site for the establishment of a repository. There was no apparent means of ultimately preventing leakage of radiation into the marine environment and accordingly the future of the shellfish industry and its employment prospects rested with the success of the campaign of opposition to Nirex."

Mr. Jamie Stone of Highland Fine Cheeses said:

"The existence of a nuclear waste repository in the Highlands would have a detrimental effect on the clean image of the area which was a vital element in the marketing of specialty food products and whisky from the Highlands and also in the tourist industry. The Highlands were widely acclaimed for being one of the cleanest areas in Europe at the moment and this situation should not be threatened by Nirex."

Mr. J. P. MacDonald, the manager of Dalmore Distillery in Alness said:

"As you are probably aware, being a distiller one is constantly monitoring the quality of the distillery water supply for any contamination, be it oil, diesel, sewage or whatever. Should a disaster happen during the transportation of radioactive nuclear waste across our water supply, either by road or rail, the consequences to us would be horrific. Our water supply is of prime importance and is guarded, if you like, jealously."

I could give many other quotations. I recommend the Minister to read the report and to take account of the views of those who provide jobs in the north of Scotland —vital jobs in my constituency. They are desperately worried that the perception of an unclean environment will prevent them from competing in the world market. More than 40 distilleries operate in my constituency, and just one unscrupulous Japanese whisky producer spreading a rumour throughout the world that Scottish whisky may be contaminated would result in the bottom falling out of the market. Where would the Chancellor of the Exchequer be if he no longer had revenue from the Scottish whisky industry?

The statements at the conference were made not by scaremongers but by people anxious to maintain the industries in their communities. They are trying to ensure that there is a future for young people in the rural communities of Scotland. I do not know what the politics may be of any of those people, and I do not really care: they work in the highlands of Scotland and are deeply concerned and angry about the Government's attitude.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North is twitching. I wish to quote no less a person than the Secretary of State for Scotland. I am sorry that he is not here to listen to the debate. In 1980, consideration was given to using Mullwharchar, in the Galloway hills, as a disposal site. It appears that there are double standards at the Scottish Office.

It is important to put on record exactly what the then hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), a Back-Bench Member, said during the inquiry. On 3 March 1980, the 10th sitting day of the inquiry, the then hon. Gentleman said:

"The terms and nature of this inquiry are inadequate and risk bringing our democratic processes into disrepute. The drilling itself would be a 'serious case of planning blight', and would affect tourism, agriculture and the locals' peace of mind."

He claimed that public opinion in Galloway was

"strongly against the proposed geological research programme."

On 16 November 1980, *The Scotsman* reported the then hon. Gentleman as saying:

"the lingering threat of the dumping of nuclear waste casts a dark shadow over all his constituents. 'They are concerned with the long term threat to future generations who would have to live in an environment ravaged by the irretrievable lodging in their midst of poisonous waste matter of inestimable danger.'"

Those were the words of the man who is now the Secretary of State for Scotland. I hope that he will recall his words and ponder them carefully. Having done so, perhaps he will reverse the governor-general attitude that was displayed by his predecessor. For example, the structure plan for Highland regional council and reports of planning inquiries were overturned with a few strokes of a red pen in St. Andrew's house. If there is genuine democracy—I hope that the Minister will convey my remarks to the Secretary of State—what is good enough for Galloway is good enough for the rest of the people of Scotland.

We are supposed to live in a democratic society. Those who have been consulted have overwhelmingly stated their opposition to the siting of a deep waste depository in Scotland. They have made their opposition crystal clear on every possible occasion. I hope that the Minister will say clearly that he is prepared for once to listen to democratic opinion. We are not prepared to sit back any longer while the people of our communities are the victims of autocratic treatment as the Government ride roughshod over them. We want public opinion to be taken into account. Jobs should be protected. Future generations should be able to feel that they have a future in our country instead of being forced to emigrate.

I feel passionately about these matters, because I know how the people in my constituency feel about them. Everyone in Moray—fishermen, farmers, distillers and everyone else—presents the same case as that which I am advancing this afternoon. The Government have not advanced logical arguments. They are unable to advance arguments that will persuade my constituents to think

[Mrs. Ewing]

otherwise. In a recent visit to Buckie in my constituency, SAND—Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping—with its specially designed nuclear dustbin, found that everyone in the area was willing to sign the petition that it had prepared.

Will that petition and others mean anything if the Scottish Office will not listen and will not take account of the genuine views of the people of our country? It is no wonder that the Tories were left with only 10 seats in Scotland after the 1987 general election. I suspect that they will have even fewer seats after the next general election. There will be Scottish National party gains in constituencies such as Tayside, North, where people feel as strongly about these matters as those elsewhere.

The Conservative party appears to have double standards when it is in power. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) referred to what took place in 1987—shortly before the general election—when four Conservative Members were not prepared to accept low-level waste disposal in their constituencies. When the Secretary of State, who was then the Back-Bench Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, argued his case during the Mullwharchar inquiry, it was accepted. When the people of Scotland speak with a democratic and united voice against something they do not want and about which they have strong feelings, why cannot it be accepted?

5.15 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: The new clause is important because it touches on a controversial matter that should be discussed objectively, rationally and sanely. I agree with the comments of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson): this matter is much too serious to be treated flippantly or to be presented in a manner that distorts the truth.

We have just listened to the most appalling speech that I have heard for a long time, on nuclear dumping. One of the difficulties that we face in Scotland is misinformation, which is disseminated by certain politicians and political parties. I am reminded of a leaflet about nuclear dumping that was distributed in my constituency during the 1987 general election. It was full of lies. It suggested that the Government had decided that there should be nuclear dumping in the Schiehallion area, which is an area of special scientific interest in my constituency. It stated that the source of the information was a well-known Sunday newspaper, the *Sunday Post*. It failed to explain that the story that was being referred to in the *Sunday Post* was the result of a press release of the prospective parliamentary candidate of the Scottish National party for Western Isles. He issued the press release a few days before the general election, and it was reported upon in the *Sunday Post* on the following Sunday.

The report alluded to the source, but the leaflet referred to no source. It was not stated that the Scottish National party was presenting an SNP story—a lie. It did not claim that the source was the *Sunday Post*. I believe that the wrong date of publication was a deliberate error and a means of ensuring that a check could not be made. That is the sort of nonsense that we have learnt to expect from the SNP. It involves itself in various controversies and then dresses up the issues, misrepresents them and tells downright, blatant lies to obtain political advantage. A careful study of the speech of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) will reveal examples of deliberately placed Goebbels-type misinformation.

Of course everyone in Scotland is concerned about keeping the environment safe. Those of us who have a special interest in the Scotch whisky industry—the hon. Member for Moray is not the only one—realise that it is vital that watercourses and the sources of barley and grain are uncontaminated. Those are essential ingredients in the manufacture of whisky. I must declare an interest, because I sponsored the Scotch Whisky Act 1988, which sets out minimum standards. I am also treasurer of the Scotch whisky parliamentary group.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I shall. Incidentally, the hon. Gentleman failed to visit the Marines before they went off.

Mr. Welsh: I contacted the Marines and said, "If you have just returned from Northern Ireland and you are going to Iraq, the last thing you will want is a Member of Parliament chatting you up."

The hon. Gentleman objects to the purported actions of others but acts similarly himself. If Tayside, North were targeted as a nuclear dump, would the hon. Gentleman adopt the same attitude as the Secretary of State for Scotland, or would he join his constituents in opposing the siting of the dump in the area? I invite the hon. Gentleman to have regard to the large mote in his own eye.

Before he talks about leaflets, for example, the hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that the Conservative party in my constituency issued a leaflet in Scottish National party colours. It contained no statement to tell the reader whence it had come. I suppose that it was an example of attack as a means of defence. The Lord Advocate was taken to his own courts and his election agent was defeated. Heavy expenses were incurred.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman puts a hypothetical question, and I could equally ask him such a question. My answer is clear. I hope that if, at any time in the future, anyone proposes any kind of nuclear disposal anywhere in Scotland, the matter will be debated fully, sensibly and clearly, just as the hon. Member for East Lothian suggested. That is the correct way to tackle a difficult and tricky problem.

Mr. Wilson: I do not want the debate to turn into a bickering match between the tiny Tayside tigers about leaflets that have nothing to do with it, but there is a serious question here. It is proposed that 15 trains with nuclear cargoes should pass through Perth, if not through the hon. Gentleman's constituency, every week. I am sure that his constituents would like to know whether he views that prospect with equanimity.

Mr. Walker: That is a realistic question. If an area north of my constituency were to be chosen for the disposal of nuclear waste, the hon. Gentleman would be astonished if I did not ask all the relevant, important and pertinent questions regarding safety and transport. The hon. Gentleman is probably aware that I hope later to raise the whole question of transport, including nuclear waste transport.

Mr. Alistaire Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on

reminding us what the Secretary of State for Scotland said 10 years ago, when there was a realistic prospect of Nirex dumping nuclear waste in his constituency. However, she should not hold out too much hope that he will stand by those same concerns 10 years later. If she has followed what he has said about the poll tax, she will know that the Secretary of State is flexible about his firmly held views. I am sure that, when it comes to the dumping of nuclear waste in Caithness or anywhere else, the Secretary of State will take a quite different line.

Following Nirex's proposals is rather like swotting flies: every time one tries to hit it on one site, it lands on another site with similar proposals for the dumping of nuclear waste.

I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), because, if the nuclear waste generated by the power station in his constituency is moved, it will go by rail through my constituency and the constituencies of other Edinburgh Members—but not, of course, that of the Under-Secretary of State.

I do not profess any particular expertise in the properties of nuclear waste. I prefer to approach the problem with common sense. It is daft to dump nuclear waste where it cannot be recovered when we do not know what will happen to it in the next 50 or 100 years, or even the next few thousand years. Once we put nuclear waste beyond recovery, if it is discovered in the distant future that it can cause untold damage, whether through leakage or in generating heat which might lead to the cracking of rocks and so on, it will be too late to do anything about it. Therefore, until we know what to do with the stuff it is eminently sensible that it should be kept in a place where we can keep an eye on what is happening to it. I wish that those who were responsible for developing nuclear energy and nuclear power had, within minutes of discovering what it could do, set about discovering what we should do with the end products of the industry.

All of us are rightly concerned about the damage that has been done to our environment by what I might call conventional energy sources. Many of us see the smoke belching from power stations such as Longannet, not far from Edinburgh. We wonder what it is doing to the ozone layer and the environment, and naturally we look to alternative sources of energy. The people who promote nuclear energy have always done so on the grounds that it does not cause that much damage, but I am not fully convinced about that, particularly as it is not known what happens to the end products of nuclear fusion. Until we know that, it is madness to go ahead with producing more and more waste which will have to be kept on site or moved across the country. It is certainly daft to dump it down a hole with all the attendant problems.

If nuclear waste is produced at Torness it will be transported along Edinburgh's suburban railway line system and possibly along part of the mainline system to Sellafield. Because I was so concerned about the matter, I arranged to visit Torness, and last year I spent a day there with Scottish Nuclear, which now owns and operates the plant.

I often feel that the nuclear industry is its own worst enemy. It is excessively secretive. It has been at pains to deny things that were subsequently found to have been fact. For some reason, it seems to prefer to shroud its business in secrecy, repelling any inquiries and treating those who ask questions with disdain and sometimes contempt.

When I went to Torness and spoke to some of those at Scottish Nuclear, I was pleased to find that they showed an openness with which I was not familiar when I spent some years as a member of the joint consultative committee when the Torness power station was being built. At that time, truth was often one of the first casualties when we were discussing the legitimate concerns of people living in the area, particularly on employment questions, of which my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian is well aware.

I went into the chambers at Torness where the nuclear products will be produced, and spent some time clambering across the cask where the nuclear material will be loaded. I am satisfied that Scottish Nuclear has done much to try to reduce the risks, but it can never be absolutely confident that there is no risk. Nuclear material could leak through the seals on top of the cask that will carry the spent material. That possibility could never be excluded, and Scottish Nuclear was candid about it.

I suggested that Scottish Nuclear should invite the community groups and the people living in Edinburgh and along the railway lines to see for themselves and should hold public meetings, as the previous chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board had said that he might be prepared to do. At the time, I thought that it responded positively, so I was dismayed to find yesterday that, when the Edinburgh *Evening News* made inquiries about such public meetings, there had been a complete about-turn and there were to be no such meetings. If people wanted to visit Torness, they could do so as part of the general public tours that are being organised.

I hope that the Minister will use his influence with the nuclear industry to encourage it to start being open with people, to discuss people's legitimate fears and to admit that there might be mistakes, leakages and some risk. People might then more easily believe what it has to say.

The present problem—Nirex is no exception—is that people have no confidence in the nuclear industry because of its track record. It is for the nuclear industry to put matters right and to show openness that hitherto it has not shown. If it does not, it cannot be surprised when people vehemently object to anything it proposes.

If nuclear material is taken by train to Sellafield, for some reason using the more elderly Edinburgh suburban line, there is a risk of derailment. I know from having travelled on passenger trains that have been run by British Rail on special occasions on that line that the trains have to travel extremely slowly. If trains have to travel the length of Scotland, there is the risk that they may be the subject of a terrorist attack or something of that sort.

Unless such matters are addressed, people are right to be concerned about the prospect of nuclear waste being transported around Scotland. That concern is not helped by the suggestion that, at the end of the day, some nuclear waste is to be dumped in a place from which it cannot be recovered, if not at Caithness then at some other point. There is no guarantee that Nirex or one of its successor bodies will not crop up somewhere else, if not in the north of Scotland then in the United Kingdom. People living in different parts of the United Kingdom cannot rely on a general election to save them, as happened to people living in four constituencies in England in 1987.

[Mr. Alistaire Darling]

I conclude by asking the Minister to respond to a question asked by other hon. Members—what research has been carried out into the treatment and safety of nuclear waste? Has the nuclear industry any idea what might be done to make it less dangerous or to reduce the risks for people who come into contact with it? What urgency has been injected into such research?

For the time being, I am happy to agree that nuclear waste should be stored on site and not transported around the country. I am also happy for it to be put where it can be recovered and checked, but that is not a long-term solution. Unless we can deal with such problems, the nuclear industry will always have the same question mark over it.

5.30 pm

Lest I am thought to be concentrating overmuch on the nuclear industry—although that is clearly what the movers of the new clause had in mind—I should say that there is no doubt that, if the Government were to concentrate on additional research into other forms of energy generation, perhaps some of the problems with which we are dealing today would be solved. I accept that there are forms of nuclear waste which are not the direct by-products of the nuclear industry and that we must deal with them, but we must consider the fundamental question about nuclear waste.

All types of waste are being generated every day, yet it seems that the effort made to deal with the end product is minimal. Unless the Secretary of State can reassure us, the same questions and doubts will continue. In any event, I hope that he will support the new clause, because surely the dumping of nuclear waste must have some bearing on the heritage of Scotland. I hope that he can make some encouraging noises rather than merely read one of his interminable briefs supplied by the Scottish Office.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), because he has added a tone of moderation and constructive thought to the debate, which, to a great extent, had become an attack on the nuclear industry.

For 35 years, I have lived within two miles of a nuclear power station and brought up a family there. I have confidence in the safety of operation at Chapelcross, and I am sure that the same could be said for those at Hunterston and Torness. The standard of safety at our nuclear power station is exceptionally high, and rightly so. I am glad that, over the years, Chapelcross has passed the tests carried out by the nuclear inspectorate and will continue in production for about another 10 years or more.

I say in passing that there are over 500 employees at Chapelcross. If the advice of candidates fighting me at general election after general election—from the Labour party, the Scottish National party, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens—had been taken, the power station would have shut down long ago with an immense loss of jobs. I have every confidence in the exceptionally high standards at Chapelcross, and in all the work put into maintaining that standard and the safety of everyone who lives in the surrounding district. That work is accepted by the neighbourhood, by those who work at Chapelcross and by all involved.

Nuclear fuel is moved from Chapelcross to and from Sellafield. It is transported by road, with extreme safety and caution, in vehicles of exceptional toughness which I do not think would cause a nuclear accident if they were involved in an incident. Road transportation could not be practical other than for the relatively short distance from Chapelcross to Sellafield, because the vehicles are large and move very slowly. The thought that they might travel longer distances on Scottish roads is a non-starter.

Doubts—or worse than doubts—have been expressed today about rail transport. All of us will remember the spectacular film on television which showed a train crashing at 100 mph into a nuclear transporter truck. The truck emerged unharmed, so it is fair to say that, with regard to rail transport, the nuclear industry has taken immense trouble—and rightly so—to ensure that its transportation vehicles are of the highest standard. It is wrong to imply that there will be a series of rail crashes in Scotland in which nuclear fallout could occur. Such scaremongering is unacceptable.

I agree that nuclear dumping is an emotional issue. The word "dumping" is not strictly correct, but it has now become standard. The thought of nuclear dumping anywhere in the United Kingdom, or anywhere in the world, brings an immediate reaction. I agreed with my right hon. Friend that there should not be dumping in Mullwharchar. That was 11 years ago. *[Interruption.]* Let me finish what I am saying. I still say what I said then. Eleven years ago, Nirex's knowledge about the disposal of nuclear waste was even less broad than it is now.

Mr. Home Robertson: Even less?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, it had not gone into the issue in the depth that I should have liked. Its knowledge of vitreous disposal, storage under the sea or elsewhere, was then not as deep as it is now.

It is right to say—and I keep saying it—that we are rushing the issue. There are magnificent new facilities at Sellafield for reprocessing an enormous amount of nuclear fuel, so what are we hurrying to make a decision about? Dry storage was mentioned by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). It is merely an insurance policy should Sellafield be unable to reprocess the fuel. In that case, the fuel would go into a dry store, which would be used as a waiting station until it could go to Sellafield for reprocessing.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is an insurance policy not merely in case the fuel cannot get to Sellafield but for Scottish Nuclear's business plans. The current debate might have more to do with the business plans of British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield and of Scottish Nuclear Ltd. negotiating about the price of processing waste fuel. I am not sure that that is the most satisfactory basis on which to make such decisions.

Sir Hector Monro: We are getting into details, which shows the complexity of the operation of the Atomic Energy Authority, or of British Nuclear Fuels and Scottish Nuclear.

The problem at Chapelcross for the past 10 years has been that of selling the power because, geographically, Chapelcross is not where the power is required. That is why the long-term future of Chapelcross and of its possible successor plant, on which British Nuclear Fuels is carrying out a detailed survey, is so important.

We cannot sweep the issue under the carpet, but Nirex is accelerating the search for a solution which is perhaps not required while Sellafield can cope adequately. The new facilities at Sellafield where British Nuclear Fuels is dealing with reprocessing cost hundreds and hundreds of millions of pounds. There are adequate facilities for storage, so I do not think that storage at Dounreay immediately or in the next couple of years, is as urgent as the nuclear industry is implying in Scotland.

I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say. Delay and further study are the answers in the disposal of nuclear waste. We should not press on too fast when there may still be an alternative method of disposing of waste other than at Sellafield. From all my contact with the nuclear industry, I believe that that is some years ahead.

Mr. Wilson: I should like the hon. Gentleman to address himself to the specific question of Scottish Natural Heritage. He has experience of the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, so I should be genuinely interested to hear whether he thinks that it is a matter on which Scottish Natural Heritage should at least take a view and express it to the Secretary of State.

Sir Hector Monro: I must return to the narrow issue of the new clause, around which we have wandered a long way for the past couple of hours. However, the issue is important and it is rare that we get a chance to talk about the Scottish heritage on the Floor of the House.

If I remember rightly, the Nature Conservancy Council was asked about the marine aspect at Dounreay. It would be right for Scottish Natural Heritage to take a view. I am saying not so much that the new clause is necessary, but that it is impossible for me to think that we could go into the issue without the major statutory bodies such as the NCC. We are leaping a year ahead because Scottish Natural Heritage will not come into being for another 11 months. We must live with the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland until 1 April 1992. I cannot believe that, in his deliberations over this major issue, the Secretary of State would not consult those bodies to hear their view.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will say that it is very likely—I cannot imagine otherwise—that SNH will be consulted when it is in place. If there was ever an issue on which we must try to take everyone in Scotland together, the disposal of nuclear waste is it. My own feeling is that Sellafield will be able to manage for a long time. We are rather rushing an issue which we do not need to do at present.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I follow the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) in begging colleagues not to use the phrase "nuclear dump". We are talking about a repository that will be fully engineered, managed and monitored. Its design will take account of the results of extensive research into the behaviour of radioactive waste underground, including leaching and gas generation. That will be augmented by detailed studies into the behaviour of natural deposits of radioactive material over hundreds of thousands of years, which will enable the designers of the repository to plan the optimum method of containment.

Anyone who has been to Sellafield will have to concede —I note the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, who may catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that, whatever his view on general nuclear issues, Sellafield is quite superb. Having visited it six times over the years, I think that it is one of the most impressive places to which I have been.

5.45 pm

I have a question for the Minister. I am an unashamed friend of the nuclear industry. I am an unashamed friend of the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, of British Nuclear Fuels plc and of Trade Unions for Safety in the Nuclear Industry. Mr. Roger Morgan, officially on behalf of the AEU, and Mr. Eric Hammond have invited me to be one of the speakers at its conference in Edinburgh on 18 May. I say that simply to give myself the credentials for asking my question. Is it really necessary to stir up a gratuitous hornets' nest?

I have listened to the speeches of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). She obviously feels passionately about the issue and I do not doubt for a moment that, in this matter, she represents her constituents. I listened to the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). Whatever I think, and my view of the nuclear industry is deeply different from theirs, I have to concede that they represent strong feelings—not only theirs, but those of many people.

During the 1987 election, I was asked all about my supposed views on the storage of nuclear waste in various parts of the West Lothian constituency, as it used to be. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who told me how foolhardy I had been on the subject, will no doubt recollect, that.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dalyell: I see my hon. Friend nodding.

Is it necessary to stir up a hornets' nest when there is an easy way out of the problem? The easy way out is at least to wait until such time as the geological surveys in the Sellafield area have been completed. Christopher Harding, the chairman of BNFL, whom I contacted before the debate, said:

> "The selection of a repository site is not limited soley by geological consideration, although these are of major significance. For instance, a substantial proportion of Britain's radioactive waste is currently stored at Sellafield and, from a logistical point of view, this makes Sellafield an attractive option if the geology is acceptable."

The sooner we find out whether the geology is acceptable the better.

I recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has a very real point. Many people are concerned, whether I like it or not, about transport. I said to a Government Whip that I thought that the Secretary of State for Energy should be with us for this debate. Cannot we wait, before creating any more difficulties in the north or elsewhere, to find out what the answer is from Sellafield? I have met plenty of people at Sellafield who are content to live against or above the waste facility that is envisaged. Any visitor to the thermal oxide reprocessing plant project—I have visited it recently —and to the various engineering projects at Sellafield must be deeply impressed by the sheer expertise there, and rather proud of Britain having it. I suspect that we are the best in the world.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am interested to hear what my hon. Friend says about his recent experience of a visit to the THORP project at Sellafield. It is a purpose-built, specialist facility for handling, processing and storing nuclear material. Would not it be rather ridiculous if, when we have such a national facility in public ownership through BNFL, organisations, including Scottish Nuclear, went off at a tangent, failed to take advantage of that facility and started using a new, largely untried and perhaps rather suspect technology to store the material in dry stores at individual power stations?

Mr. Dalyell: I am very much against untried technology. I do not want to take up the time of the House, because we have a lot of business. I want simply to say that, for heaven's sake, we should look at the Sellafield option.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The brevity of my contribution owes most to the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) has spoken in the debate and I agree with everything that she said. It is also due to the fact that time is moving on, there is a lot more business on the amendment paper, and I want to hear the Minister's reply. The issue arises from within the boundaries of Highland regional council and from the campaign—which I very much support—that the regional council has run against the Nirex proposal.

I agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about how one is constantly caught, and that is not merely true of the Nirex issue but about matters nuclear more generally. It is rather like the abortion debate. No matter how much persuasion is used, people have a gut instinct about where they stand on nuclear matters, and persuasion in the House or on any other public platform tends to go out of the window.

Let us compare the Nirex issue to the poll tax. Adherents of that former flagship called it the community charge, whereas those who were against it let it be known that it should be called the poll tax. Similarly, people who are against what Nirex has been instructed to get on with call it a nuclear dump whereas people who are more neutral—perhaps more scientifically accurate—or who are in favour of what Nirex is doing tend to talk about deep site nuclear repositories, which has a more neutral sound than the more emotive and more easily understood expression, a nuclear dump. Part of the problem is that people have gut reactions on the issue. While people follow details of both sides of the argument, once they form a conclusion there tends to be very little shifting of opinion.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and I attended the opening of the Highland regional council campaign in Inverness some time ago. She quoted a number of people who spoke there. The cross-section of business, cultural and tourist potential and opinion that they represent within the area speaks for itself. I pay her special credit because she quoted my constituents far more than I would ever have dared to do, with any degree of modesty, in a speech.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) spoke about the need for an informed debate, and I agree with him. However, those of us who have been dealing with the Nirex proposals, or the investigations that it has been carrying out in Highland region in the past four years, have found that Nirex would have nothing to do with any opportunity extended to it to appear on a public platform and put its case. I was involved in a local referendum, which Lorraine Mann, a constituent of mine and a leading member of Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping, helped to organise, and I pay tribute to the work that she has done on this issue in the past few years. Once again, when ballot papers were sent out, Nirex was invited to enclose information material to put its side of the argument, but, as on every other occasion, Nirex would have nothing to do with it.

It is difficult to have the informed debate that the hon. Member for Tayside, North and many others want when the agency charged with carrying out the investigations will not put its case except within carefully controlled circumstances of its choosing—as opposed to public dissemination of the facts—often with personnel that it has invited. All too often, that makes for a frustratingly one-sided debate. I do not think that Nirex does itself much good by pursuing that line.

One must consider the backdrop to this issue—the natural heritage and its role within the highlands. Successive Governments, both Labour and Conservative, in the late 1950s and through to the 1960s, supported opening up the highlands to try to reverse historic depopulation. Successive Governments supported the establishment of the Corpach pulp mill, the Invergordon aluminium smelter and the Dounreay fast breeder reactor research site.

When the late Willie Ross opened the Second Reading debate on the Bill that formed the basis for the Highlands and Islands development board, he said that the highlander was "the man on every Scot's conscience." I suspect that that would no longer be the case, because the sort of problems that have visited themselves upon the highlands have affected in equal measure other parts of Scotland, whether in the steel or coal industries or elsewhere.

There was general public support for development in the highlands. However, in the past 10 years, the pulp mill and the aluminium smelter have gone; and, more recently, the fast breeder reactor research programme was run down.

Let us be clear about the Nirex proposals. Although I cannot claim any scientific qualification, I understand that any jobs that might accrue from the siting of a nuclear repository—with respect to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, I shall use the neutral term—will not require the same scientific qualifications that have been developed at Dounreay in the preceding decades. Also, the numbers involved will not be nearly as encouraging as was perhaps first thought. However, that is not the crucial issue, which is that, as both my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute and the hon. Member for Moray made clear, given the essentially fragile nature of the highlands—their location and economic base—the public perception of products from that part of the country is all-important to ensure success in the national, European and international markets.

As successive chairmen of the HIDB and anyone else who has tried to promote the economy of the highlands will confirm, if added value is the name of the game and is the only viable means of securing an economic base for the highlands, something that is liable to run directly against the indigenous interests of added value in any form—whether fishing, farming, tourism or any other activity—clearly has little economic rationale.

People say of matters nuclear, especially a nuclear dump, "Not in my backyard." We saw a graphic example of that before the last election. However, Highland regional council, with all-party support, has put a distinctly different case. We are not saying, "Not in our back yard." If nuclear material is produced in the region, whether Dounreay is the source or whether it is low-grade waste from Raigmore hospital as a result of hospital processes, the council has been the first to say that we have a geographical and moral responsibility to take stock of it, to look after it and to secure it within Caithness, above ground level in dry storage, so that it is retrievable at a later date.

We are not saying that we will have nothing to do with it. We want to take responsibility for waste that accrues in our region. However, we are saying "Not in our back yard," to a nuclear dump and we are also saying that it should not be in anyone else's back yard either. It does not represent success if one moves the problem from one part of the country, that has perhaps been earmarked, to another.

I referred at the beginning of my speech to the fact that there are different views about the efficacy and desirability of civil nuclear power. I speak as one who sees a continuing need for a civil nuclear power programme in this country. I do not think that it is sage, in the long term, to put all one's energy eggs in one basket. A mixed provision of supply is only sensible for a country that is dependent on declining fossil fuels.

Scotland Against Nuclear Dumping is a good example of an interesting aspect of the Nirex proposals. Some people in that organisation oppose anything to do with the nuclear industry, whether a power station, a reprocessing plant or Nirex. Others may accept the need for civil nuclear power as a part of electricity generation, but do not want the Nirex proposals or may not be in favour of foreign reprocessing contracts being carried out in the United Kingdom.

However, there is a unanimity of view about Nirex. People may be in favour of a civil nuclear power programme of against it, but whatever their views on the rights and wrongs of that per se, everyone has agreed that Nirex is not a worthwhile object that they would wish to support. When people who would otherwise support civil nuclear power think that, it should cause the Scottish Office, the Department of Energy and the Department of the Environment to think again.

6 pm

Only last Friday, the Minister was in Dornie, a part of the highlands that he knows rather well, as he spends the occasional family holiday there. As he opened the new Dornie bridge bypass, he waxed lyrical about the natural beauty of the area. I know that he appreciates how crucial that perception is to the highlands as a whole, so I hope that he recognises the genuine and deeply felt acute anxiety in the highlands and elsewhere in the country about the damage which even talk about deep-site nuclear disposal could do. If he does, I hope that he will have a word with the Secretary of State and tell him not to ride roughshod over Highland regional council as the planning authority, as the Scottish Office has done so far.

He should also ask him to encourage sanity in other parts of Whitehall and of government and recognise that to lock away nuclear material so that it will not be retrievable in the future is madness. Even if we went for on-site storage, we might discover in future the scientific knowledge to deal with the long half lives involved. We might be able to find a solution. If that is a scientific possibility, it would be crazy physically to block off future access to the material.

Not one hon. Member has spoken in support of what Nirex has been instructed to do. It is worth stressing that that is what has happened. The argument is always directed against Nirex, but it has been instructed as an agency to do something in the name of the Government. At the end of the day, it is a political decision. As we saw before the last general election, the Government are in a position to put an end to the hornets' nest, as it was rightly described, and the damaging uncertainty that has been created. I hope that, in his reply, the Minister can go a long way to calming the waters.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) raised a major issue. How can we register the feelings and anxieties of people and ensure that the worries of the people of Scotland who will have to live with these decisions are given democratic expression? Will Scottish Natural Heritage be able to fulfil that purpose? I have my doubts.

We have had a wide-ranging debate on one of the most important issues that will face Scotland for generations ahead. It has shown how inadequate a body is Scottish Natural Heritage to deal with the issue. The Minister said that SNH will be able to comment on such matters. That is not good enough. The Minister can comment. Anyone can comment—the Minister's granny can comment. But it is important that SNH should have the powers to make inquiries, be consulted and take action. Clearly, SNH does not have such powers now.

Any environmental agency worth its salt should have a major say and be able to take action on issues such as the dumping of either nuclear or toxic waste. It is incredible that SNH will not. Those are the most important issues which face our environment. The acid test is whether SNH, as planned by the Government, has the power to take action or even to be consulted. That shows how inadequate an instrument the Minister is creating.

I appreciate the Labour new clause, but I note that it uses the word "person" when it seeks to make nuclear dumping without SNH permission an offence. However, the greatest dumping threat does not come from individuals. It comes from an organisation—Nirex. Labour probably has in mind individuals such as landowners who may be only too happy to allow their land to be used for dumping. Perhaps that is why the new clause is phrased in that way. However, there is an obvious distinction between a legal persona and a Government Department. I do not care which one proposes nuclear dumping—it simply should not be allowed.

I hoped that the Scottish National party new clause would be selected. It would have strengthened the purpose of the Labour new clause. It is incredible that we do not have an adequate democratic forum in which to discuss these matters. We should be able to call representatives of Nirex and question them in detail about some of the anxieties raised in the House today. The obvious way of doing that would be through the Scottish Select Committee. Such a Committee could bring in Nirex, other organisations and expert witnesses and question them in detail. Such matters should be brought before the Scottish people——

Mr. Bill Walker: The Scottish National party refused to serve on the Committee.

Mr. Welsh: As usual, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) appears to be jumping his guns. If anyone is to be blamed for the lack of a Scottish Select Committee, he is a prime candidate. It is a pity that we do not have a forum in which these matters could be discussed.

I regret that the much stronger SNP new clause was not selected. It refers to both nuclear dumping and the dumping of toxic waste. Scotland needs the protection of a cast-iron guaranteed halt to threats of nuclear dumping. Our new clause takes a much stronger stand against nuclear dumping. It includes protection against the transportation of nuclear waste. The lack of such protection is an unfortunate and serious weakness in the Labour new clause, which appears to be more of a probing new clause than one which Labour Members intend to press. I hope to find otherwise, and that the Labour party will press the new clause.

I also regret that there is no mention of toxic waste dumping in the Labour new clause. Dumping of toxic waste is not a greater threat than nuclear dumping but in many ways is a massive threat to the environment of Scotland. The acid test for the Minister is whether, with the powers proposed in the Bill, Scottish Natural Heritage, will be able to take a major part in making decisions on such issues. It should be a sounding board for the views of the people of Scotland.

No environmental protection organisation can fail to tackle or discuss nuclear and toxic waste dumping. The ramifications of such dumping spread across the whole social and economic fabric of Scotland. If Nirex or any other body uses Scotland as a nuclear dumping ground, it will be a disaster for the entire Scottish population who have to live with it, and for all visitors to the area. It will be a disaster for tourism, agriculture, fishing and other industries dependent on a good, clean environment and the worldwide understanding that Scotland has a wholesome environment.

We are discussing employment, as well as the primacy of safety. Nirex proposes to create only a few jobs, but the dump will result in a massive loss of jobs locally. On the basis of Nirex's own figures, the operational phase of the Dounreay installation would create only about 100 jobs. Yet in the fishing industry alone, 250 jobs would be lost if the industry lost only 1 per cent. of its capacity. If that is extended to other industries and activities in the highlands, we shall face a disaster in local employment.

The Bill is simply inadequate, for the reasons that I have given and other reasons given today. Unfortunately, inadequate as it is, it is probably the best that we are ever likely to get out of the Government. The issue of nuclear and toxic waste dumping shows how deficient the Bill is in meeting, the environmental needs of Scotland.

What is the Minister's personal position not only on the plans for Scottish Natural Heritage but on nuclear dumping? What standing does he have in the debate? We have already noted that the Secretary of State for Scotland was opposed to nuclear dumping in his constituency. His colleague the Secretary of State for Energy, who is responsible for Nirex, was opposed to nuclear dumping in his constituency. Both Ministers stopped the creation of such dumps in their constituencies. What firepower does the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), have to offer in these circumstances? We have a right to know the Minister's position on the subject. Does he agree with his colleagues, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Energy—the man in charge of Nirex—in opposing dumping?

Will the Minister give a commitment to the people of Dounreay and of the whole of Scotland that he will ensure that they are not subjected to dumping plans for their area similar to those to which the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Energy were opposed? The timing is right. We are headed for a general election, as we were when the Secretary of State for Energy opposed nuclear dumping in his constituency. He succeeded because the Government feared a loss of votes.

Perhaps they do not have too many votes to lose up there, but what is the Minister's own personal position? Will he join his right hon. Friends in coming out and clearly opposing nuclear dumping in Scotland? If he does, I will certainly applaud him. Let us hear from the Minister what he says on this issue.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I will be extremely brief on this matter, but I feel compelled to say something, since I have been unashamedly put in the frame by my unashamed hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who mentioned my own unashamed membership of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and I may have to say something unashamedly about its policy in the nuclear field.

As one who was from the beginning very much opposed to the whole concept of nuclear energy, my views have been somewhat tempered—not because of any direct pressure through my trade union but through a great deal of discussion throughout the trade union movement, especially on the whole aspect of safety. Irrespective of one's view of nuclear energy, I think we are all united on one thing: we are all extremely concerned about safety in that industry and will try our best to see that the safest methods are used for the production of nuclear energy. The AEU in particular taught me the lesson that we have a problem with the removal and storage of nuclear waste and how best to do it.

On many occasions, I have unashamedly been the ally of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Munro), who has unashamedly joined me in several campaigns—one, obviously, about the production and excellence of Scottish whisky of which he is the chairman. I can therefore understand why he wants to keep the water in Scotland as pure as possible. However, he said that there might have been a smack of hysteria in this debate. I honestly have not detected any hysteria. I welcome the debate because I think that it is extremely useful, and I believe that we shall have to go into this matter very much more fully in the near future.

One point that the hon. Gentleman made and on which I agree with him conceived haste. Why is there this undue haste? I went to Sellafield with my hon. friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) when we were invited to see for ourselves what they had done there about safety. I have to say, as someone who was apprehensive, to say the least, about that visit, that I was extremely interested in what I saw, and very impressed. The people there were trying to extend the range of what certainly seemed to me, as a layman, a centre of excellence as in the storage and handling of this dangerous matter.

Why, then, is it considered necessary to seek to impose this repository upon the people of the Highlands? There should be no imposition upon the people of the Highlands. We should not say that they must handle the storage because we happen to believe that the borings we have done show, that that is the best part of the country in which to store these wastes. If the people of the highlands say that they do not want it, that ought to be the end of the matter.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Scotland will reflect on the words that he used 10 or 11 years ago, speaking quite eloquently, before an election. He fought his corner; he certainly did not wish waste to be dumped in his own backyard, as was going to happen then. No matter how we dress it up, although the safest repository in the world might well be in the highlands, if the people in the highlands do not want it there, that should be that.

The Secretary of State ought to learn the lessons of recent events. We did not want the poll tax in Scotland. It was foisted upon the people of Scotland, and we can now see the result of foisting it not only on us but on the people of the rest of the United Kingdom. We do not want opted out hospitals to be foisted on us, and we are having that rammed down our throats. We certainly did not want the examination of our seven-year-olds, and we are having that rammed down our throats. But the people of the highlands—they will be backed by the rest of the people of Scotland—will not have a repository for nuclear waste brought in from outside that area and stored in the highlands. We and the Secretary of State ought to learn that lesson: we cannot foist that upon the people of Scotland.

I saw the report that came up from the Highland region. Unfortunately I could not get to the meeting because I was at another meeting on Scottish business. I was impressed by the fact that the authors of the report said that they recognised that there was waste arising from production in their area and were prepared to take care of their own waste. They are not saying that the waste should be shoved into some other area. They have faced up admirably to their responsibilities.

We should recognise that the campaign is not hysterical but very responsible. The Secretary of State ought to recognise that, and he certainly ought to be in the lobby with us tonight supporting a genuine attempt to bring this matter fully in front of the people of Scotland and to legislate for it. We are giving the Secretary of State for Scotland the opportunity tonight to do so.

6.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): When this debate began, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) made it clear that this was a vehicle for a general debate as well as a debate on the specific terms of the new clause. May I first make it absolutely clear that Scottish National Heritage, under clause 2 as drafted, would be expected to advise the Secretary of State on any matter affecting the natural heritage of Scotland, and that would most certainly include the disposal and storage of radioactive material and waste.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North said most appropriately that a distinction should be drawn between nuclear power and nuclear waste, because it is within the knowledge of all of us that successive Governments have supported nuclear power. In fact, it was the former Secretary of State, Bruce Millan, who gave approval for Torness to be built under the electric lighting Act. Therefore, we all—certainly the members of the major parties—have a moral obligation to make absolutely certain that nuclear waste is dealt with in the safest possible way and in a way that gives the greatest reassurance to the public.

I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and other hon. Members that there must be as much openness as possible on this subject. That is why, in the last Parliament, I sought to discuss on the Consolidated Fund with the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) the subject of nuclear power.

One point which I feel that I should answer concerns the planning implications. If Nirex were to decide that either Sellafield or Dounreay would be suitable as a repository for nuclear waste, planning permission would be required. The Government have made it clear that, if such an application were made, it would be called in for decision by the relevant Secretary of State and a full public local inquiry would be held. Scottish National Heritage, as the Secretary of State's adviser, would be asked for its views. Any proposals and objections that it might make would be fully considered at the inquiry. The planning framework is well established and capable of dealing with contentious cases. No special legislative provision is necessary.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made a courageous speech. He made absolutely clear his support for the trade unionists who are most engaged in safety procedures. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) rightly suggested that the safest method possible should be used, and that I wholeheartedly support. I am sure that Nirex will take careful account of what the hon. Members have said.

Mr. Home Robertson: I thank the Minister for confirming that a planning application would be called in and would be covered by a full public inquiry. Can he confirm that similar planning arrangements would apply to the establishment of a dry store for nuclear fuel waste at Hunterston, Torness, and so on?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member takes me a stage further on. I can confirm that that subject is now under consideration. The hon. Member made a speech about spent fuel. Spent fuel which is not radioactive waste is currently sent to Sellafield for reprocessing. Dounreay is involved in reprocessing smaller quantitites of reactor fuel. Recently, however, Scottish Nuclear Ltd. put forward proposals to store spent fuel on site at Torness and Hunterston rather than send it to Sellafield. These proposals are currently under consideration. However, I shall be very happy to correspond further with the hon. Gentleman if he wants me to follow up any details in relation to spent fuel. If hon. Members wish, I can tell them how different forms of waste are dealt with.

Mr. Darling: Is the Minister saying that Scottish Nuclear has abandoned its plans to take spent fuel by rail, through Edinburgh, to Sellafield, and is considering keeping it on site? If that is what he is saying, it seems to be a departure from the position that the Government have taken up to now. The people of Edinburgh, as well as people elsewhere, will want to know.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I did not say that, but I shall make inquiries and write fully to the hon. Gentleman.

I was asked by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North about the Secretary of State's decision on Nirex's application to drill 6,000 boreholes. Nirex appealed to the Secretary of State against the regional council's decision to refuse approval. The Secretary of State will announce shortly the decision and the outcome of the appeal.

I was asked about the views of NCCS and SNH. Obviously, it is for NCCS to express its own view; it is not for the Government to speak on its behalf.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow and the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) asked me about submarine hulks. No decision has yet been taken on the most appropriate means of disposing of out-of-service nuclear submarines. Currently, when a submarine has finished its active live, it is defueled, the radioactive material is removed for storage, and the submarine is beached at secure moorings. The disposal of the residual radioactive components of such submarines is now under active consideration.

Mr. Dalyell: This matter was raised nine years ago. It has been considered for a long time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of the Secretary of State for Defence, who clearly is involved in these matters.

I was asked about expenditure on research into the long-term disposal of radioactive waste. In 1990-91 the Department of the Environment spent about £9 million on such research. Details are given in the annual report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee. In 1990-91, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food also spent £3·5 million, and the industry itself spent about £27·5 million. The total of £40 million shows the seriousness with which this problem is rightly treated.

New clause 1 seeks to give to Scottish Natural Heritage new functions which, in our view, are inappopriate. The purpose of SNH is to combine the functions of the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland—not to cross the work of the pollution control agencies. The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Environmental Protection Bill in 1990. That legislation introduces tighter controls over possible sources of pollution, but uses the expertise of the existing regulatory authorities, which, with regard to nuclear substances, are the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Part I of the 1990 Act established a new system of control over the most potentially polluting processes that do not involve emissions of radioactivity. This will be administered by the industrial pollution inspectorate and the river purification authorities. Part II introduces tighter controls over the disposal of non-radioactive wastes. These will be exercised by the waste regulation authorities, overseen by the hazardous waste inspectorate of the Scottish Office. Part V of the 1990 Act strengthens the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, which is the statutory framework within which the industrial pollution inspectorate controls the keeping and use of radioactive material and the disposal of radioactive waste.

I do not recall that during the passage of that legislation the hon. Member for Angus, East expressed any dissatisfaction about this matter. It really is not good enough for him to suggest that it should be dealt with in the context of this Bill. Everybody knows that Scottish Natural Heritage is much more concerned with soft green issues. The Standing Committee of which the hon. Gentleman was a member dealt with hard green issues. He had every opportunity on that occasion to raise the matter if he was dissatisfied.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Is the Minister saying that the new agency will have no say whatsoever if it is proposed that a nuclear dump be located at Dounreay? He says that SNH has the right to advise the Secretary of State, but has no legal right to be consulted or to take action. In refusing to rule out nuclear dumping in Caithness, is the Minister a Scottish Office NIMBY, like his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, or a Scottish Office namby?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: New clause 1 seeks to give Scottish Natural Heritage statutory power in relation to any development of an underground repository for radioactive waste that may be proposed for Scotland. I am glad to see that the new clause leaves the final word with the Secretary of State. In effect, therefore, it merely requires the Secretary of State to consult Scottish Natural Heritage before allowing the development of any underground repository. For a very simple reason, that is unnecessary.

I am very happy to give an undertaking that, if there is any proposal to develop an underground repository, the Secretary of State will make certain that Scottish Natural Heritage is notified and given the opportunity to express its views. It will be free to express its views to my right hon. Friend directly, or at the local planning inquiry, to which we have already committed ourselves, if Nirex proposes that the United Kingdom's underground repository should be located at Dounreay. That commitment dates from 1984.

I want to refer to a point that is of particular importance and is relevant to a matter raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. Nirex has made it clear that, other factors being equal, Sellafield—not Dounreay—will be the preferred site because of transport considerations. It would simply be much cheaper to site the repository near Sellafield, where most of the waste arises. Of course, this gives rise to the question of transportation, about which I want to speak briefly, although it comes within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Dalyell: Some of Nirex's friends, of whom I am one, are rather exasperated. Why should Opposition Members and their constituents be stirred up if the Government have more or less made up their minds—rightly, I believe—that Sellafield should be the location? I am told that the geological conditions there are very favourable. Why on earth should all this trouble be caused gratuitously? The Government's friends begged them not to take this course. They did it once in Ayrshire, and now they are doing it again.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Nirex will take careful note of what the hon. Gentleman has said, and will bear in mind the fact that he is a very strong supporter of nuclear power and of the most stringent safety conditions.

The question of transportation was raised—in particular, by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling).

Mr. Kennedy: Hon. Members have made the point that Nirex is not a free-standing agency, that it has a degree of accountability to Ministers. The Minister may draw the remarks of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) to the attention of Nirex, but can he explain what the Government were thinking of when they decided to drill in Caithness? By strong implication, we are now being told that Sellafield has been the preferred option all along, and is beginning to look as if it was the more likely option all along.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that, if various parts of Britain have nuclear power, the best and safest means of disposing of waste must be employed.

I have been asked what contact there has been between Secretaries of State and Nirex in the past. To answer that question, I shall have to check in great detail the minutes of all the appropriate meetings, and I shall be happy to do so.

The matter raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow should be well within the knowledge of Nirex, which would be wise to take it fully into account.

The issue of the transportation of nuclear waste is really a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. This Bill is not an appropriate vehicle for discussion of the issue. However, I can say that the safety record in the transportation of nuclear material in this country is excellent. The safety regulations for the transporting of such material are based on stringent internationally agreed standards, laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency. This question has been considered several times in recent years—at the Dounreay, Sizewell and Hinkley public inquiries—and in no case did anyone produce evidence that cast doubt on the adequacy of the regulations.

In nearly 30 years of nuclear flask movements, not one incident has occurred that led to the release of even the smallest quantity of radioactivity. The transport of nuclear waste to a deep repository, wherever it is ultimately sited, would of course be considered in detail at the local planning inquiry to which we have committed ourselves.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Nuclear submarines and reactors are extremely large objects to decommission. How feasible does the Minister think it would be to have such constructions taken to Dounreay? In other words, Dounreay seems to be ruled out from the start.

6.30 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not putting forward any such proposal tonight. I can only tell the hon. Gentleman that the matter is under consideration. If he has a proposal to make, I strongly suggest that he sends it to the Secretary of State for Defence, with a copy to the Scottish Office.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow had my total agreement when he said that it was inappropriate to use the expression "nuclear dump". It is extraordinary to find that phrase being used so much when most of the radioactive waste that is produced in Scotland is transported into England for disposal or reprocessing. It is perhaps a commentary on the extremes to which scaremongering has extended that some people believe blatant untruths. It should be borne in mind that 50 per cent. of Scotland's electricity is supplied by nuclear energy.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) spoke about reprocessing. There is an important distinction between reprocessing fuel from abroad—in which case the waste will eventually be returned to the country of origin—and the disposal of radioactive waste created in this country. Dounreay's reprocessing business, which has safely and successfully been carried out in the past, has nothing to do with Nirex's current geological investigations at Sellafield and Dounreay, which are to determine whether either would be a suitable site for a deep repository for United Kingdom waste.

To sum up, the new clause seeks to give SNH statutory power over the development of an underground repository for radioactive waste. In doing so, the new clause cuts across the existing statutory framework in the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The Act contains adequate provisions for controlling the disposal of radioactive waste. The authorisation procedures for disposing of radioactive waste require consultation with appropriate bodies. I assure the House that SNH would be included in any such consultations.

I hope that, with those reassurances, Opposition Members will not think it necessary to press the clause to a Division.

Mr. Wilson: I said at the outset that I was pleased that we had managed to get this issue raised on the Floor of the House. At the end of the debate, I am even more pleased, for this has been a first-class debate, which has proved extremely useful. Remarkable about it is the fact that we have achieved great consensus on the issue, beyond the immediate subject under discussion, of whether a repository should be established at Dounreay.

I cannot say that this will prove to have been an influential debate, but it should be. The *Official Report* of it should be read in the proper circles, because the unanimity among the parties—hon. Members speaking from different standpoints but arriving at the same conclusion—is impressive. The consensus is clearly against the development at Dounreay. My hon. Friends and I are grateful to the Chair for allowing the debate to range wider than the immediate subject of the new clause.

There have been some key contributions to the debate. Much of what the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said was common sense, although he said that there had been some hysterically anti-nuclear speeches from the Opposition Benches. A characteristic of the speeches of Opposition Members, certainly of Labour Members, has been the strong support for the civil nuclear industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and I have major nuclear installations in our constituencies, as have my hon. Friends the Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), whose views have been changed somewhat. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) recalled

[Mr. Wilson]

visiting Chapelcross during the 1987 election and giving assurances that there was no threat to that station during its commercial lifetime.

In other words, the hon. Member for Dumfries must not lump all his past opponents together in the way he did. Any hon. Member who represents a constituency which includes an establishment such as Hunterston has his or her mind fully concentrated on the need for nuclear power and the contribution that it makes to the wider Scottish economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow was right to ask whether it is necessary to stir up a hornets' nest over the issue. The Secretary of State has been told that he more than anyone should recognise the unnecessary storm that will be created if he allows the matter to proceed further. He must be aware of the way in which it could develop into an enormous issue. It is not in his interests, or in those of Scotland or the community most directly affected, to allow it to be at the centre of the brouhaha that would develop particularly if at the end of the day it turned out to be a false start, either because there was no interest in Dounreay or because it was discovered, after the expenditure of £500 million, that the place was not geologically suitable.

The Secretary of State has power quickly to bring the whole matter to an end. We were told by the Under-Secretary that he would be deciding soon on the 6,000 test bores. That could be the moment for him to make some virtue of the fact that he will uphold local democracy and say that the Dounreay option will not be pursued further. It is clear, on the basis of tonight's debate, that he would earn the gratitude of hon. Members in all parts of the House, and that would give the clearest possible message to Nirex.

The Under-Secretary said that Nirex would take careful note of what has been said in the debate and particularly of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. While Nirex may take careful note of our words, it would take even more careful note if it received a letter from the Secretary of State saying that he was not of a mind to overturn the democratically arrived at planning decision of Scottish National Heritage.

I welcome the comments of the Minister about the role of SNH and I hope that, on this and other issues with which the Bill is concerned, SNH will take heart from the fact that it seems to be the will of the Government that it should become involved in contentious matters in a wholehearted way. In other words, SNH does not exist simply to discuss the birds and the bees and peat cutting and the minutiae of nature conservation issues. It must get involved, from an environmental point of view, in the big issues of Scottish life and politics.

Having said that, I fear that I must tell the Minister that he did not go far enough, and that we feel it necessary to press the matter to a Division to reinforce the arguments that we have adduced.

I should have referred in my opening remarks to the fact that, when representatives of Highland regional council came to the House yesterday, they stressed strongly the commitment that Caithness had given to the nuclear industry. Caithness is also in the eye of the storm in conservation matters. Instead of proposals from Nirex to take up the slack in the Caithness economy, Highland regional council would like the Government to say that the scientific research base for SNH will be centred in the place which is relevant to environmental concerns, which has a strong scientific background and which is facing great economic difficulties.

The convenor of Highland region, Duncan McPherson, wrote to the Secretary of State in those terms this week. He concluded his letter by hoping that the Secretary of State would support Highland regional council's desire to have the scientific research base, initially of the Nature Conservancy Council and subsequently of Scottish Natural Heritage, established in its area. What a constructive note we would end on if we could send that message to the people of Caithness and if we could tell them at the same time that the Secretary of State is turning down the application for 6,000 unwanted test bores.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 93, Noes 132.

Division No. 128] **[6.39 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bellotti, David
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
McAllion, John
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*

Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Warren, Kenneth
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

SNH'S POWERS IN RELATION TO PRIVATE ROADS

'(1) It shall be an offence for any person to construct a private road without first informing SNH of their intention to do so.

(2) Where SNH are of the opinion that the construction of a private road would result in serious damage to the natural heritage they shall serve notice of that fact on the person proposing the construction.

(3) Where such notice has been served, it shall be an offence to commence or to continue the construction of the road without the permission of the Secretary of State sought and obtained in writing.

(4) The Secretary of State shall not give such permission without first consulting SNH.

(5) Any person found guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(6) For the purposes of this section "private road" means a road or track not maintained by a roads authority and constructed to bear vehicular traffic, whether or not it is a public right of way, and above a length to be specified by the Secretary of State."—*[Mr. Galbraith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 4 deals with private tracks throughout Scotland and seeks to bring them under planning control.

Anyone who has tramped across the Scottish mountains or driven over them on local authority or other roads cannot help but be disturbed by the scars created on the landscape and to our natural heritage by those roads that clearly spread across the moorland and hills. Those tracks give access to a limited number of individuals but are offensive to a large number of people who see them. They are often unsightly because, being on private land, they come under no planning control.

The clause attempts to bring those roads within the authority of Scottish Natural Heritage. It is a problem that has been with us for many years and is growing rapidly. It has caused great concern to the Countryside Commission for Scotland. Indeed, its 22nd annual report in 1989 says:

"The proliferation of unsightly hill tracks in remote and scenically beautiful areas continues to cause concern".

One of the worst cases mentioned by the Countryside Commission was the track bulldozed through Glen Feshie by Lord Dulverton, who owned that area. It was a particularly beautiful area which many of us, including the Minister—who often takes his holidays there in the winter—have often tramped. That beautiful glen has been scarred, probably irretrievably, by an unsightly track that was bulldozed through it without permission, despite the fact that the Countryside Commission recommended that Highland regional council continue to refuse planning permission and to seek reinstatement. That, however, has not been possible.

There was a further problem in 1986 when a track above 300 m, which is the limit imposed by the commission, was bulldozed through Glen Ey within the Deeside and Lochnagar national scenic area, again without planning permission. Another example is the hill track in Strath Dionard, which lies on the northern margin of the north-west Sutherland national scenic area. Unless action is taken to bring those tracks within planning controls, the problem can only worsen.

We are not attacking landowners, nor are we attempting to prevent tracks on private land within Scotland. Rather, we are trying to ensure that, if such tracks are necessary and a good case can be made for having them, they should at least be developed in a suitably scenic way as far as possible. Many of them lead to no significant place. For example, the track near Arduerike estate, which is three or four miles long, leads only to a small fishing loch. One finds when walking in that area that no one else uses the track. Therefore, those tracks

[Mr. Sam Galbraith]

are bulldozed for use by a limited number of individuals, and for most of the year they lie vacant, only to assault the eyes of those who see them.

Another problem is the track at Beinn a'Bhuird, in a particularly nice area. It is badly designed and offensive to the eye. It could easily be dealt with, because it now lies within the Mar Lodge estate.

What is the Government's current position on Mar Lodge estate? Will they make funds available for that estate or will it pass into public ownership? Mar Lodge estate stretches from the woods of Dee, up over Corrie Etchican down Ben McDuie across to Cairn Toul, across to the nature reserve at Glen Feshie. It forms part of an extremely beautiful landscape of great natural heritage significance. It is currently owned privately, and it is said that it could be sold to the public for £10 million to £15 million—a small price to pay for such an exquisite piece of land. If Scotland's natural heritage is to be protected, surely Scottish Natural Heritage should purchase that land on behalf of the nation.

Today's *Scotsman* said:

"Mar Lodge provides an opportunity for the state to protect and preserve an important part of Scotland's heritage, including three of Britain's highest mountains. Under the new agency it could become a model demonstrating how conservation, recreation and limited development could be practised without conflict. It is estimated that, at the most, such a venture would require £5 million from the Exchequer".

Are the Government prepared to give not only tacit but practical support to Scottish Natural Heritage and purchase Mar Lodge estate for the nation? Were such land in public hands, we could prevent the despoilment of those areas by unsightly tracks. Everyone, whether they tramp across the mountains or merely travel through them, is offended by those roads which, in increasing numbers, are pushed through estates. The amendment seeks to bring them under planning controls to ensure that, if they must exist, they are built in the most aesthetic manner.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Two issues have arisen from the debate: private roads and Mar Lodge.

The prime target of this amendment is the unsightly mountain track, over which there has been some controversy in recent years. The Government agree that there has been a case for extending control over the way in which such developments take place. Since 1987, we have required all proposals for hill tracks in national scenic areas to be subject to planning permission. This requirement for planning permission, which provides for consultation with the countryside Commission for Scotland, and, ultimately, referral to the Secretary of State, will not only be transferred to Scottish Natural Heritage but would also carry forward to apply similarly in natural heritage areas.

We are currently considering whether there is a case for a further extension of this or a similar requirement throughout other parts of Scotland. We intend to seek comments on proposals later this year.

The amendment would create an offence for the construction of a private road without the sanction of SNH. We do not believe that the introduction of a new offence is conducive to the consensual approach we seek for the operation of Scottish Natural Heritage. More particularly, given the existing role of planning authorities, the Countryside Commission for Scotland and, ultimately, the Secretary of State, and the possible extension of the procedures, the introduction of an offence for failing to consult SNH on every private road can scarcely be defined as administratively efficient.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister referred to the consensual approach, but some of the tracks are simply acts of vandalism. Other vandals are not treated in a consensual way, with people saying to them, "Would you mind not doing it?" They are rightly punished for acts of vandalism. Some of the tracks that have been made to pre-empt the controls suggest a level of irresponsibility on the part of those who make them. That irresponsibility will not be constrained by the consensual approach. Perhaps the Minister could give us a firmer proposal.

7 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is a matter of sufficient importance for me to state that we intend to consult on it, hopefully later this summer, when we shall put forward proposals and listen to various views.

The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) asked about Mar Lodge, which has been in the press a great deal in recent days. The Government recognise the national and international conservation status of the Cairngorms. We have already taken a number of decisions in recognition of their importance. For example, the Secretary of State modified the Highlands regional structure plan to guard against the development of downhill ski developments in Lurcher's gully to protect the gully, surrounding quarries and the adjacent mountain plateau. In that connection, the evidence relating to the road was of particular interest.

We have established a working party under the chairmanship of Magnus Magnusson to develop a management plan for the district, which will form the basis for its protection and sustainable use in the longer term. We also submitted a case for the world heritage listing of the Cairngorms to UNESCO. I am sure that the House will agree that those steps clearly underline our intentions to ensure proper management of the district.

We recognise the important position of the Mar Lodge estate within the Cairngorms. It comprises a range of habitats from the flood plain terraces of the Dee to the high plateau of Ben Macdui. It has significant remnants of the Caledonian Scots pine forest, as well as habitat for a wide range of important bird species. It is also enjoyed for recreational purposes and managed for sporting purposes. The question of who is to own and manage the estate in future cannot be resolved at present, but, as the House will appreciate, for most of Scotland, conservation and recreation management of land is secured through private ownership.

I can assure the House that the Government would be prepared to look at any proposition that might be put to us—although without commitment. I understand that a series of complex discussions are under way at present between a number of organisations. I am afraid that I am not in a position to provide the House with any more detailed information now. I hope that that answers the inquiry of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

Mr. Galbraith: In the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), if I may say so, that was a rather vague statement about what is

happening at Mar Lodge. I had hoped that the Minister would come up with a more definite statement and that he might even say that the Government were seriously considering purchasing it for the nation. It is in order to discuss that now, because the Mar Lodge estate includes Beinn a' Bhuird, which contains one of the tracks that has probably caused most controversy and offence over the years.

I was not particularly grateful to the Minister for saying that it would not be administratively efficient to bring all private tracks within the planning procedure. In the immortal words of my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, if I may say so, that seems a weak excuse. Anyone who can administer complex schemes, and who attempts to administer the poll tax, will surely find bringing a few private roads under administrative control as nothing in comparison. However, I am grateful to the Minister for saying that he intends to consult and make proposals, which I shall await with great interest, later in the year. Therefore, with the permission of the House, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 6

SPECIAL POWER OF SNH TO SEEK HABITAT MANAGEMENT ORDERS

'( ) Where it appears to the SNH expedient to do so for the purpose of conserving the natural heritage of Scotland it may make an application to the Secretary of State for a Habitat Management Order for the purposes of carrying out essential nature conservation management; and the provisions of Schedule *(Procedure in Connection with Habitat Management Orders)* shall have effect as to the making, confirmation and coming into operation of orders under this section.

(2) An application for an order under this section may only be made in respect of land—

(a) which has been notified or meets the criteria for notification as a site of special scientific interest under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and

(b) has been the subject of an offer of a management agreement with the owners, lessees or occupiers of such land in accordance with the provisions of section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968 (Areas of Special Scientific Interest) and an agreement cannot be concluded.

(3) The Secretary of State may authorise SNH (or any person or organisation which he considers appropriate) to enter the land for the purpose of carrying out any operation necessary to maintain or conserve the special interest of the land.

(4) Any operation authorised under subsection (3) shall be specified in the order applying this section to the land.

(5) SNH, or other person or organisation authorised by the Secretary of State under subsection (3), may give notice to the appropriate owners, lessees or occupiers of the land requiring him to pay the expenses of the operations carried out under the order.

(6) The persons notified under subsection (5) may within 28 days of the services of the notice represent to the Secretary of State that—

(a) the amount specified in the notice is unreasonable; or

(b) the recovery of that amount would cause him hardship,

and the Secretary of State shall determine to what extent the representations are justified.

(7) The Secretary of State shall give notice of his determination, the reasons for it and the amount recoverable—

(a) to the persons who made the representation; and

(b) to the authority which gave notice under subsection (5).

(8) Any expenses recoverable by virtue of this section shall be recoverable as a simple contract debt in any court of competent jurisdiction.'.—*[Mr. Galbraith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Galbraith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to take amendment No. 1, a new schedule——

PROCEDURE IN CONNECTION WITH HABITAT MANAGEMENT ORDERS

Consultation

1. Before making an order, the Secretary of State shall consult with SNH and such persons as he may consider appropriate.

Giving of Notice

2. (1) Before making an order, the Secretary of State shall prepare a draft of the order and give notice—

(a) stating that he proposes to make the order and the general effect of it; and

(b) specifying the time (not being less than 28 days from the date of the giving of the notice) within which, and the manner in which, representations or objections with respect to the draft order may be made.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3), the notice to be given under sub-paragraph (1) shall be given—

(a) to persons who had received the offer of a management agreement from SNH relating to the operations contained in the order; and

(b) every other owner, lessee or occupier of the land to which the draft order relates.

Unopposed Orders

3. If no representations or objections are duly made to the persons notified, or if any so made are withdrawn, the Secretary of State may make the order with or without modifications.

4. (1) If any representation or objection duly made by persons notified is not withdrawn the Secretary of State shall, before making the order, afford any such person an opportunity of being heard by a person appointed by the Secretary of State for the purpose.

(2) On considering any representations or objections duly made and the report of the person appointed to hear representations or objections the Secretary of State may make the order with or without modifications.

Restrictions on power to make orders with modifications

5. (1) The Secretary of State shall not make an order with modifications so as—

(a) to affect land not affected by the draft order; or

(b) to include operations not authorised in the draft order.

Notice of making of Orders

6. (1) As soon as practicable after an order is made, the Secretary of State shall give notice describing the general effect of the order as made and stating the date on which it took effect.

(2) A notice under sub-paragraph (1) shall be given to the persons notified of the draft order.

Proceedings for Questioning Validity of Orders

7. (1) If any owner, lessee or occupier of the land to which the order applies is aggrieved by an order which has taken effect and desires to question its validity on the ground that it is not within the powers of section *(Special powers of SNH to seek habitat management orders)* or that any of the requirements of this Schedule have not been complied with in relation to it, he may within 42 days from the date of the giving of the notice under paragraph 6 make an application to the Court under this paragraph.

(2) On any such application the Court may, if satisfied that the order is not within those powers or that the interests of the applicant have been substantially prejudiced by a failure to comply with those requirements make such declaration as seems to the Court to be appropriate.

(3) Except as provided by this paragraph, the validity of an order shall not be questioned in any legal proceedings whatever.

(4) In this paragraph "the Court" means the Court of Session.'.

Mr. Galbraith: The new clause and the new schedule are long and complex but deal with a fairly simple point. A major issue throughout the passage of the Bill, and one which was dealt with extensively in Committee, was sites of special scientific interest and in particular the designation and various appeal procedures involved. However, now we are taking the matter further and considering what happens once a site has been designated.

Some sites of special scientific interest require maintenance or they deteriorate and lose their scientific interest. In its last report, the Nature Conservancy Council detailed such sites. In the year from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990, one site was lost—it suffered damage that resulted in the denotification of its SSSI status. In that year, three sites were partially lost—part of the site was denotified—and, in 35 of them, long-term damage occurred—there was a lasting reduction in the special scientific interest of those sites. Overall, 261 sites suffered damage from which they could recover. That shows the scale of the problem. Because SSSIs can deteriorate, some require positive management.

I do not know how many of those sites were in Scotland. The Minister may be able to get the answer to that question swiftly, so I shall talk for a few minutes if he wishes to obtain assistance. How many of the sites that were lost, partially lost or suffered long-term or short-term damage were in Scotland? Classic examples of SSSIs include the chalk downs and Wiltshire downs, where the SSSI sites lose their scientific value unless there is persistent sheep grazing. If the owner no longer wishes to graze sheep there, the area is overcome by scrub and its scientific value is lost.

The new clause would allow Scottish Natural Heritage to restore the designation of an SSSI that is in danger of losing its designation either through neglect or change of purpose of the land. There are two caveats to that. It can be used only on a designated area and where a land management agreement with the owner has been sought. If those two criteria are fulfilled, Scottish Natural Heritage can move in to preserve the sites.

I think that most of the examples are in England. I am not sure whether there are many in Scotland, although there has been a suggestion of one in the outer isles. The important principle set out in the new clause gives Scottish Natural Heritage a power to protect SSSIs that it would not otherwise have. It would be an important extension of the conservation principle in Scotland, and I hope that the Minister will look favourably on the new clause.

Mr. Dalyell: I have two questions of the Minister, and I gave him notice of one of them on Tuesday.

The Carver report strongly recommended that, in the new era, the future of nationally relevant databases and methodologies, such as the national vegetation classification and the biological record centre at Monkswood, should be assured. What steps is Scottish Natural Heritage taking, through the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee or otherwise, to ensure that the landscape and people of Scotland continue to benefit from that expertise? We are not marketing such factors, and we should be holding them in trust. I gave the Scottish Office 48 hours notice so that it could give a considered answer.

Secondly, I think that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has been in touch with the Minister's Department this morning. It takes the view:

"With regard to the Minister's statement that 'specified types of development' is not an adequate phrase to include in legislation, the RICS is not convinced that the phrase is sufficiently inadequate as to render the amendment undesirable. The alternative phrase 'such types of development as may be specified by the Secretary of State from time to time' may, however, meet with the approval of the Minister and the Parliamentary Draughtsman and the RICS would be happy to see its proposed amendment reworded accordingly."

At some stage—I think that this is the right one—I should like the Minister to comment on that point.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I welcome the opportunity to debate the role of sites of special scientific interest in habitat protection and the principle upon which the safeguarding of sites is based. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) has proposed a far-reaching step—in effect, to compel owners and occupiers to pay for the management of their land for nature conservation purposes, determined by the Secretary of State for Scotland in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage.

While hearings and appeals to the courts are built into the procedures set out in the amendment, and objections to the costs in the new clause, it is difficult not to interpret these provisions as being peremptory to owners and occupiers. The House will appreciate that that flies in the face of our well-established procedures—based on the voluntary principle—for site safeguard. The whole basis of the voluntry approach to nature conservation management would be undermined if we not only told people how to manage their land in SSSIs but forced them to pay for that work.

The second reason for resisting the new clause and schedule is that the voluntary approach has stood the test of time in Scotland. Notification, allied with provision for the negotiation of management agreements and the procedure for making nature conservation orders, provides the opportunity for disagreements to be overcome. The fact that the last-resort powers of making nature conservation orders have been used so infrequently —in Scotland only 10 orders have been made when almost 1,300 SSSIs have been notified or renotified since 1981 —provides ample proof of that point. In addition, the new procedures that the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland introduced early this month for SSSIs should bring about a considerable reduction in the number of disagreements.

We are not convinced that any benefits would accrue from the new powers. I believe that they have the potential so to undermine the present system that they would hinder rather than further the management of land within SSSIs in a way that is sensitive to nature conservation interests.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for having given me notice that he would raise a matter in relation to the Carver report recommendations. I am aware that steps have been taken to secure the future of nationally relevant databases and methodologies, as he would wish. I can assure him, however, that the Carver report recommendations were fully implemented by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. All existing

databases, methodologies and research contracts have been inherited by one of the new conservation bodies of the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee, as appropriate.

Nothing has been lost in the process. The Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland has taken over data and contracts relevant to Scotland. These will, in turn, be transferred to Scottish Natural Heritage. Great Britain, United Kingdom and other international matters will be dealt with by the three new country agencies, acting through the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee.

Only a few days ago, I was at the headquarters of the Countryside Commission for Scotland, at Battleby. The offices there, which are being converted, will be of assistance to the JNCC staff in the future.

The hon. Gentleman also raised a point about clause 2, about which we had a useful discussion in Committee. I should emphasise that we are aware of the concern expressed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland that development in designated areas should be of the highest standard. That is entirely proper. Our answer is that the RICS's concern is already taken account of as regards national scenic areas and SSSIs.

There are no areas designated under the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 or the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Accordingly, there is no need for clause 2(2) to refer to those enactments. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman will be able to assure the institution that we are not trying to avoid the spirit of its proposals, since the essence of its concern has already been met. The present arrangements are satisfactory and will be carried forward to Scottish Natural Heritage when it comes into operation.

7.15 pm

Mr. Galbraith: I am grateful to the Minister for his comments. He seems, however, to be slightly confused. He referred to the powers of last resort and nature conservation orders, but they are designed to deal with damaging activities on a site of special scientific interest. The new clause deals with the matter from the point of view of neglect. The question is not what a landowner may intend to do to a site but what he or she may fail to do. If a landowner were willing to enter into a land management agreement, it would cost him nothing. Therefore, the Minister's objections to the new clause are not well founded.

I accept his statement that the attempt to deal with these matters by agreement has worked reasonably well up to now. I should not like to interfere with that arrangement. However, this would be a reserve power, to be used in exceptional circumstances when a site of special scientific interest was endangered through neglect. In those circumstances, a land management agreement could be offered to the owner. If he refused the offer, only then would this reserve power come into effect.

Having heard the Minister's reassurances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 7

ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

'(1) No landowner or any other person or group of persons shall take any action which prohibits or impedes or reduces reasonable public access to the countryside without first reporting such proposed action to SNH.

(2) SNH shall consult appropriate local authorities and advertise any proposed action under subsection (1) of this section.

(3) If any objections are registered with SNH, then SNH shall arrange for a public inquiry to be held before deciding whether to approve or reject any proposed action under subsection (1) of this section.'.—*[Mr. Canavan.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

During our debate on the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill it is appropriate that we should pay attention to public access to one of the most valuable parts of Scotland's natural heritage, the Scottish countryside. In terms of natural beauty, there are few, if any, countries which can equal Scotland. It is important to remember that the people of Scotland who, as a whole, have inherited that natural heritage have a duty to protect it, to ensure that it is used for the benefit of the people as a whole, and to pass it on to future generations for their enjoyment.

Unfortunately, the land—particularly the countryside—does not in law belong to the people as a whole. Huge countryside estates, including some of Scotland's most famous mountains, hills and glens, are owned by wealthy landlords such as the Duke of Buccleuch—with 277,000 acres—the Wills family—with 263,000 acres—Lord Seafield—with 185,000 acres—the Countess of Sutherland—with 158,000 acres—and the Duke of Westminster with 113,000 acres. It is worth remembering that it was people like the ancestors of the Sutherland family who were responsible for the Highland clearances. Some of the likes of them today are not content simply with owning huge tracts of land in Scotland; they seem to be intent on trying to keep the people of Scotland from enjoying access to that land. The House should try to do something about that. The enjoyment of the Scottish countryside should be the birthright of all the people of Scotland—and of people from further afield who come to Scotland to enjoy its natural beauty and its other assets.

I am not a lawyer, but, as I understand it, there is no common law of criminal trespass in Scotland and very little in the way of statute law and byelaws relating to criminal trespass. I hope that the Minister, who is a lawyer, will be able to say whether the law needs to be clarified and what improvements, if any, the Government have in mind, whatever the merits may be of my new clause.

My understanding is that, if someone is causing, or threatening to cause, damage to property, or is being a nuisance, a landowner can initiate civil action through the courts by reporting the matter to the sheriff court and seeking an interdict—although that could be granted only against a named person or persons. I should welcome clarification of that from the Minister, who is a well-known Scottish advocate.

Mr. Wilson: Is he?

Mr. Canavan: The Minister certainly was at one time.

It is my experience, and that of many who enjoy the countryside, that some landowners—not all—set a bad example by threatening walkers, climbers and innocent people even with violence. Those innocent people have no criminal intent; they want to enjoy a walk in the countryside or pursue a favourite sport or pastime.

I declare an interest as I regularly enjoy walking, hill running and climbing, most of which I do in the Scottish countryside. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Canavan]

Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), I cannot claim to have conquered all of Scotland's Munros. My hon. Friend is unique in the House—although I think that I might be the only hon. Member to have survived the Ben Nevis hill race on two occasions, and one has to be a bit of a masochist to enjoy that.

I wish to give a couple of examples of my experiences. One winter's day a few years ago, I, my brother and some friends arrived at daybreak in Glen Lyon to do some mountain climbing. My brother, who is more civilised and polite than me, courteously asked a chap in a tweed suit to tell us the best way to go up the mountain. The tweed suit gruffly replied, "You don't." It was difficult to argue with him because he had a gun and a big dog, and there were some other tweed-suited thugs lurking in the background. They told us in no uncertain terms to clear off because they were deer stalking. They made thinly veiled threats that, if we did not clear off, we risked being shot—I do not know whether by accident or design. I was so incensed by that attitude that I initially wanted to stand my ground. However, because of the undesirability of a by-election, my colleagues persuaded me that it would be better to climb another mountain.

I do not want to turn the debate into an argument about the morality or otherwise of certain blood sports, and whether they should even be taking place in the countryside. However, in all common sense there is a strong case for saying that there should be some regulation —preferably a statutory regulatory body—to decide whether certain activities should be given priority over other activities in certain areas at certain times. My new clause is a reasonable attempt to achieve that through the new Scottish Natural Heritage.

I shall give another example from my home area that shows the difficulties of gaining access to the countryside. Not long ago, I was doing a bit of cross-country running —a harmless enough pursuit. I was training for the London marathon, and my route took me through a country estate. I was accosted by the husband of the landowner, who shouted, "What the hell do you think you are doing?" I kept on running, and politely replied, "What does it look like? I'm running".

He drove ahead of me in his van and closed a gate to try to obstruct me. He virtually threatened me with violence if I went any further.

That man did not succeed in scaring me, but I know that other people in the area, and especially elderly people, have been intimidated by his behaviour. They are being deprived of access to the countryside so that they cannot even enjoy a walk. It is not even a walk with a dog; if it were, that man would probably argue that the dog might worry sheep if it were allowed off the leash. Groups of elderly people are too frightened to go walking through the countryside because they are being intimidated. That is unacceptable, and it is time that the House got to grips with the problem. Such thuggery by landowners cannot be allowed to continue.

I have quoted only two of my experiences; I could quote many more. Anyone who regularly enjoys countryside pursuits could cite many other instances of landowners using intimidatory and obstructive tactics, such as putting up barbed-wire fences and notices saying that trespassers will be prosecuted. Of course, in law the notices have no validity. Nevertheless, through that intimidatory behaviour, landowners are hounding and harassing innocent people, with the result that many of them are terrified of going into the countryside and enjoying Scotland's natural assets.

My new clause would help to put a stop to that nonsense. The procedure that it outlines is simple. If a landowner had reasonable cause to limit or prohibit public access to an area of the countryside, he would first have to report his proposal to Scottish Natural Heritage. The agency would then consult the appropriate local authorities and advertise the proposal—something similar to a planning application—and people would have the right to register their objections. If there were such objections, Scottish Natural Heritage would arrange an appropriate public inquiry before deciding whether to approve or to reject the proposal. That is a straightforward and common-sense proposal.

My new clause is a reasonable, practical measure that would clarify Scottish law. It would improve access to the countryside and it could lead to a charter on the right of the people to access to an important part of Scotland's natural heritage. I ask the House to accept it.

Sir Hector Monro: I followed what the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) said with great interest. He was right about the vagueness of the law of trespass —indeed, there is none. The best statement that I could obtain was from the Scottish Landowners Federation, of which I am a member, although I do not speak on its behalf. It is that no one has the right to enter anyone else's property without consent except by means of an established public footpath or roadway, and that anyone who does so is strictly a trespasser. The term "trespass" is in common use, but it has not been defined in Scotland in statute or by the courts. The main difference between Scotland and England on trespass is that the common law of Scotland, unlike that of England, provides no penalty for the simple act of trespass itself. Damage or nuisance must first be proved. That shows that in Scotland there is no law of trespass. There is, however, the right of ownership.

7.30 pm

We must try to bring people together when it comes to using and enjoying the countryside to the best of everyone's advantage. That is the key approach. I was quite taken by the approach of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) in Committee, where he took a responsible attitude and rightly explained the wishes of so many people to use our wonderful countryside but said that, at the same time, they should not, as it were, overstep the mark or cause a nuisance to those carrying on farming. The achievement of that careful balance is the key factor.

So much depends upon attitudes. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West told us about his experience when running along a farm track. If he had stopped and asked the owner whether he would object if he, the hon. Gentleman, were to run along the track, I suspect that he would have been warmly welcomed to do so and told to enjoy his recreation. In many instances too much is taken for granted and not enough politeness is shown in using other people's property.

Those of us who frequently use the hills know that we must be careful about erosion and generally causing

damage to the landscape. The dangers become clear when we consider what has happened to Ben Lomond and the damage that has been caused in the Cairngorms. There are other concerns that turn upon farming operations, especially at lambing time. Other worries arise at nesting time, especially for many of the birds that we are keen to protect.

I once had to speak for an hour in Committee about bulls on public footpaths. I dare say that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had to put up with my speech. I am not sure whether he listened to it with enthusiasm. There are many who can identify a bull, but not a heifer or a cow with a calf. They can be every bit as dangerous as a bull. People must be very careful when wandering about the hills if they are not aware of what they are doing.

When so much depends on the rural economy and on providing employment in the countryside, we should not attack, as the hon. Member for Falkirk, West did, those who are carrying out legitimate sporting operations. Those activities are important and we must not prevent them. It must be realised that at certain times—for example, from mid-August to late September—important shooting takes place on the hills. The greatest worry is that on which the hon. Gentleman touched, stalking.

We were highly critical in Committee—the same criticism has been made in the press—about the insufficient cull of deer in Scotland, and especially of hind. Stalking hind is an intricate and difficult operation, especially during the short days in Scotland in mid-winter. If hikers, hill climbers or hill walkers are on the hills at the same time, the operation becomes virtually impossible. A little co-operation either way would make a tremendous difference to everyone enjoying himself while cohabiting with our landscape.

I shall not talk about the concerns that are expressed about litter, gates, fences and knocking down dykes. It is all too easy to think that we can climb a dyke. If the top stone is knocked out, however, the whole thing begins to fall down almost immediately. There is also the danger of fire in forests and, because of other factors, the inconvenience that is caused to fishermen. There must be a balance between water sports and the enjoyment of those who are fishing.

When I was a Minister in the Department of the Environment and concerned with rural affairs, there was an immense amount of work to be done in protecting footpaths and bridleways. It is a relatively low key matter in Scotland. I am not sure whether district and regional councils have taken enough interest in establishing or retaining footpaths and producing maps so that people may know where there are rights of way. Similarly, I am not sure whether enough has been done to ensure that rights of way are available to enable the public to enjoy the countryside. We in Scotland are lagging behind in the development of footpaths and rights of way.

So much could be taught in schools about how to enjoy the countryside, what to look out for and how not to be difficult at times that matter, such as nesting time and during critical farming operations. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West takes a swipe at the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry whenever he can. No one has done more than the duke and the Buccleuch estates to educate children in Scotland to appreciate the joys of the countryside. The duke takes many school parties to his estates at Bowhill, Drumlanrig and in Northamptonshire so that they may learn how an estate is run. They visit the sawmill, the farm, the gardens and the woodlands. The children leave with the feeling that they have begun to learn what enjoyment of the countryside is all about.

Anything that Scottish Natural Heritage can do to bring teachers and others to understand and to teach that appreciation in our schools, the better it will be. I know that it is said that the curriculum does not allow for such teaching, but if we cannot find time for things that matter, such as the countryside, much of our children's education will be lost.

It is extremely important to get right the balance of the use of the countryside. We must realise that everyone has an interest in achieving that. Only by working together in harmony will we all get the best out of the country.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: The major theme of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) was co-operation. That is clearly a reasonable goal when we talk about access to and use of the countryside. It is the traditional Scottish attitude to these matters. We believe that the land belongs to the people of Scotland and future generations of Scots. The land is merely held temporarily in trust by the present generation.

The Scottish attitude to our land and its enjoyment is that there should be freedom to roam, restricted only by the need to take care of the land and to be concerned about it. Passage should be allowed to those who give consideration to the needs of farmers and others who depend upon the land for their living. It is an alien experience when barriers are erected and rights of way are lost. The new clause seeks to clarify and consolidate the right of access of its people to the land of Scotland. I believe that it achieves the underlying purpose, within reasonable constraints, and will protect those who work on the land and gain a living by so doing.

The Scots have always taken a stroppy attitude to feudal landowners who try to get them off the hills. My only criticism of the hon. Member for Falkirk (Mr. Canavan) is that he was not stroppy enough during the incidents which he described. There is no law of trespass worthy of the term in Scotland. A person's home and garden are fully protected from unwelcome visitors, and rightly so, but provided that people keep to the countryside code and cause no damage or disturbance to livestock, there should be no barriers to wandering over the mountains or generally enjoying our magnificent scenery.

Recent changes in ownership have led to certain changes in attitudes. Bit by bit, more and more estates are seeking to keep their lands for themselves and their friends. Many of the new estate owners come from the south of Britain, from the continent, the United States or the middle east, where the concept of public access to private property does not exist. There is a danger, because alien ideas are being introduced to Scotland by those who have no understanding of how the Scottish attitude to land has developed.

Those new attitudes have brought with them, from the Borders to the Highlands, a growing infestation of notice boards and signs preventing and restricting access. The undeniable fact that a landowner cannot prosecute for trespass and that public authorities have limited control over campers is ignored. It is unacceptable that rights of way should be blocked up, barbed wire laid down and fences put up restricting what are clearly rights of way and the ability of people to enjoy the land of Scotland.

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

Instead of the people of Scotland still imagining that their country is freely available to them, the opposite is becoming the case. Unless action is taken to reverse such trends, we will simply be herded into forestry parks or reservations of one kind or another, and that would be a great loss to Scotland. I certainly would not like to see the bulk of the Scottish people herded around and directed to specific areas, leaving our hills, lochs and mountain tops the private preserve of the fortunate and selfish few. If that ever happened, we would all be the losers and the Government would have made a big mistake. Therefore, I welcome the new clause, which reinforces the rights of the people of Scotland to their own land.

One step in the direction of mediation and a straightforward way in which to help the people of Scotland would be if the Government were to consider ordnance survey maps which, in England, but not in Scotland, include rights of way. That would be a straightforward way in which to inform people of their rights, reinforcing traditional rights of access and preventing some of the worst practices of landlords taking over rights of way for their own purposes. Marking such rights of way on ordnance survey maps would be a simple way of informing people of their rights.

The new clause clarifies the legal basis for access to Scotland's natural heritage. It establishes the principle that landowners should not exclude walkers from their land except where damage or intrusion into personal privacy might result. Therefore, I support the new clause and hope that the Government will accede to its basic premise that the land of Scotland belongs to the people of Scotland, and that their reasonable enjoyment of it should be allowed in harmony with other land users.

Mr. Dalyell: About three months ago, I telephoned Sir James Stormonth Darling, the ex-secretary of the National Trust for Scotland, who is well known to the Minister and to my hon. Friends, on a completely unrelated matter. As soon as we had discussed our business, he said that he did not know why I was asking about that, because I should really be concerned about Mar Lodge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have made a statement on that. I regret that the hon. Gentleman was not present.

Mr. Dalyell: I know, and very inadequate it was. If it had been a half-decent statement, the House would have been spared my speech, but it is precisely because it was such an inadequate statement that I make no apology, with the good will of my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), for returning to the subject.

I spare the House my three months of interest in the subject, but this very day there has been a leader on it, not the one in the Scottish newspaper which has been quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, but in a national paper. It is entitled "Preserving Mar Lodge", and it says:

"The decision by the American billionaire Mr. John Kluge to sell the 77,000 acre Mar Lodge estate in the Cairngorms raises questions about the future of a mountain landscape which is to Britain's natural environment what St. Paul's Cathedral is to our man-made heritage."

Mr. Galbraith: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dalyell: I am glad to hear my hon. Friend say, "Hear, hear." If there is scepticism among Conservative Members, let me put their minds at rest. This is not some Labour tabloid or newspaper; it is *The Daily Telegraph*. The leader writer goes on:

"The sale, which coincides with the formation of the Natural Heritage Agency for Scotland, also creates an opportunity which, if not taken, will be lost for generations. The disclosure that the Prince of Wales is involved in negotiations to buy the estate on behalf of the Crown Estate and the fledging Scottish Natural Heritage Agency shows that he believes that the opportunity to buy the estate for the nation must be grasped.

The Prince of Wales should be wary of public ownership where other options exist. But the case of Mar Lodge is special."

I did not think that there was much special about it from the response that my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden received from the Minister. I am on the side of *The Daily Telegraph* and against the Minister on this.

The Daily Telegraph says:

"But the case of Mar Lodge is special. It is so valuable that private ownership has meant foreign ownership for nearly 30 years. The rich men who have owned Mar Lodge have made mistakes—overstocking with deer and preventing one of the most magnificent fragments of Caledonian forests from regenerating, but they have kept it whole. The danger is now that a new buyer, anxious for a return on his investment, will split it up."

Many of us would say amen to that. I am one of those who is fortunate to know something of this wonderful countryside.

7.45 pm

The Daily Telegraph goes on:

"No government has faced up to the challenge of how to reconcile the conflicts in the Cairngorms, Britain's most important mountain landscape. Now there is the chance to demonstrate how to conserve nature on a large scale, while achieving income from sporting interests and restricting access to those who are prepared to make the long walk in. All depends on Mr. Lang, the Scottish Secretary"—

or should we say, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)

"He should be clear on two things: that endorsing the purchase of Mar Lodge would banish doubt about the Government's commitment to nature conservation, and that it would prove enormously popular among the moderate opinion that the Conservative party badly needs to win back in Scotland."

It is not my business to suggest to the Conservative party how to win votes, but it is my business to say that there is a strong feeling that this is a major litmus test for Scottish Natural Heritage. The kind of statement that the Minister has made simply will not do for serious Scottish opinion.

I do not criticise the Secretary of State for having just come in, but I am referring his ministerial colleague to the leading article on Mar Lodge in *The Daily Telegraph* today, of which I plead with him to take notice.

I shall not abuse the time of the House, but I want to refer briefly to the statement made by Robert Edwards on 19 April:

"Prince Charles was asked by Magnus Magnusson, chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council in Scotland, to approach the American billionaire, John Kluge, about the forthcoming sale of his 77,000-acre Mar Lodge estate which contains three of Britain's five highest mountains, rare flora and fauna. Kluge apparently refused to give the estate to the nation, but did agree to offer it to the Government or a consortium of voluntary organisations at the reduced price of £10 million, half of which could be paid over the next five years. It is expected to fetch over £13 million on the market."

Are those figures available to the Scottish Office?

The Minister will know what I am talking about if I say, in parentheais and without going into detail, that some individual properties have had millions—in the plural—of pounds from the national heritage memorial fund. We are not talking about something extraordinary but, dare I say, about less than the price of one Tornado. However, that is by the bye.

An article in *The Guardian* stated:

"Kluge appears to have set a deadline, the first week of May. Magnusson, unable to convince the Scottish Secretary . . . to fight the Treasury for cash, this week appealed to conservation organisations for help with emergency funding."

There is nothing more urgent or important on the agenda of the infant body than a decision about Mar Lodge. If that body acted on Mar Lodge, it could receive a great deal of good will, and if some of it accrued to the Conservative party, so be it.

I am not so inexperienced as to ask the Minister to get up to make a statement straight away, after what he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). However, I should like him to tell us tonight that, tomorrow and in the coming week Ministers, will discuss the issue, possibly with a view to revising their opinion. It would be a heck of a pity if the historic chance to do something of lasting importance for the countryside of Scotland were lost.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): It is 107 years since James Bryce introduced the Access to Mountains Bill. For 107 years, the country has been waiting for a right for the people of this country to have access to the open countryside, which they should have the right to enjoy.

I hope that my colleagues will forgive an Englishman for participating in the debate, but I claim a long and abiding passion for the Scottish landscape and countryside. Over the years, I have spent many happy days roaming the hills, mountains and wilderness of Scotland. I am delighted to say that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) the shadow Chancellor, is now following in my footsteps and has embarked on the herculean task of completing the ascent of Scotland's 277 Munros.

Barring a number of historical incidents of some notoriety—most notably perhaps, the famous battle of Glen Tilt, when an eminent professor and his students were on a geological expedition in the late Victorian years and were set upon by a landowner and his ghillies—the tradition in the Scottish hills, which is a good tradition, has on the whole been one of consensus. There has been reasonable access for those who want to walk, climb and take recreation in the Scottish countryside and, in return for their responsibility, permission for that access has been granted by the landowners. That consensus has been based on good will and, on the whole, it has worked. It has not worked by walkers asking permission every time they wanted to walk on any footpath—as I suspect the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) intended—but it has been a tradition of responsibility on the one side and access granted on the other.

However, there are three problems that increasingly threaten the good practice of that tradition. First, the law does not always work well. Sadly, an increasing number of landowners deny access to reasonable members of the public who have no intention of causing damage to the landowners' property.

A few years ago, I was sitting on top of one of the hills just to the south of Lochnagar in an area of rolling countryside and great beauty. My brother and I had walked on three or four of the mountains in the area. We were at summit Cairn when we were approached by an irate landowner who—as in the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan)—carried a gun and was surrounded by a group of ghillies. He summarily ordered us off the mountain.

We were doing no damage; we were not disturbing any sporting interests and we were not disturbing any movement of deer. We were merely out for a walk. The special irony of the event was that we were sitting in a national nature reserve—the Caenlochan nature reserve. Despite that, the landowner was able to use his intimidatory powers to remove us from the land. When something of that type can happen, I contend that the law is not operating properly or fairly in the interests of all.

So the first problem is that the law does not always operate well. The second problem is that there is general confusion in the minds of many people who go into the Scottish hills about the exact state of the law. As the hon. Member for Dumfries stated, the law is somewhat unclear, because it does not prescribe a provision of trespass but it neverthless enables a landowner in some circumstances to remove a person from his land with the use of minimum force. An unclear law is not a good law. The new clause rightly seeks to clarify the law.

The third problem is precisely the provision for the use of minimum force. Where it is possible for a landowner to remove walkers from his or her land by intimidation—by hassling them, by threats or perhaps by revealing rather obviously the possession of a gun—there must always be a potential problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West wishes to put that right, and I support him. He is attempting not only to put the law into a clearer perspective but to move it closer to, for example, Swedish provisions for access, which work well. They are supported almost universally within Sweden; they preserve the right balance between the landowner's right of privacy and the general public's right of access, and enshrine those rights sensibly in legal form.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West will be successful in prevailing on the Government, although I doubt it. If we were able to enshrine such a provision in law for Scotland, I hope that it would give a lead for England and Wales. Therefore, I support the new clause.

The natural heritage of Scotland is unsurpassed. It is a landscape of breathtaking beauty. It has peaks, ridges, lochs and desolation in some of the wildest parts of our country, and they should be for all to enjoy and to share. It should not be up to anyone, however mighty, to remove that opportunity for enjoyment from the rest of us. My hon. Friend seeks to secure that enjoyment for us and for future generations. It is a noble cause, and I support him in it.

8 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I understand and share the objectives of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) who moved the new clause in his purpose of seeking to enlarge the freedom of the citizen to have access to Scottish rural areas. However, I am doubtful about the mechanisms that he has proposed

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

to achieve it. His proposal appears to put in the hands of a Government-appointed quango the decision whether a right of access should be enjoyed in a particular area.

That is a dangerous new power to give to a body such as Scottish Natural Heritage, and it could further restrict access in a way that would supplement and even empower proprietors to be more exclusive than some of them are at present. By simply prevailing on SNH that it had a good case to exclude the public, the proprietor would have the imprimatur of official approval which, at present, his ownership of itself may not give him. Far from achieving the purposes of Professor Bryce, to whom the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) so eloquently referred, I fear that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West could set back the very cause for which he so eloquently pleaded.

We should not be unduly hung up on the precise terms and proposals of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West, who identifies a serious and important issue. Many of us who represent parts of the country to which the public wish to have access in increasing numbers are conscious that there is a problem of reconciliation of interests which should be tackled and that the law, with all the obscurities to which the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred, may not resolve the difficulties which are increasingly sharp in certain areas.

Mention was made of the acquisition of estates by those who have shown less sensitivity to the custom and practice of those who have lived in the countryside than used to be the case. I do not, of course, exempt some of those who have lived in and known estates for a very long time from all blame for over-zealous exclusion of the public from their property.

This type of debate invites anecdotal evidence in support of whatever point of view one wishes to put. I do not want to go too far down the road of recalling the occasion in the Strath of Kildonan when the proprietor spoke, with accents of earlier years, pretty roughly to me when I was sitting by the roadside eating a sandwich, having just been re-elected as member of Parliament. She spoke roughly in terms of the possible damage that I would do to her property by sitting there and allowing the crumbs from my lunch to fertilise the moss around me. Her remarks may have been animated by a certain disappointment about the result of the election. On the whole, I have not found such an attitude among those who have lived and worked in the area, whether proprietors or others.

There are less attractive examples among the factors of estates. Factors often show the least sympathy for the public interest in access. They are rather at the sharp end of the conflict. There have been occasions when factors have deployed arguments that suggest that there is no time of year in some areas when it is suitable for the public to have access. They say that there is no time because it is either the time when people are stalking or shooting, or the time when the birdlife is breeding and the very scent of a human being could be enough to upset the eco-system over which the factors preside as the agents of the proprietor. Such an argument shows a certain lack of sympathy and understanding, and increases the desire to legislate where it is difficult to legislate without completely running into conflict over the use of land.

Certain uses of land are inconsistent with public access at certain times. It is not consistent with public access to stalk or to drive grouse across a moor. Many other forms of activity have some benefit for rural areas, but are inconsistent with public access at certain times. The limits to those times should be subject to some agreement and understanding. We may be reaching a time when the most constructive way forward would be to seek to agree for particular areas codes of practice with proprietors and representatives of the public who could, publicly and openly, express their view of the public interest in an area of land.

Like others, including the hon. Member for Falkirk, West, I do not wish to use the debate to run through the arguments about the appropriateness of blood sports. Field sports play a significant part, at least, in the highlands economy. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman or anyone else would wish to end such sports as a side wind of the proposal. That is not the purpose of the new clause.

However, we cannot rest absolutely content with the law and practice as they stand. In the past, the law has allowed gentlemen such as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, whose hill-climbing endeavours fill less energetic Members with nothing but admiration, to reach those achievements broadly unimpeded, although with one or two unpleasant experiences such as that with which the hon. Gentleman regaled the House. He and others are right to point to the threat of change from the arrival of people who are less than sensitive to the growing public interest in access.

We cannot reconcile those interests by old-fashioned means and by old-fashioned proprietorial power, with sticks, dogs, guns and threatening notices that imply or threaten action against those who appear on the land.

I suggest to the Under-Secretary of State that he has an opportunity to emphasise the desirability of reconciling those interests and of reaching agreement on how they should be reconciled. That cannot be done Scotland-wide. The interests of heavily populated areas close to Glasgow, where the countryside is much more penetrated by people on weekend or even evening outings, are different from the interests of the more sparsely populated areas, further from population centres.

If codes of practice are the route to follow, they must be studied and negotiated for areas narrower than Scotland as a whole. However, the time has come to take a lead in this, perhaps with the Scottish Landowners Federation. The time has come to discuss their interests and the interests expressed by the Ramblers Association, organisations promoting tourism and others to seek to ensure that the coutryside in Scotland, which is part of our heritage and with which we are concerned in the Bill, remains attractive and as open as we would like it to be.

Mr. Bill Walker: I represent a constituency with huge agricultural and shooting interests and with a large tourist-related economy. I shall be brief, but I feel that it is important that anyone debating the measures contained in this clause should fully understand that we can have the economy that we have in Perthshire and in the part of Angus that I represent, with a balance in the use of land, only if people understand that balance. There have been some interesting, thoughtful and helpful speeches on that.

There are times when it is just not suitable for people to wander willy-nilly around parts of Perthshire and Angus.

They are a danger to themselves and to everyone else, and one must recognise that. There are other times when people are welcome, as they are in their hundreds of thousands in my constituency. They are certainly welcome on the slopes of Glen Shee, which has become increasingly popular, and I am delighted that it has had a good season this winter.

The jobs provided from all those different activities show that the balance is important. There would be no economy in my constituency if there were not a balance between the rural and tourist-related interests, which are the providers of jobs. When anyone says that they believe that they should have unlimited access to any part of my constituency, I tell them that that is unrealistic. I spend a lot of my time walking around the mountain areas of my constituency and, because they are so beautiful, I understand why they attract people.

Mr. Dalyell: I would be interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's views on the Mar Lodge estate issue, although I know that it is just outside his constituency.

Mr. Walker: I know the Mar Lodge estate quite well. Like the hon. Member for Linlithgow, I think that it is much too valuable an asset not to be available to the public at large, if that can be arranged, and I believe that it can. The hon. Gentleman will also know that in that part of Scotland there has been little difficulty in getting access. I used to live at the end of Glen Clova and I used to walk regularly over the top of the hills. There were never any problems. In those days, it was not unusual to bump into members of the royal family. They did not know me, but I knew who they were, so I had the advantage over them.

Let me make it clear that I was speaking largely to the interests of my own constituency and drawing the attention of the House to the importance of balancing rural interests with those of tourists and leisure and recreation activities. People who use the countryside extensively understand that balance. I find that the only people who give trouble are those who have an axe to grind for some reason or another. People who are interested in that balance and interested in the use of the countryside rarely have difficulty in being accommodating, either in their interests or their activities.

8.15 pm

Mr. Galbraith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) for moving the amendment, and to all those hon. Members who have spoken and have covered the ground fairly well, making it easy for me to be brief.

I cannot claim, as my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West can, to have run up and down Ben Nevis in the Ben Nevis hill race. I am not a masochist. Nor can I claim, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) can, to have climbed all the Munros. I am not a Munro bagger, with or without a beard, as Muriel Gray would have it.

I can claim to have spent the largest part of my life in the Scottish mountains—or at least most of the weekends of my life. I started initially with the Renfrewshire hills and moved on to the Scottish mountains, the Alps and then to the Himalayas. I shall repeat what I said in Committee, which the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) obviously noted. Throughout that time in the mountains and on the many trips that I have made to climb their rock and ice faces, I have never had any difficulty with access.

I do not have any experiences such as those that have been recounted by my hon. Friends. I have sometimes had to change my plans because of stalking or for other reasons, but that was always easily accommodated by a discussion with the keeper who would give me directions to go elsewhere. Perhaps I am fortunate, but that is my experience. That is due to the traditional nature of access to the Scottish mountains, from which we have all benefited.

The traditional right of access is best summed up by Lord Thurso, one of the ogre figures mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). We do not often agree with the noble Lord, but I think that we should again quote what he has said about access to his land:

> "I'm perfectly content with the Scots law of trespass which is that you can walk across my land but you can't stop and use it . . . Everybody has a right of passage, but only the owner has a right of use. This approach suits me perfectly well. It works very well and always has done."

I accept that that is the way that access has traditionally worked. In my case and for many other people, and even for my hon. Friends, it has worked very well, apart from a few exceptions.

However, we must recognise that the position in the Scottish mountains is changing, for whatever reasons. It might be due to a change in landowners' use, although I am not necessarily sure that that is the case as there were always troublesome landlords in the past and some new ones may or may not be more troublesome. There is also the question of forestry land which has been sold to private owners, which will obviously affect access.

Whatever the reasons for a change in attitude, there is no doubt that it has changed. It came home to me only at the weekend. As many hon. Members will know, for obvious reasons, I have been away from the mountains for about three years. I was in Glen Coe once again at the weekend, at the Kingshouse, from where one can gain access to the Black Mount estate. When I passed by there I noticed the increased hassle factor, as we would describe it on the mountains. A road leads up towards Ben Alder from just beside the Kingshouse. It had always had open access, but now there is a closed gate and a rather large sign pointing out that it is private land and listing all sorts of stipulations. None of the signs has any legal basis, but if one is unclear about whether one can gain access and about one's rights there is no doubt that notices saying "Don't trespass" and "Private land" are intimidating. The hassle factor is increasingly occurring on Scottish land. Unless it is dealt with now, it will cause further disturbance as more and more people seek access to the Scottish mountains.

There is no doubt that more and more people are frequenting the mountains. In the early 1960s, if one went to the north side of Ben Nevis to do one of the climbs on an August bank holiday, one might have been the only person there. I remember one bank holiday when I was the only person on the face of Ben Nevis. I was climbing an observatory buttress.

Now, although not in the Lake District proportions where one has to queue, more and more people are seeking access to the mountains in Scotland. There is a climb known as Point Five. Aficionados among us will know

[Mr. Galbraith]

that that is a nice, high-standard, popular climb. It was climbed for the first time only in the 1960s, yet by the late 1960s to early 1970s, we had to start queuing at 3 o'clock in the morning to gain access to the mountain, almost as one does in the Alps.

The Countryside Commission for Scotland recently asked System Three to carry out a poll on access to the countryside. It was found that 61 per cent. of the people sampled—almost two thirds of the respondents—claimed that they walked in the countryside of Scotland. Almost two thirds of the population claim to climb or walk in the countryside of Scotland. That is the extent of the problem.

The recent Munro book by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust almost instantly sold 50,000 copies. We can extrapolate from that that between 10,000 and 15,000 trips are made to the mountains each year. Of the people who went into the mountains, 61 per cent. had difficulty knowing where they were going and what their rights of access were. Three quarters of the sample—almost 72 per cent.—agreed that people should have freer and better access to the mountains.

The survey showed how public opinion regards the problem. The problem must be set against the ever-increasing number of difficulties. I do not have any personal anecdotes of difficulty with access, but many examples are coming into the public domain. We have all heard about the troubles of the Kintail mountain rescue team. It wanted to produce a booklet on walks in the Kintail region in order to raise funds. The local landowner threatened to prevent the team from gaining access to his land, even for mountain rescue purposes.

In fairness to the Scottish Landowners Federation, it disowned the position taken by the landowner. It has always been reasonable and I commend it for that. It regards the traditional approach as the correct one. It wishes to negotiate access and achieve a balanced approach. It did not support its member in Kintail. The letters column of the *West Highland Free Press* contained a letter from one member who was threatened with prevention of access. That is a most excellent journal run by an extremely able individual, although I am not sure who he is. Sometimes I am not sure whether he knows who he is. The member said:

"I have enjoyed hill walking for over 20 years and have always attempted to co-operate with the estates over stalking etc. Increasingly, however, I have had blanket refusals of access, even though there is no stalking in the immediate area."

There is a nice wee footnote at the bottom which says:

"Donations to Kintail Mountain Rescue Team funds should be sent to Sergeant Charles Gillies, Police Station, Kyle of Lochalsh."

I read that out for the benefit of hon. Members.

That is one of the incidents which have arisen. A more recent one took place on Saturday 13 April 1991 on the lands of Lord Pearson of Rannoch.

Sir Hector Monro: Ah.

Mr. Galbraith: The hon. Member for Dumfries obviously knows Lord Pearson.

Sir Hector Monro: No.

Mr. Galbraith: The hon. Gentleman wishes to dissociate himself from Lord Pearson of Rannoch. I realise why. Lord Pearson was the famous individual of the sites of special scientific interest amendment in the Lords.

Four hill walkers were on open hill on Lord Pearson's land, 3 km from Rannoch station, when they were told to get off by two men wearing military garb. The men said that it was a shooting area and gave no other explanation. They said that the owner of the land was Lord Pearson.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that from time to time the military make use of that part of his Lordship's estate. It is possible that the men were in military garb, and properly entitled to be so.

Mr. Galbraith: As far as I know, the area is not under the control of the Ministry of Defence, so, whether shooting was going on there or not, the men had no right to ask others to remove themselves from the area or to do so on behalf of Lord Pearson.

I hope that the Minister will comment on another worrying development on access to the land. I hope that he will dissociate himself from it. Professor Sir Frederick Holliday, the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, was reported in the *Press and Journal* on 22 January as saying that there should be

"a system of tradeable permits for public access to the countryside, with prices set by the government or the landlords."

That is a most worrying development. Access to the countryside would be restricted and controlled by permits which would be sold.

Not unnaturally, the Ramblers Association was somewhat upset by that limitation of access to the land. It wrote to Professor Sir Frederick Holliday. He replied:

"The report in the *Press and Journal* was only partly correct. I have long held the view that access to certain parts of the countryside will have to be restricted and paid for."

That was said by the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. That is a Government body. Does the Minister agree with that? Will he take this opportunity to dissociate himself and his Government from that statement?

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West for introducing the amendment. It deals with access to the countryside. I would like the traditional method to continue. I have had no problems with it in the past. However, there are increasing difficulties. We seek simply to provide a right of access to mountain areas—not to allow use or abuse of the mountain areas. We seek simply a right of access and clarification of the law. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will look favourably on the new clause.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with what the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) said earlier. There is no common law of criminal trespass. The hon. Gentleman asked me for my legal opinion. He was also correct in saying that an interdict, which can be granted, can take effect only against a named person. Civil liability exists only for damage caused by trespass—for example, if someone took a dog into an area in calving or lambing season and upset the animals. Trampling of a cornfield could also be considered unreasonable.

My hon. Friend the member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) correctly stated the position in law. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) also gave a clear definition of the position. I am glad that

the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) spoke in the debate. We welcome hon. Members, who, although they represent other parts of Britain, greatly enjoy the countryside of Scotland. He said that the natural heritage of Scotland was unsurpassed and should be for all to enjoy. I am wholeheartedly in agreement with that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) stressed the importance of a balance in the use of land. That is absolutely correct. In Scotland, we have traditionally enjoyed the freedom to roam, derived from a mutual respect and understanding between those who own and manage the land and those who wish to use the land for recreation. In the eyes of the majority of commentators, this relationship has worked well and it is one that we are determined to see continue. We do not believe that the simple solution proposed by the new clause is the right solution. It not only ignores the many complex issues that surround access but introduces its own particular difficulties. For example, I do not envy the person asked to adjudicate, under the terms of subsection (1) whether the restriction or denial of access was reasonable.

Even if one gets over that hurdle, the new clause is unnecessary. Where Scottish Natural Heritage identifies a need for a particular track of land to be accessible, it will have a range of powers to negotiate means of securing that access. It will, under clause 12, be empowered to negotiate access agreements and, where appropriate, seek the Secretary of State's approval for an access order.

8.30 pm

Scottish National Heritage will also be able to negotiate management orders under section 49(a) of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967, as amended by schedule 10. With those powers, the SNH will be able to negotiate the means to protect the national heritage where necessary. Those powers are more flexible than the specific legislative provision in the new clause and would allow for a clearer focusing of priorities as to where access is necessary.

I accept what has been said about more needing to be done. Indeed, it is for that reason that a thorough-going review is currently being carried out by the Countryside Commission for Scotland. The commission has been involved in opening up access among many waterways in Scotland. The Clyde Calders initiative is one near a centre of population, so a great many benefit from that, and that is a good use of public funds.

In carrying out this review, we are also involving the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, but it would be premature to take any action before the review is completed. There will, of course, be full consultation and decisions should not be made before that has been carried out. We welcome the initiative and look forward to an early report. We feel that at this stage it would be inadvisable to cut across the detailed consideration of the review by introducing a new legislative provision of this type, bearing in mind that access agreements can, and we very much hope will, be forthcoming.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) spoke about Mar Lodge. It is premature to make any decisions. Negotiations are under way concerning the purchase, and the means to finance the management, of the estate. Until they are concluded and the proposition is put to the Secretary of State, it would be unreasonable to expect the Government to make any commitment. The hon. Gentleman will see in *Hansard* precisely what I said this evening in response to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Galbraith *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the Minister giving way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Dalyell.

Mr. Dalyell: It may be premature, but I think that what we can sensibly ask for tonight is that, before any irrevocable move is made, there will be at meeting of Ministers to discuss matters. Once the sale starts, without compensation and all sorts of legal entanglements, it will be a juggernaut that cannot be stopped. I am asking a straight question of the Secretary of State and the Minister. Can we be certain that, before any procedure starts, there will be a meeting of Ministers at which the excellent and powerful leader in *The Daily Telegraph* will be taken into account? It says:

"Now there is the chance to demonstrate how to conserve nature on a large scale, while achieving income from sporting interests and restricting access to those who are prepared to make the long walk in. All depends on Mr. Lang, the Scottish Secretary."

Well, for his own house journal—no, I must not say that. If a distinguished newspaper such as *The Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper that I respect very much, in a clever article, says that, surely it is time to step back and think.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that the Minister was giving way.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I thought that I had finished, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I will just say——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I asked the Minister if he was giving way and he indicated that he was.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I was not aware that I had given way but, if that is your ruling, I can respond in one sentence by saying that I will keep in touch with the situation but I cannot go further than that at present.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us be quite clear. Is the Minister giving way or is he not?

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I think that I have finished now.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Minister is not giving way. In that case, do I have another speaker? Mr. Galbraith.

Mr. Wilson: I will take over where my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) left off. I think that my hon. Friend wanted to point out to the Minister that he had not replied to the important question about the letter from the chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Professor Sir Frederick Holliday. In it, the professor came up with the remarkable statement:

"I have long held the view that access to certain parts of the countryside will have to be restricted and paid for."

I hope that the Minister will come in at the end of my brief remarks in order to respond.

Mr. Maclennan: Before the hon. Gentleman concludes his brief remarks, will he agree that the attitude expressed by Professor Holliday must make some of us pause before putting into the hands of SNH the power to determine whether public access should exist that is provided for in this clause. Although we understand and welcome the desire to increase public access, many of us do not think that this is the way to do it.

Mr. Wilson: The point is extremely well taken and I will come to it in a moment.

I do not want to delay the House at all but there is a wider perspective to the access question. What worries me about the debate is this. Everything that has been said by the Opposition parties is correct. There is always concern for the use of walkers and climbers and all the other people who go into the countryside for leisure purposes. The deprivation of access to the Scottish countryside and to huge areas of the natural terrain of Scotland has a much longer history than that. It affects communities that once lived and worked there and are now denied access in that broader sense.

What we are now down to in many areas is the margin of the debate. When there are people out with guns frightening off the odd individual that comes along, that is the last stage in the process. The major work of denying access was done by past generations, who got rid of the bulk of the people who lived and worked and had a right to be in that area.

I am conscious of the argument that this is all due to a new breed of landlord, people who do not understand the Scottish countryside, and so on. In the days of the old breed of landlord, Jock was as good as his master and everyone lived happily in a sort of Caledonian Valhalla. It is rubbish. These problems have been created by the old breed of landlord, the people who removed the vast bulk of the people from the land in the first place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to the Glen Tilt case. There we had a fine Scottish figure of a man—the Duke of Athol of that time—driving people off the land. He told the Cambridge students, "It is not a public way. It is my private drive. You shan't come down. The deer are coming. The deer are coming."

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow has been quoting from *The Daily Telegraph* editorials of 1991, but we can go back 100 years to the editorial in *The Times* based on that incident. *The Times* devoted a long leader to the incident in which it said:

> "The public have as perfect a right of way through the Vale of Glen Tilt as the Duke of Athol has to the possession of any acre of the property which constitutes his estate. The right in the one place, as the title in the other, is the mere creature of law."

The leader concluded as follows:

> "The two Cambridge students would have an easier remedy against the Duke of Athol if they cared to bestir themselves in the business. Certainly it would be rendering the public a service to bring this hotheaded foolish man to his senses."

I should be quite interested to know now whether the right of way in Glen Tilt—

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that Glen Tilt is also in my constituency and there is no problem today getting into Glen Tilt, and I regularly picnic there with my family. In fact, there is only one shepherd living there now. However, 20 or 30 men from Glen Tilt went to the Korean war. That gives some idea of the change that has taken place in that glen.

Mr. Wilson: I am delighted to hear that. If it is so, it is only because, over the generations, the right of access has been asserted on a regular basis.

The great causes célèbres concerning access in the highlands and islands have not involved individual hill walkers. Consider the pet lamb case in Kintail, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) will know. It was absolutely crucial from the point of view of asserting the right of the people who lived there to put their stock on to estates. The pet lamb had wandered into a deer forest owned by a man called Winnis. He invoked the whole majesty of the law to deny the right to put even one lamb on the land. That case was not about individual access; it was about the right of a community to access to huge swathes of land that had been taken from it.

This is not some new phenomenon. Consider the last land raids in the highlands and islands, which took place after the second world war. The Nazi collaborator Lord Brockett was the owner of a large estate. The men coming home from the war, who had fought against the side that the noble Lord had supported, were denied the right to establish themselves in smallholdings. He, too, invoked the majesty of the law to remove them. At present, issues of access concern individuals, who might be told by some latter-day charlatan, "Get off. This is my land." The reason the conflict has been removed is that the mass of the people have been removed. That is the historic background.

I am interested in rights of access and in legislation on rights of access, but I am not concerned simply with the protection of hill walkers and mountaineers. All these people are perfectly worthy, but my concern is to assert the right of people to have access once again to all the land that can make a community more viable. The greatest obscenity in the highlands and islands is that tiny communities have to cling for their very existence to a peninsula or island, while the vast area behind them is denied to them as it is still held for deer, or for some other useless purpose for which it was taken a century or a century and a half ago. Until that historic wrong has been righted, the whole issue of access to land in Scotland, particularly in the highlands and islands, will not have been addressed. The issue should have been addressed, politically and legislatively, a long time ago. There is much unfinished business.

I accept the remarks of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) about the other side of this argument, about the danger of putting the power in the hands of conservation bodies or of defining too tightly the areas to which people should have access. If areas are defind too tightly, it may be inferred that areas that are not defined are not open to people. This is the argument against rights of way. The balance has to be maintained. This matter will be considered by a Labour Government. It is necessary to get the balance right and, where necessary, to enshrine rights.

In this context, it is appropriate to quote Bill Murray, a respected mountaineer and writer on mountains. He said recently:

> "There is now too much uncertainty about the legal situation regarding public access to land."

That is one side of the coin. The other is that we should not, for the sake of giving a liberal freedom, over-restrict by defining a liberal freedom. That is the balance we must get right.

In conclusion——

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): Hear, hear.

Mr. Wilson: The Government Whip should not come in at this point to say, "Hear, hear."

Mr. Clark: I said it.

Mr. Wilson: Maybe the Minister should watch his tongue. We know something about his activities in the part of the world about which we are talking. If he wants to have the debate turned in that direction——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will oblige me by returning to the amendment.

Mr. Wilson: If the Minister does not desist, he and his hon. Friends will be here for a very long time tonight. We shall be delighted to get into a debate about the stewardship of land in the highlands and islands and about his right to hold so much land there. If he wants to have a debate, let him come to the Dispatch Box. Many hon. Members would say that he has no such right and that he is an impediment to the lives of, and a parasite upon, the people of the highlands and islands. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wilson: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene? Can he speak only from his backside position? Does he want to enter into the debate?

Sir Hector Monro: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you please ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the word "parasite"? Surely it is quite improper.

8.45 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: I should be obliged if the hon. Gentleman would withdraw the word "parasite" so that we may get on with the debate in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Wilson: I shall alter it to say that the whole breed of landlords, particularly absentee landowners in the highlands and islands, are parasites. I say so with absolute confidence. This is not peculiar to the Minister. He is one of that breed. Let me remind you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it was he, with his remarks from a sedentary position, who introduced this note into the debate. These issues matter to the people who live in the region. The Minister is an irrelevance at best, and a parasite at worst.

Mr. Alan Clark: The hon. Gentleman should not make accusations of that kind. I do not give a damn whether this may be thought to be extraneous to the debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I withdraw the word "damn". I do not care a fig for the niceties of this procedure. The hon. Gentleman has made accusations against me. He should justify those accusations. I suspect that he does not know anything about the way in which my family administers its land in Sutherland. We believe that we administer it as responsibly and decently as possible. The hon. Gentleman should flesh out his accusations. He need take only a minute and a half to do so. I should be glad to listen to any charge in support of his serious allegations. Some would say that such allegations against a parliamentary colleague are improper.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am more interested, and the House is more interested, in hearing a debate about the amendment that is before us than in hearing a debate about personalities. I shall be grateful if hon. Members on both sides of the House would deal with the amendment.

Mr. Wilson: I shall be very happy to get back to the subject under debate. May I say, for the record, that I was totally unaware of the hon. Gentleman's presence in the Chamber until he chose to intervene?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The record will stand.

Mr. Wilson: The record will stand, as will my remarks.

This is a debate about access to land in Scotland. It is about the need for legislation to assert the historic right to roam. It is about freedom of access to land and about the redevelopment of communities which have been excluded in recent times. These are proud clauses with a very long history, and I am very pleased to associate myself with them.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 3

DUTY TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF CERTAIN MATTERS

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 44, leave out ', and' and insert

';

( ) the interests of owners and occupiers of land, and'.

Clause 3 identifies the wide range of interests that the SNH should take into account in carrying out its functions. We have been reflecting further on the wording of the paragraphs of this clause to ensure that they are both all-embracing and have sufficient clarity to enable the SNH to operate effectively. The needs of agriculture, fisheries and forestry and the needs of social and economic development in Scotland or any part of Scotland cover the majority of situations. We accepted an amendment tabled in another place to the effect that the SNH should take appropriate account of the interests of local communities.

As was said in Committee, the definition of "communities" is not an easy one. We wish to ensure that the interests of owners and occupiers of land, who will be major partners with SNH in conserving and enhancing the natural heritage, are taken fully into account. Without taking the interests of owners and occupiers of land, as well as the interests of local communities, into account, the SNH will not be able to perform its statutory functions effectively.

I emphasise that, while the amendment in no way means that SNH will be beholden to owners and occupiers of land, it will be expected, where appropriate, to take their interest into account, along with the other needs and interests set out in the clause, in carrying out its functions. It will be for SNH to judge in each case what the balance should be between the different needs and interests as set out in the clause. I hope that the House will also appreciate

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

that SNH is expected to take only appropriate account of those various needs and interests. It cannot override its primary aims and purposes as set out in clause 1.

Mr. Dalyell: How much consultation has taken place over this issue? I understand from Dave Morris, representing the ramblers, from Wildlife Link, from Michael Taylor and others, that there has been little consultation, and that, in any event, the consultation period was due to go on until the late summer. People are asking, in effect, "Are the Government not sufficiently interested in our views to wait until the consultation has taken place?" The Government may have their side of the story on that. If so, may we be told it? I ask because serious people who are not automatically hostile to the Government are aggrieved by what has occurred. Will the Minister clarify the position?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not certain to what the hon. Gentleman is referring. There have been a number of consultation documents and we have tabled the amendment partly as a result of debates in the other place on the balance, duty and nature of the provision to ensure that it covers all necessary matters, without making it too specific, so that we shall not have to change the clause year by year. We think that we have the balance right and that it is appropriate for the amendment to be made.

Mr. Maclennan: I welcome the amendment. It may open up the possibility of judicial review of action taken by the SNH, which is apparently in defiance of the interests of owners and occupiers of land. It may give them a locus standi in the courts. That may be a residual remedy if the SNH were to exercise its functions with little regard for some of the interests of the community, in the way in which the predecessor organisation did in the past. I believe that some people with interests in, for example, forestry and farming or in activities with some economic benefit to the community, had those interests interfered with by the predeessor organisation. They will now have access to the courts, and while that may never be necessary —I hope that disputes will be resolved amicably—the amendment could be valuable in that respect and should be supported.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19

Drought orders

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 13, leave out lines 22 to 24 and insert

'and where applications are made both by a board and by an authority in respect of the same locality, the Secretary of State may make separate drought orders in favour of the board and in favour of the authority.'.

This amendment seeks to clarify that the Secretary of State may, if appropriate, grant orders both to a water authority and to a water development board in respect of a drought affecting one area. While it might be expected that the water authority could be in the lead in such cases, a board would require an order to allow it to meet any request from the authority for additional supplies. The problem might be that, in case of drought, the water authority would need extra supplies from the Central Scotland water development board, which had huge supplies, and both the water authority and the development board would need a drought order of their own to achieve that.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 27

Short title, commencement and extent

Amendments made: No 11, in page 19, line 45 after '4(2)', insert 'and (4) of this Act'.

No. 12, in page 19, line 45, after '26', insert 'of'.

No. 13, in page 19, line 46, after '11', insert 'to this Act'. *—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 2

Amendment of Enactments conferring nature conservation functions

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 24, line 35, after '21)', insert ', in subsection (7)(a)'.*—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 8

Procedure for making drought orders

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 39, line 30, after 'circulating', insert '(i)'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient for the House to discuss at the same time Government amendments Nos. 16, 17 and 18.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This series of amendments would add to the advertisement requirements for drought order applications the requirement for an advertisement in the area from which alternative supplies of water are proposed to be taken to meet deficiencies elsewhere. This is appropriate so that those who have an interest in the alternative sources may have an opportunity to raise any objections to the applications.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 16, in page 39, line 31, after 'order', insert '; and

(ii) within any locality from which, in the opinion of the applicant, an alternative supply is likely to be taken,'.

No. 17, in page 40, line 29, after 'place', insert '(i)'.

No. 18, in page 40, line 30, after 'order', insert '; and

(ii) within the locality from which, in the opinion of the applicant, an alternative supply of water is likely to be taken,'. *—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 10

Miscellaneous Amendments

Mr. Galbraith: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 45, line 12, leave out 'quarter' and insert 'third'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient for the House to discuss at the same time the following amendments: No 4, in page 45, line 17, leave out 'quarter' and insert 'third'.

No. 5, in page 45, line 22, leave out 'half' and insert 'third'.

Mr. Galbraith: An aspect that has characterised the Bill has been the amount of cross-party agreement and support for the measure and many of its provisions, and our debates—barring the odd incident such as that which occurred a few moments ago—have been held in good spirit with consideration of each others position. But the provision dealing with the variation and composition of river purification boards is a piece of nasty political spite and represents manoeuvring and gerrymandering by the Government.

The Government intend to reduce the number of local authority representatives on the boards. We are dealing here not simply with an isolated incident but with a pattern that has developed while the Conservatives have been in power. They have gradually been removing the democratically elected representatives on boards, replacing them with their own sycophantic appointees and lackeys. That has been happening to health boards and many other institutions for which the Government have responsibility.

This nasty trend is being continued with river purification boards. The Government have sought, through amendments introduced in Committee, to reduce to a minimum the number of local authority representatives. It has been a case of death by a thousand cuts. We fear that, in due course, the Government will introduce regulations to reduce their numbers still further, until such bodies are stuffed full of Government appointees, those bodies becoming nothing short of rest homes for failed Tory candidates and failed former MPs. Is it nothing more than once again a nasty piece of political spite to try to achieve by subterfuge and devious methods what they cannot do by democratic means?

9 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As the Opposition know, we consulted widely before making the provision. The vast majority of those consulted agreed with us and not with the Opposition on the matter. The change which we intend to make in the proportions of members of river purification boards is linked to our plan also to reduce the size of boards, while nevertheless enabling a wider range of interests to be appointed by the Secretary of State. Clearly, if we have smaller boards but need more places for Secretary of State appointments, we would have to reduce the number of other appointments made. That would mean reducing the numbers appointed by regional and district councils.

I emphasise that our proposals will still make certain that half of each board comprises local authority members. Their contribution is most certainly valued. The other half, although appointed by the Secretary of State, will represent not his interests but, as at present, those of the various groups to which they belong. Indeed, the views of industry, wildlife bodies, ecology interests, commercial fisheries, anglers and others should rightly be heard.

The plans do not add up to centralisation of control; far from it. What they mean is that the river purification boards will be seen to be independent, as they should be, of both central and local government.

I should also mention in relation to the boards that it is important not to erode their independence. Councils are not free to alter the amounts requisitioned by the river purification boards or to transfer those funds to other areas of local authority expenditure; nor are boards accountable to councils as such but ultimately to the Secretary of State. They set their own budgets and make their own decisions. They publish annual reports, and any member of the public is free to take up any matter with any board member directly.

The essence of the matter is that the change has been introduced because the vast majority of responses to consultation supported it.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 47, line 26, at end insert—

'( ) a Natural Heritage Area designated under section 6 of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991;'.

No. 20, in page 47, line 47, at beginning insert—

'(1) The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 shall be amended as follows.'.

No. 21, in page 47, line 47, leave out 'of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984'.

No. 22, in page 47, line 51, at end insert—

'(3) In section 98(1) (control of stray and other animals on roads) for the word "countryside" there shall be substituted the word "land".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 11

REPEALS

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 49, line 29, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 98, subsection (6).'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

9.2 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am sure that the House is by now very familiar with the main purpose behind the Bill: to establish Scottish Natural Heritage by merging the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland. To that end, the Bill provides SNH with general aims and purposes, sets out its various functions and responsibilities and updates particular powers which it will inherit from its predecessor bodies under existing legislation. The House will know that we consider that the Bill offers SNH a positive and flexible framework within which to operate in pursuit of its goal of the improved management and conservation of our precious natural heritage throughout Scotland.

Mr. Dalyell: Having listened patiently, does the Secretary of State agree that, when he talks of goals, the first goal that he and his colleagues will have to consider is the difficult question of the Mar Lodge estate? It is legitimate to ask the Secretary of State, who has heard the exchange, whether he accepts that he has a special responsibility in that matter.

Mr. Lang: I heard the hon. Gentleman's interventions earlier on the matter. I think that it would be inappropriate for me to seek to add anything to what my hon. Friend has already said in reply. Apart from anything else, the matter is not covered by the Bill, which is what we are debating on Third Reading.

There have, of course, been valuable and constructive debates on a number of points at each of the various stages of the Bill, and I am grateful to all hon. Members who contributed to them. We have made a number of important changes to the Bill as a result. We have introduced clause 6, which provides for the opportunity

[Mr. Lang]

for the establishment of natural heritage areas. We have removed the former clause 11, which would have required SNH to review all existing sites of special scientific interest, with subsequent appeals against continued designation. We have also amended the balancing duty of clause 3 to require SNH to take appropriate account of the conservation of archaeological and historical sites.

We also made some rather technical but nevertheless significant changes to clause 4 to make sure that SNH's relationship to the Joint Nature Conservancy Council will be exactly the same as the NCCS's. A new clause, clause 12, was added to extend to SNH the provisions of part II of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967. It will allow the new body, as well as planning authorities, to enter into access agreements or promote access orders designed to allow the public access to open country.

Even more importantly, perhaps, the Bill has given us the chance to discuss the major issues facing Scotland's natural heritage. These include the national parks debate, the principles of the SSSI system, fish farming and forestry. We have also had informed discussions about the importance of a Gaelic name for SNH and, of course, the question of the possible reintroduction of wolves and wild boars.

Hon. Members will also know that parts II and III make important provision for dealing with water resources with regard to irrigation and drought in Scotland. Further provisions on the management of water resources have been introduced during the passage of the Bill—for example, the raising of penalties for certain offences under the Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1968.

I am confident, and have been throughout my involvement with the Bill, that it is a necessary and important step towards the better understanding and use of our natural heritage. With the dedication and commitment of its staff and the co-operation of all those concerned in land use and management,. I believe that SNH will be successful in its aims. I thank hon. Members for the efficient way in which they have dealt with consideration of the Bill, both in Committee and in the Chamber.

I believe that the important amendments which we have made to the Bill in this House are crucial to the proper working of SNH, and I trust that all concerned, including those in another place, will see the wisdom and value of what we are doing by means of the Bill. I commend it to the House.

9.7 pm

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his remarks about the work of the Committee. The Committee's and tonight's proceedings—with a brief blemish from the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), who has now mercifully departed—were amicable and constructive. We share the aim of improving a Bill to create an agency that will work effectively to achieve the ends for which it is being set up. I have enjoyed the Committee's work and tonight's proceedings and believe that we have a better Bill now than we had at the start. In that spirit, we shall send a message to Scottish Natural Heritage that it is the profound hope of Labour Members that, when it comes into operation, it will do its work well for all the people and the natural inheritance of Scotland which is entrusted to it and to all of us.

I wish to press the Secretary of State once more on the question of Mar Lodge. Clearly, it is at the forefront of the debate in environmental terms. There seems to be wide support for the idea that it should be transferred to some form of public or community ownership. When we can unite an American billionaire, Prince Charles and every environmental organisation in the country, it would be a pity if the Secretary of State were to prove the impediment out of pure apathy. I do not suggest that, of the cast that I have mentioned, I am the most influential, but the Secretary of State would have the full support of the Labour party if he took steps to ensure that the aim of bringing Mar Lodge estate into public ownership was pursued. In deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I should have included the editorial writers of *The Daily Telegraph* in the list of personalities who support that aim.

Will the Secretary of State make a positive statement on Mar Lodge? There seems to be unanimity in the view that it is very special. It should not return to the vagaries of the marketplace once again, because over the past decade——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. All right hon. and hon. Members present are considerable parliamentarians. They know that Third Reading is a difficult debate, because it concerns only what is now in the legislation. I have been tolerant of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who moved far from the amendments, but he cannot press that point now. I should be grateful if he would return to Third Reading.

Mr. Wilson: I mentioned Mar Lodge in the context of Scottish Natural Heritage, which the Bill is creating and in the context of national parks. If Mar Lodge were brought into public ownership, it would immediately become a question——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have given my ruling. The hon. Gentleman will oblige the House and not abuse our procedures.

Mr. Wilson: On the issue of national parks, it is no secret that the Opposition were sympathetic to the idea, and the Government have come forward with a compromise. It is still our view that the Government should have allowed maximum flexibility in each of the areas under pressure. In Committee we had a debate about Loch Lomond, where there is clearly a strong body of opinion that national park status is desirable. Equally, parts of Scotland have been mentioned in the context of the national parks, where there is a general view that what the Government propose to set up and achieve under the Bill may be adequate for their management.

I hope that there will be the maximum possible flexibility within the terms of what has been created. I particularly hope, in deference to to the excellent case made in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) for national park status for Loch Lomond, that resources will be provided to meet the needs of that district. Even if the name "national park" is not used, some of the advantages that would have flown from it being a national park should be available to that part of Scotland which, even now, is under so much pressure.

On the issue of SSSIs, it is worth recalling, because it is now quite a long time ago, that we removed something from the Bill that the other place had introduced. We certainly regarded it—I think that the Government's decision to withdraw it would suggest that they shared our view—as a wrecking amendment, whereby the new agency would have to spend several of its first few years of existence trotting around every existing SSSI to re-designate it. That would have created a high hurdle in terms of an appeals procedure.

The Minister and the hon. Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) showed that they sympathised with the idea of an appeals procedure, even where they accepted that the procedure suggested by the Lords was not workable. In Committee, everyone concluded that the proposal introduced in the Lords should be removed, on the understanding that there would be a far healthier process of consultation than some people have experienced under the existing set-up. I am sure that the message could not have gone out any more strongly to Scottish Natural Heritage that, although there is no appeals procedure, there must be maximum sensitivity to the needs and interests of the people who live in regions affected by the designation of SSSIs.

I hope that the Minister will activate the valuable concession that he gave us over forestry, as it affects communities close to districts to be afforested—that a gazette or some other publication will list proposed forestry developments. That will prevent any mystery and ensure that no private forests appear from nowhere without the local community knowing about them. I hope that information will be circulated to organisations such as public libraries, community councils and local authorities. I was grateful for that assurance in Committee, and I hope that the Minister will communicate to me exactly how it will be implemented.

We had a wide range of debates in Committee on the powers that we suggested should be given to the new agency. Those exploratory debates gave us an opportunity to raise the issues of environmental concern in Scotland—fish farming, the movement of shipping in the Minch, the possibility of an oil spillage, forestry and a range of environmental issues. We have concluded that process tonight with our debate on the nuclear possibilities at Dounreay. In every one of those cases, we are happy to take at face value the assurances of the Minister that there is no need to write into the legislation the duty to make representations to the Secretary of State on such matters, because the right to do so is assumed.

I hope that Scottish Natural Heritage will be emboldened by the repeated statements of the Minister that it is expected to make representations on all those contentious issues. We want an environmental organisation with teeth and courage that is prepared to speak on issues, even if it treads on the toes of its political masters or mistresses, irrespective of the party from which they come. It is there to serve not political masters but Scotland's environmental interests. I hope that it will be encouraged by the Minister's clear message that it is expected to do so.

In fairness, I ought to say that, if the Government had wanted to establish a compliant and silent agency, they would not have appointed so high profile a chairman as Magnus Magnusson. That is turning out to be a good appointment, and we wish him well.

We have had a constructive and largely non-political debate. Anything to do with land use and land ownership in Scotland gives rise to debate. For all sorts of reasons, land use and land ownership matter deeply to a wide range of people. There are those who believe that they should not impinge upon the rights of private ownership. Some people would go to very great and arrogant lengths to defend those rights. There are others who will never accept the validity of those rights. Between those two positions, we have to work out a modus vivendi. The Bill lays the foundations for the creation of an agency that will be able to work well in the interests of Scotland and its natural heritage.

In that spirit, I thank in particular the Minister for the courteous way in which he has conducted all the proceedings on the Bill. When it comes into being, we wish the new agency well. We shall work with it, and we hope that it will be a great success.

9.15 pm

Sir Hector Monro: I am delighted that the Bill has completed its proceedings in the House, subject to anything that may happen later. It is a Bill of great vision. I am excited about the future of Scotland's natural heritage. Having been connected with the drafting of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill in 1979 and with taking it through the House, with the help of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and others, and having served on the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland for nine years, I find it slightly paradoxical that I am no longer involved in any official capacity with our natural heritage and that I am very much on the touchline.

The provisions of the Bill will improve and enhance Scotland's heritage. The very best of the Nature Conservancy Council, now in its own Scottish right, coupled with the expertise of the Countryside Commission and the two chairmen, running in harness this year and working closely together to set up Scottish Natural Heritage on 1 April 1992, can do nothing but good. The Secretary of State for Scotland has chosen a man of exceptional calibre to head it. The personnel and resources of the two committees are equally strong. Both organisations will have the back-up of an excellent permanent staff. I have great hope that what we are all so keen on in Scotland—the preservation of our natural heritage—will come about.

The amendments that were debated both in Committee and on Report have demonstrated the great enthusiasm in all parts of the House for preserving Scotland's natural heritage. They have highlighted the fact that, in future, emphasis must be placed upon improving what is already a very good record. We tend to play down our scenery and landscape and our good record on nature conservation and the preservation of wildlife habitats. We are starting from a very sound base. I wish the Secretary of State, the two chairmen and, subsequently, Magnus Magnusson, every good fortune. I am sure that we can look forward to immeasurably improved facilities in Scotland, and I am confident that the Government will provide sufficient resources to ensure that our heritage is maintained and enhanced.

9.19 pm

Mr. Maclennan: The Bill did not attract universal acclamation from the environment lobby, and the Government have displayed some political courage in bringing it to the House against the critical view that the Scots should not look after their environment. That was an insulting view which, from the beginning, most Scots rejected.

Most of the main environmental issues have been canvassed during the passage of the Bill, and the concerns that gave rise to a demand for a new Scottish agency were properly ventilated. The Secretary of State responded with some imagination, which I found encouraging, to the concerns in my constituency about the way in which the predecessor organisation had handled the issue of the flow country. The establishment of natural heritage areas under the provisions of clause 6 could provide a way to reconcile the various land interests.

I did not have the good fortune to be a member of the Standing Committee, so I did not have the opportunity to deploy certain arguments. It is right to recognise that the expertise of Scottish Natural Heritage in scientific matters will be the best available, and that there would be no point in having an appeal system. However, as designation will result in the transformation of the status of the land, with consequences of great importance to those who own or occupy the land, and the community that uses it, there should be a requirement for the Secretary of State to confirm the new status. I regret that that is not included in the Bill, but this is not an occasion on which we should linger overlong on what is not included.

My argument was somewhat misrepresented by the Minister at an earlier stage, when it was suggested that my hon. Friends and I wanted an appeal system. We wanted no such thing—we wanted to establish the right of the Secretary of State to intervene when designation could have adverse consequences. I think that that was a legitimate objective. If clause 6 is to be the way ahead, it is possible that conflict will not arise. That will depend on how Scottish Natural Heritage uses the power of designation of sites of special scientific interest. If it goes full steam ahead and designates large tracts of Scotland, rather than using the proposals in clause 6, I predict that there will be conflict.

We should have a clear statement, not about consultation—we have already had that from Magnus Magnusson and his colleagues—but about the policy intention on widespread designation. The Secretary of State has admitted that that power was used in the absence of any other power, for purposes that the House did not envisage when the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was enacted. I think that that is the view of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who has a closer knowledge of, and involvement in, the matter than any other hon. Member. No one wants to see a continuation of past conflicts.

Clause 6 provides for sites of special scientific interest that have already been designated in pursuance of the objectives that the clause would cover. I do not accept the view of some that for the next few years, the agency should reconsider all designations because that would be damaging to its role. However, there may be a case for it reconsidering designations in some sectors that would be better covered by the procedures set out in clause 6. It would be extremely sensible for the agency to place a moratorium on the designation of sites of special scientific interest in the flow countries, especially while it contemplates the use of powers that allow representations to be made about the economic impact of what is proposed and, ultimately, for the Secretary of State to decide what is the best way to proceed. I appeal to Magnus Magnusson to issue a clear statement that there will be a moratorium pending consideration of the powers that are set out in clause 6.

In other respects, I welcome the Bill as a strengthening of the protection of our environment in Scotland. I believe that the interest of the Scottish people in seeing that environment improved and protected is one that everyone in the House who has participated in debates on the Bill has sought to reflect, and that that approach is reflected in the shape of the Bill as it has emerged following consideration on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report. The Bill has been improved because the Government have responded to suggestions and listened to criticisms. We can take some pride and satisfaction in the fact that the House has agreed to the setting up of a new institution that will bring together the work of two former agencies. The redefining of the roles of those agencies will give a sharper cutting edge to the work that is so important to our country.

9.28 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to what can be described as the in-house matters of dealing with those who wish to appeal against decisions that will be made under clause 6. The clause does not provide for a particularly happy system. I spoke at some length on the issue in Committee, but I shall not do so this evening. If the matter is not taken up in the other place, I believe that we shall return to it in future.

I shall be astonished if Scottish Natural Heritage does not behave in an understanding and sympathetic way. I am sure that it will engage in consultations that will be different from those that have taken place in the past. I hope that that will happen, but all my experience is that bureaucratic bodies, despite all the good wishes of Parliament, have a tendency to develop what I call god-like postures after they have been in existence for some time. With that fear in mind, I tabled an amendment, as did other hon. Members.

I shall be surprised if the matter is not canvassed when the Bill is considered in another place. I am fairly sure that those in the other place will debate it. Whatever happens finally to the Bill, I believe that the system that is set out in clause 6 will constantly be considered.

However, this is an important and substantial Bill for Scotland. It will change things in many ways and for the better. We all hope that we will care for, use properly, look after and make use of our natural heritage. By "we", I mean the Scots and all those who visit Scotland. We can certainly say that we have given our children and our children's children a basis on which they can look forward to enjoying the delights and beauty of beautiful Scotland.

9.29 pm

Mr. McFall: Some hon. Members have said that the Bill has received universal acclamation, but it certainly does not have it from me. The mountain areas of Scotland and

consultation management have not been addressed, and in the years to come the problems will pile up, particularly in my area.

Clause 2 deals with the functions of Scottish Natural Heritage. People in my area are crying out for legislative proposals so that the issues affecting the Loch Lomond area can be addressed. It is manifest that the present arrangements whereby local authorities come together are not working effectively and will not work in the long term. I plead with the Minister and with Magnus Magnusson the chairman-designate, to take into consideration, with the working party which the Minister kindly offered me, that legislative aspect and the crucial aspect of funding.

The Bill does not address funding. As I said in Committee, we have national parks for England and Wales and Government funding of 80 per cent. In a current White Paper, the Department of the Environment calls the national parks of England and Wales the jewels in the crown. We do not have that. The comparison with England and Wales is bad enough, but in a European and international context we are the odd man out. We are very much the poor relation.

The Minister has done nothing to enhance the environment of my area. The Scottish Council for National Parks has recently been re-established. It mentions in a communication sent to us that natural heritage areas are intended to be substitutes for national parks, and I agree. That is based on the voluntary principle. But the voluntary principle has to date failed to take care of the environment. If the Minister comes to Loch Lomond with me this summer, he will see the effects and inadequacies of the voluntary principle, and the need for a solution for Loch Lomond. That is not on offer from the Government at the moment.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said that bureaucracies have a way of their own and become godlike. I fear that the NHA has been set in concrete and that there will be nothing good on offer for my area. That is the worry in my area.

I said in Committee that there was a manifest agreement among community groups in my area about the desirability of national park status. Rural community councils like Callender, which is not in my constituency but in the constituency of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), voted strongly to be included in the national park area. I have received no adverse comments on the issue of the national park status and I would like the Minister to tell us about any comments he has had from people on that subject.

A letter dated 3 December 1990 from Magnus Magnusson, the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, to the Countryside Commission says:

"The status of the designation and its protective powers should be commensurate with the relative importance of the areas in Europe or wider international term.."

How can natural heritage areas come within the European or international context when they are not established along the lines of national parks, when they do not have independent planning or adequate funding? That is the first issue that Magnus Magnusson and his colleagues will have to address. In the same letter, Magnus Magnusson said:

"The budget allocated to the area must be adequate for reasonable attainment of priorities determined for the overall management of the area."

That is not happening.

In my letter to the Minister on 5 April 1991—which I am sure he has received—I said that the constituent local authorities for Loch Lomond regional park are dismayed at the latest exercise with regard to a working party. I have reason to believe that we shall not get far with that. A communication from Dumbarton district council tells me that it has been informed that in correspondence with the Scottish Office the working party's remit is to consider how improvements may be achieved within the existing statutory and administrative framework; and that there is a current school of thought which believes that the working party would be at officer level only.

One important aspect of any working party is that it should represent local interest and involve local authority and community representatives. It is local authority, community and voluntary representatives who know their own areas. It is no use leaving it to those at officer level. There must be input from the local community or the problems of the area will not be considered in their entirety.

Natural heritage areas are inadequate for Loch Lomond, as are the voluntary principle, the lack of funding and the lack of planning powers. I tell the Minister that tonight and I will tell him that for years to come. There is a huge body of Scottish environmental opinion behind me, because the need for enhancement and conservation for a strategy for land management for the mountain areas of Scotland is important. The Bill does not deal with those issues. I welcome it as a little step forward, but it has had almost fatal flaws from the beginning. Even at this stage, I ask the Minister to reconsider the Bill when it returns from another place and to listen to the people in Scotland because I am speaking for many of them. I ask the Minister to respond to local feelings and, when the Bill returns to the House, to give us some of the tools with which properly to manage our land and our heritage.

9.36 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh: There was an enormous contrast between the speech of the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and that of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who believes the Bill to be perfect in every way. It is not perfect, but it has been improved since it arrived in the House by, for example, the fateful disappearance of the notorious clause 11.

However, there are still massive gaps in the Bill, for example, on the dumping of nuclear and toxic waste and on the concept or clear definition of sustainability. I hope that the Minister's promise about community involvement will be fulfilled in practice. I notice that there is a major gap in the Bill on the question of land use in Scotland. I hope that the House will deal with such topics in the future.

The Bill is at least a step towards a co-ordinated view of the Scottish environment and has at least attempted to create an integrated approach to Scottish environmental needs. If Mr. Magnusson's promises are fulfilled, I hope that we shall see a decentralised approach in which, as far as possible, there will be a decentralisation of decision taking and contact with local communities.

I am disappointed that, although there has been an improvement in the Bill, that improvement is partial and under-powered compared to the Scottish environmental protection agency that I should like to see in an ideal and independent Scotland. At least the Bill is a small step in the

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

right direction. I should like to wish Magnus Magnusson and the staff of the Scottish Natural Heritage well in their work. Their task will not be easy, but it will be of massive importance to the future of Scotland.

9.38 pm

Mr. Kennedy: I do not propose to interrupt the running order, and I shall be brief.

Mr. Galbraith: Good.

Mr. Kennedy: It is typical of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) to shatter the all-party consensus which was emerging in the closing stages. I want to make a contribution now, as I was not a member of the Committee. As Wester Ross featured heavily in the discussions of national parks, I should like to say a couple of words, almost in contrast to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

I shall begin with an opening principle. The beauty of the legislation—if it works—is that stated by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). It has within it a degree of flexibility which, if it is to succeed and to perform well in the years ahead, means that it can come up with a variety of different solutions based on the realities of different communities and different parts of Scotland. That must be a strength.

The weakness of the argument for the level of community responsiveness and the different working blueprint for different areas is that if one is not careful one ends up with anarchy. No one has angled seriously for that for our natural heritage and conservation. I want to go back to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). We must recognise that the argument of the hon. Member for Dumbarton for a national park, independent planning and proper resourcing may be the blueprint for Loch Lomond, given its proximity to the conurbation of west central Scotland and to Glasgow in particular, but it would not fit easily or acceptably in the context of Wester Ross, which is a rather different environment.

Mr. McFall: In Committee, I tabled various new clauses with specific reference to Loch Lomond. I made the point then that different solutions are required for different areas. I said that the sensitivities of people in the area had to be upheld. I was speaking about my own area.

Mr. Kennedy: I was aware of that point, and that is why I am only too pleased to be able to speak in the hon. Gentleman's support. He obviously speaks with more local working knowledge of Loch Lomond than I can and he makes a powerful case. However, the same case may not apply to other areas, whether the Cairngorms or Wester Ross.

My next point is for the Minister, although it might now be made more appropriately to Magnus Magnusson. Highland regional council is very much encouraged by Mr. Magnusson's approach and by his attitude to the post. He has visited various parts of the Highland region, and he has had some contact with the regional authority and with people at local level. He is sensitive to the anxieties involved.

In the whole saga of sites of special scientific interest, as other hon. Members know only too well, there has been anxiety about an imposed national park in part of the highlands. The tremendous anxiety that has followed from that is that people from outside the area will call the shots. It is feared that there may even be no shots to be called because an iron curtain will be drawn around the area and no development in the local interest will be allowed. That is a genuine anxiety, which Mr. Magnusson appreciates. The Bill sets out a framework that will allow him sufficient flexibility, subject to the guidance of the Scottish Office, to produce an environmental policy that can square that difficult circle—to protect and promote the indigenous natural beauty while not stifling it. The aim should be to enable future generations to make a livelihood from the area as the present generation can.

One of the most encouraging features of the constituency postbag—I am sure that hon. Members of all parties find the same—is the tremendous increase in the number of schoolchildren who now write to Members of Parliament. Hon. Members who have served in the House for decades longer than I have have also registered that. I find that, apart from the broad global issues such as the third world, schoolchildren increasingly write to Members of Parliament about environmental issues.

In the highland context, I hope that that demonstrates an awareness of the importance of the natural environment. It also shows that those who are being born, brought up and educated within that environment have a sensible sensitivity to the need to enhance it and at the same time to the need to be able to promote development in the area which will be for their future well-being as regards job opportunities. That means that one does not want to turn the highlands into a natural history museum with the presumption that people will not be able to live and make a livelihood there, but wants to ensure that the livelihood conforms as much as possible to the natural environment.

Given all the slings and arrows of fortune that have on occasion been fired against highlanders, they have done a pretty good job of being responsible about the environment while exploiting it, in the proper sense of the word, for their future well-being.

I hope that the Minister, the Scottish Office and Magnus Magnusson will be extremely careful in any moves that they might make to designate natural heritage areas. We do not want to end up with the sort of national park blueprint that might well suit Loch Lomond but would not be the right solution to achieve a balance between conservation and development in Wester Ross and other parts of the highlands.

9.46 pm

Mr. Dalyell: An 11-year-old wrote to me inquiring:

"How come a person in Mr. Magnus Magnusson's position could possibly be in favour of whaling. Answer that."

I am still contemplating the reply, because I am not sure that there is one.

Mr. Wilson: Pass.

Mr. Dalyell: Pass. During the recess, I heard you say, Mr. Speaker, on "The Week in Westminster" that the best Members of Parliament were the most unreasonable.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but I said "not too unreasonable".

Mr. Dalyell: I am being reasonably unreasonable, when I say that I think that Third Reading is certainly a time for

politenesses, but also a time to talk to the House of Lords if one wants to, because they will have to consider the Bill further.

As regards politeness, the Minister has certainly been a model of courtesy and decency in Committee, and I must couple that with the courtesy that I have received from his office and from other officials of the Scottish Office on the many occasions that I have had dealings with them. I have no doubts of the seriousness of purpose of both the Minister and his officials. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) who was Chairman of the Committee.

I am deeply discontented by what we have done. There are geological flaws in the Bill. During the recess, I reflected carefully on exactly what we have been up to. As I see it, the position is this. The Government have enacted legislation to create an independent Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland. To be fair, there is merit in placing in the hands of the Secretary of State for Scotland a clear responsibility for the conservation of Scotland's wildlife and for ensuring that nature conservation has a full place in the debate about land use in Scotland.

However the cost of that change has been high in disruption of the scientific conservation effort, in the alienation of much informed opinion on conservation and in the loss of morale among concerned and involved staff.

Perhaps the first geological fault is that landscape and wildlife conservation simply are not compatible bedmates: they do not go together. The Government's proposals for mergers postulate that landscape and wildlife conservation are natural partners for merger. We need to ask whether that proposition is appropriate for functions of different origins, approaches and ethics. Those differences are important.

The roots of landscape conservation lie in planning for the built environment and concern to conserve the designed and man-made landscape structure of much of our countryside. That is an aesthetic approach. Nature conservation has its origins in study of natural history and its practice is underpinned by scientific survey and assessment. That is an ecological approach. Each has a different ethos, and different training, skills and legislation. Those fundamentals simply cannot be set aside in a shifting around of our administrative arrangements for delivery of conservation advice.

There is no right or wrong way in which to arrange these matters. Other countries do things differently. But it is facile to set aside the experience and structures which have evolved over a long period without any debate about whether they are right. We all know the genesis of the Bill. It was thought up by the former Environment Secretary and dispatched to the House of Commons.

A case could be made for a close alliance between landscape conservation and protection systems for historic landscapes and the built heritage. Here might lie an alternative alliance of interest in the way in which man has fashioned and continues to fashion the appearance of our land.

The Minister might ask his advisers on the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland for its views on that proposition. It has concluded that a convincing case for the linking of landscape and nature conservation functions has not been made. Far less do the proposals address the mechanics of integration. A merger, in the full sense of that word, is not realistic. The best that can be done is to staple functions together.

In my opinion, for the most part we have created elaborate window dressing. Scottish Natural Heritage is not either more powerful or more effective than its predecessor.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Gentleman is making an interesting speech. We may not be creating a body which is any more powerful, but at least we are creating a body in which the two interests that he rightly described as rather different can be reconciled. Is not that a way of producing a coherent approach to the land?

Mr. Dalyell: I am not sure about that. My candid response to the hon. Gentleman is that I have to recognise that he had an unfortunate experience in his constituency with nature conservancy in the flow country. A good deal of tactlessness was involved, and Sir William Wilkinson and his colleagues regretted what happened. For reasons of time, I would rather not be drawn into discussing that interesting and important point. In all honesty, I could not tell the hon. Gentleman that he is wrong. That is not the position that I wish to take.

In the Government's earlier consultative paper about merger, "The Way Ahead", little attention was paid to the commission's recreation function. This is dismaying, because recreation is at the centre in the commission's business and it commands a significant portion of the grant that the commission disburses to its client groups in the public and private sectors. The lack of attention to recreation is alarming on several grounds.

First, for too long we have under-invested in recreation in the countryside and extra new resources are required to manage the impacts of the public use of land and to promote higher quality facilities, all of which underpin the recreation and tourism industries. This is one of the essential arguments in the commission's mountain areas report, as the Minister will concede.

Secondly, the commission promotes its recreation functions through investment and working with others, operating almost as a development agency, and funds for this approach will be less secure after merger, given the wide prospectus of new conservation initiatives proposed for the new agency.

Thirdly, the Government's consultation paper identifies recreation as a potential threat to conservation. Indeed, recreation is seen as a problem, not an opportunity—a perception that is likely to lead to recreation becoming subordinate to conservation, if carried forward.

I hope even at this stage that the Lords will reflect on these points.

Enjoyment by the public extends across the whole of our heritage, be it scenery, wildlife, the built and historic, or cultural matters. The assessment and care of heritage involve many organisations concerned with land use, planning and management. The Commission's functions for enjoyment and care of fine scenery are well balanced, because scenery is the prime attraction for most visitors to the countryside and is central to tourism. The countryside is also the resource and the backdrop for many sporting activities.

A time when the tempo of interest in leisure use of the countryside is on the increase is not the time to be playing down recreation. Nor is the time to be placing this function in a new agency where it will inevitably be in a more subordinate role because of the dominance of staff and legislation concerned with nature conservation. Any

[Mr. Dalyell]

underplaying of recreation will be regarded as controversial by recreation interests and will be likely to lead to new controversy and conflict.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman is making a very important speech and certainly many of us would have wished that we could have heard some of it earlier. That is not a criticism; it is just a comment.

On the very point of recreation bodies that have an interest in the use of a our Scottish land, does the hon. Gentleman join me in deploring the absence of proper appeals procedure, which is the point I tried to make in Committee, he will remember?

Mr. Dalyell: I was, as my hon. Friends know, very tempted when the hon. Gentleman approached me to support him on appeals. I did not do so. I took a lot of trouble about it. I asked around, and a number of those with whom I was in close contact were against the appeals procedure precisely because they thought that it might be abused. It did not help his case that Lord Pearson and others in the Lords had conducted this ambush. This is my personal opinion—I cannot speak for my hon. Friends on the Front Bench and they may take a different view—but had it not been for what happened in the Lords, the hon. Gentleman would have got his amendment through. But great resentment was caused by what happened in the Lords on this issue.

Mr. Walker: What about the Committee?

Mr. Dalyell: I think that the Minister will agree that, with the exception of himself, I probably occupied more of the Committee's time than anybody.

During the recess, I reflected on this matter with colleagues, who have been very helpful, with a view to making a submission to the House of Lords to think again. I make no bones about what I should like to see happening. I should like to see a general election in June, so that we could go back to the drawing board on this whole matter. In fact, I should like to see the Bill fall.

We have to reflect on the whole question of sustainable development and whether it can be delivered. By far the most interesting element of the new proposals is the emphasis on sustainable development. The Government's desire to move in this direction is to be welcomed, but the realism of laying this task on the new agency needs examination.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Dalyell: First, there is the question whether the new agency is centrally enough placed to handle this major challenge. The central conservation issues of today pivot on the consumption—particularly by the developed nations—of increasing amounts of the world's natural resources, and on all the consequent effects on pollution, population increase, health, hunger and the social cohesion of increasingly urbanised societies.

This is a heady agenda, on which a local agency with a limited remit might make progress. It can be argued that the scale of these issues places them at governmental or transnational level, although there is an important challenge here for a body to act in a missionary role. But this will be a provocative task, if only in defining, in a practical way, what sustainable development means. This will not necessarily lead to the kind of harmony that the Government seek in the debate about conservation and development.

The concept of sustainable development is, on the one hand, simple and, because of this, attractive. But it is also difficult to define and difficult to apply to the kind of marginal land that makes up much of upland Scotland. Let me give some examples.

We cannot easily assess whether present approaches to the management of rural land are sustainable, because of the long time scale involved in understanding the effects of present practice, and because of the complexity of the systems—for example, the debate on whether conifer afforestation of poor, acidic upland soils leads to enhanced acidification. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) knows exactly what I am getting at, as it is highly pertinent to the kind of area that he represents.

In the assessment of gains and losses in the use of land, we cannot easily measure, or give monetary value to, the intangible benefits or values that we attach to, say, well-being and pride in our heritage, or to the enjoyment of recreation in fine countryside. It is unlikely that there is any methodology to do this with precision.

At this stage I want to pay tribute to a man I admire very much. I refer to George Lawson, a former Member of Parliament for Motherwell, and a Scottish Whip. He gave a great deal of his time to the question of land use, and published a report. I do not say that I have read the entire report, but during the recess I went back to it. I thought extremely highly of the work that George Lawson did.

It is likely that we have already passed the limits of sustainable use in the way in which we exploit land of the lowest productivity—say, in the afforestation of the very poorest land, or in the carrying capacity of some upland habitats for recreation.

So, while the sustainable development remit is attractive, it is not an easy route forward for any agency whose remit does not extend into a wide arena, and vigorous pursuit if this theme is likely to sharpen the conservation-development debate, not ease it.

The Government have made it clear that the proposed new agency must temper its functions with economic developments in rural areas. That is not quite in accord with the definition of sustainable development in which human activities should be in balance with the capacity of the natural resources being used. The dilemma here is that the Government's approach to balancing duties places undue burdens on the lightweight and lowly funded conservation bodies as against the heavily resourced mechanisms for the support of the development.

Yet evidence is lacking that conservation is a major constraint on development in Scotland. No such accusation can be made against the way in which the conservation of landscape has been delivered. For wildlife conservation, there has been a small number of high-profile cases of conflict, but that should not obscure the fact that most SSSI consultations, most management agreements and most other consultation arrangements for conservation are working smoothly. Any snags in the system should be eased through improvements in its administration rather than in its wholesale reorganisation.

My ferocious defence of the NCC staff against accusations in the debate in the other place by people who should have known better was partly due to the fact that the NCC staff as a whole, with certain exceptions—the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to some unfortunate exceptions—had been very successful. It should be on the record that the NCC staff as a whole were deeply hurt by what was said in the debate in the other place. I say that having attended the estuary and other NCC presentations given by Sir William Wilkinson and Tim Hornsby.

Mr. McFall: I suggest to my hon. Friend that the people who have been betrayed are the members of the Countryside Commission, with their mountain areas report. My hon. Friend is making important points about development and conservation. In the Loch Lomond area, there is £120 million-worth of development, but we do not have the necessary statutory laws for conservation and enhancement. The result is that, on the see-saw, the balance is very much on the side of development. Interest in conservation and the enhancement of the environment is negligible compared with the pressure for development.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not exaggerate when I say that, of the 30 to 40 mostly knowledgeable people I have met who read the *Official Report* of the debates that took place in Committee, and in particular who read the remarks of my hon. Friend, most said, in effect, "John McFall is absolutely right, and you people in Parliament had better understand that." I refer not only to Frank Bracewell, the planning officer of Central regional council, but many others who strongly agree with the proposal put forward by my hon. Friend, who is the constituency Member involved.

I leave out the rest of the argument. My hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) may be right in what he said about his area, and we do not quarrel with that, but some of us in the Central region desperately want a natural park. The whole tenor of the Government's proposals is to undermine the role of nature conservation and to give encouragement to the prejudiced view that the nature conservation movement must be brought to heel. That is nothing less than a major surrender of values. Adding to the commission's functions may be seen by some as one way of shifting the balance against nature conservation, but it is no way to create a workable merger. The early signs are that the merger is not working happily. The planning stage and the rest of what is going on are riddled with difficulties.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): We all acknowledge my hon. Friend's expertise in the matter, but is it not the case that one of the tragedies of the Government's approach is that the vested interests—landowners, and worse, those people who have only a financial interest in lands in Scotland, who may not be based in Scotland and who may not have any concern for the conservation of land in Scotland—seem to be listened to in the corridors of power rather than the hill walkers, the bird watchers and the other conservation groups who for over a century have had the real interest of Scotland at heart? Does my hon. Friend agree that, by his approach, the Minister is prejudicing the interests of people who enjoy, relish and have a great commitment to land and conservation in Scotland in favour of the interests of those who have only a financial interest? That is the nub of the difference between us and the Minister.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall not stretch Mr. Speaker's patience by wandering to the question of Mar Lodge. The earlier discussion of Mar lodge completely encapsulated the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) had made. That is why we will talk about Mar Lodge on other occasions, but I undertook not to stray back to that.

There are organisational imbalances to address in the merger. Those imbalances might be catalogued. There is a major imbalance in staff numbers, with the NCCS at the time of merger being at least six times larger. The organisation will be starting life essentially in the old offices of the NCCS, but with a new nameplate, so there will be an image issue which will run against the interests of the Countryside Commission for Scotland. The NCCS has complex and well focused legislation on designation, control licensing, land management, and so on, and those functions will still have to be delivered, while the commission's functions under statute are relatively open, and will be overshadowed by the need to achieve these key wildlife tasks. There is a very vigorous voluntary sector lobby on behalf of nature conservation, which will be pushing hard for no relaxation in the way in which nature conservation is delivered. Far from being a true merger of equals, the prospect is that the CCS functions will become overshadowed in the new arrangement.

We have a complex system for administering and overseeing land use matters. Some people think that there should be an all-embracing land use department, but there are good arguments against whole scale amalgamation of functions. Principally, the key sectoral interests should be seen to be separate and visible, without the concealment of debate that would exist in an all-purpose land-use department where controversy was balanced internally. The all-purpose approach would be bureaucratic and less efficient.

Maintaining two Government agencies would allow those functions that may be subordinated to have their place and to be visible—as in the case of recreation—to the large constituency with an interest in it. Objectives would be more focused; indeed, divergence of views on matters like conservation is to be encouraged, as fostering debate and providing the widest spectrum of views to Government. The risk of subordinating key functions is the key argument in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" against an equivalent merger in England, and one has to ask why that argument does not apply in Scotland.

The new agency, SNH, already promises to be a small bureaucracy, with complex systems of political control and oversight. The Minister may interrupt if he thinks that I am being unfair, but there are those dangers.

Less dramatic but more cost effective, more efficient and saving of confusion and morale would be to address any need for change through administrative action. To do that, the Government should endorse the present structures as the basis for change, and encourage administrative fine-tuning of existing mechanisms where snagging points occur, such as the need for a route of appeal when promoting new designated areas.

They should provide some of the extra resources required for the merger with the relatively underfunded

[Mr. Dalyell]

Countryside Commission for Scotland and should direct that its two agencies collaborate closely on those topics where joint working makes good sense. They should promote and strengthen the commission's work in the countryside around towns where it has already made an impact and, with major dereliction now tackled by the Scottish Development Agency, direct the commission to a new role in leading smaller scale landscape improvement work in collaboration with the local enterprise companies to create a richer and more accessible landscape close to where most Scots live.

The Government should also encourage the commission to continue to develop a stronger design-based approach in its work, particulary to promote higher standards of built development in the countryside. They should release more funding to the commission to strengthen its work to promote recreation and facilitate harmony between visitors and those who own and work the land.

Finally, the Government should encourage stronger working between the conservation agencies and those agencies and Departments responsible for primary land uses. They should begin a debate about sustainable use as a collaborative venture in that way rather than through a single agency approach as proposed.

Underfunding of the Countryside Commission in recent years has left it in a weaker position than the Nature Conservancy Council because the commission's mode of working through others has led to it spend little of its resources on building up its own staff and internal activities. Although small in size, the commission has operated efficiently and prudently and chosen partnership as its main working theme. The extent of duplication of effort between the commission and the NCC is limited, and that could be eased by more collaboration.

There is a role for an agency to link caring for the countryside and its use for recreation. That is not always an appreciated role because it involves bridge-building and compromise as well as avoidance of confrontation. Recently, however, the commission has been leading lively debates on issues like caring better for mountain areas, and has been reviewing arrangements for access to the countryside.

Given a modest increase in staff and funding, the commission could play a more vigorous role and develop a distinctive approach to enjoyment and conservation of Scotland's scenery, which is the crucial resource underpinning tourism and outdoor recreation.

There has been little general debate about the technical merits of the proposed merger of the CCS and the NCC in Scotland. In part, some people may see the merger as simply a good way to simplify public administration. Some may see it as providing a new face to conservation, while others undoubtedly see the merger as a means of blunting what is perceived to be a sharp edge to conservation. But there must be a serious review of fundamentals and practicability.

I hope that the House of Lords will reconsider the Bill thoroughly, as it is entitled to do. Having read the *Official Report* of the Standing Committee, I hope that, saved by the gong in the form of a general election, the Labour party will put forward different proposals from the ill-thought-out, ill-conceived and exceedingly expensive Conservative party proposals, which will cause a great deal of hassle.

Mr. Galbraith: I shall put everyone's mind at rest by reassuring them that I have no intention of following that tour de force, but shall simply make a few closing remarks.

I have spent the last part of my life in the mountains, and I have a love affair with the mountains and the countryside—in other words, Scottish Natural Heritage, which is what the Bill is about. Therefore, I was pleased to be part of the process of taking the Bill through its stages, along with the courteous Under-Secretary of State.

The merger between the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council is a natural one. On that I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). There are conflicting functions within the organisations, but both establishments are concerned with the good use, management and preservation of the countryside. The conflicts are best dealt with when taken together in a committee rather than being set apart, which often generates false conflicts.

My first contact with the Nature Conservancy Council was during my visits to the Isle of Rhum, which I have already mentioned. The council has always been a delight to me and others, and looks after that island very well; access to it is free and easy, and I have never had any problems. Its management of that island is an excellent example of just what the Nature Conservancy Council can do. Therefore, all in the House can trust in an organisation constituted, in part, by the Nature Conservancy Council to provide good management and ensure the preservation of the countryside in the mountain regions of Scotland. Therefore, I wish the new organisation well. It has the full-hearted support of Opposition Members.

10.22 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) that the Bill enjoyed a good Committee stage, and that Magnus Magnusson will be a dedicated, conscientious and determined chairman of the new organisation and willl make a complete success of it.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has participated as he started this theme with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. As he said, the Bill provides great hope and possibilities.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has a particular interest in environmental matters. I have been unable to convince him on the justification of merging the two organisations, but I think it is fair to say that the House as a whole welcomes that proposal—most Scottish Members of Parliament do. I certainly agreed with what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said on that issue. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow well knows, we amended the Bill with regard to the built heritage.

I believe that we have created a stronger environmental agency in practice that will make more use of existing mechanisms. To the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) I say that the working party will be established before long. As a first step, we have commissioned review papers from the relevant interested parties on the issues facing the management of the region and what should be done.

To my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) I say that the new organisation will have to operate with much more sensitivity in relation to future non-statutory appeals.

The protection and conservation of landscape and wildlife are closely linked and cannot be separated from access and enjoyment of the countryside. We believe that an integrated approach by one agency will provide a more effective means of stimulating the sustainable use of Scotland's natural heritage. The new agency will maintain and extend the work of both organisations, building on their existing strengths and staff expertise. We expect Scottish Natural Heritage to bring about changes in attitude towards conservation and the enjoyment of Scotland's natural heritage. With its network of offices throughout Scotland and its regional structure, it will be well placed to play a responsive and sensitive role.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow raised a number of issues, including recreation. I shall be happy to respond to him in detail later. I think that that is probably the best way to proceed because he raised a large number of issues relating to structure.

The agency will be a much stronger environmental organisation and will be greatly in Scotland's interests. I thank hon. Members for participating in our debates on the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not expect any answers tonight, but I would ask for a letter to reflect the careful consideration that will be given to the matter.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman will most certainly receive the answers, but I again stress that this will be a much stronger environmental agency for Scotland.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

PETITION

Traffic Management Scheme (Great Harwood)

10.24 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I wish to present a petition to the House on behalf of the residents of Great Harwood. The petition expresses concern at the introduction of a traffic management scheme in the Park road and St. Hubert's road areas of Great Harwood, which residents feel is not only inconvenient but may result in an increase in the number of accidents. They feel that there is great danger to children and old people.

The residents feel aggrieved because they consider that they were not properly consulted and that their views were not taken into account by local councillors and Hyndburn borough council before thousands of pounds were wasted on a scheme that will increase the danger, spoil the environment and cause inconvenience to residents and loss of trade to businesses. They say:

We object to the traffic ramps in St. Hubert's road, Park road and the surrounding area. There is no parking space for residents and there is no indication whether pedestrians or motorists have right of way.

The petition continues:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Transport to review the traffic management scheme in St. Hubert's road and Park road and the surrounding area in Great Harwood, taking into account the views of local residents, and to bring forward improved proposals. And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Orpington Hospital

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neil Hamilton.]*

10.25 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Orpington hospital has its origins in a military hospital built with prefabricated buildings by the Canadian army for its troops during the first world war. Over the years, it has grown so that now it has, in addition to many of the original buildings, modern residential staff accommodation, a social centre and a substantial modern block, completed in 1982 at a cost of £9 milion and known as the Canada wing. It includes twin operating theatres and 264 of the hospital's 354 beds. The Canada wing is the most modern fabric of the entire Bromley health district, with all facilities for acute patient care. The entire hospital stands on a site of 38·8 acres, of which 12 are green fields. There is ample room for expansion. The whole site lies just off the A21, a main artery from London to Kent and the Channel ports, and only two miles from the M25.

The existing official plan for the hospital's future, as approved by the Government some years ago, is that it should be further developed into a modern district general hospital, providing all acute services and a full-time, 24-hour accident and emergency service, to serve the needs of the southern half of the London borough of Bromley and adjacent areas in Kent. The southern half is the growing half of the borough. The northern half is intended to be served by the expansion of Bromley hospital, a cottage-hospital style building presently standing on a site of only nine acres in urban Bromley.

The area served by the local health authority is coterminous with the London borough of Bromley. Besides Orpington and Bromley hospitals, it includes hospital buildings in Farnborough, Beckenham and Cane Hill. The object of the officially approved plan was to rationalise hospital services in the health authority area by concentrating acute services on the two main sites.

So far, so good. The Canada wing represented phase 2 of the development plan for Orpington hospital. My constituents and I were looking forward to the completion of the third phase, projected for next year, when it was anticipated that all the old hutted accommodation would be replaced and the rest of the services appropriate to a modern general hospital would be added. Successive Ministers in this House have assured me that Orpington hospital will retain its place in the plan.

However, we reckoned without the bureaucrats, administrative and medical, who have now screwed up that prospect and left us in a situation where the hospital is reduced to a shadow of what it could and should be: its status for the purpose of professional training removed, its provision for general surgery and intensive care withdrawn, its accident and emergency service, even on the scale of a minor injuries unit, abolished, its professional staff leaving and the morale of those remaining at its lowest.

The community health council has unanimously passed a vote of censure on the health authority. The general manager of the health authority, like his predecessor, has left to go further up the hierarchy, and the chairman has left office in somewhat mysterious circumstances. Both posts are now vacant. How the authority got into that mess is instructive. In 1987, the planners got it into their heads that the site of the existing Bromley hospital—nine acres—was too small to allow it to expand into a district general hospital to serve the northern half of the borough of Bromley.

They therefore proposed a deal—fashionable in those Thatcherite days—whereby the private sector could help to pay for the cost of a mammoth new hospital for all the acute services in the borough to replace both Bromley and Orpington hospitals. The new building, housing 820 beds and with parking space for 1,000 cars, would cost £100 million, which the planners of both the health authority and the borough council expected to raise by selling to private developers the surplus land at the other hospitals, which would be reduced to providing back-up services.

The idea would mean the death of Orpington hospital as my constituents know it. The prospect of the loss of that marvellous hospital on their doorsteps and journeying six to eight miles into Bromley is anathema to us all. Unfortunately, those in the north of the borough who formerly relied on Bromley hospital found the idea attractive, and they provide a majority on the council and on the health authority. The medical professionals also liked the idea, for they thought that it would mean greater opportunities for higher professional standards. The site proposed, which is owned by the borough council, is 21 acres of open space in the centre of the borough, where the traffic is often congested.

The idea seemed unstoppable when I raised the matter in the House on 30 October 1989. The then Under-Secretary of State for Health—my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman)—agreed that his predecessors had given me assurances about the future of Orpington hospital. He was sceptical about the chances of £100 million being raised for the scheme, but he did not want to intervene then. However, there was a hitch. The site for that massive piece of concrete jungle was in the green belt. It appears to be incredible that that fact was overlooked by the planners, but it was.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment called in the planning application. His inspector reported, inter alia, in paragraph 55 of his report:

> "I have come to the conclusion that whereas there is an undoubted need for new hospital provision in Bromley, the circumstances are not so very special as to overcome the strong presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are to my mind other possible forms of development elsewhere which could achieve most of the objectives being pursued by the Health Authority."

He also reported in paragraph 22:

> "My conclusion on the evidence available is that the best prospect of locating the proposed new hospital elsewhere would be to combine a small development at the existing Bromley hospital site with a large development at Orpington".

So planning consent for the super-hospital was rightly refused. Green fields are especially precious in urban areas such as central Bromley.

Unwisely, the person who wrote to Bromley council to convey the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment stated that the refusal was because the site was in the green belt and that there would be no objection if the green belt excluded it. As a result, the health authority chose not to take the sensible advice of the inspector and get on with making Orpington the major hospital in the district. It chose instead to persuade Bromley council to agree to an alteration in the boundary

of the green belt so as to exclude the site. This rather disreputable manoeuvre is now under way. I hope that local conservationists will be up in arms about it.

The poor quality of management that was revealed by the error has been the cause of many of the health authority's decisions that have affected Orpington hospital. There is undoubtedly a reluctance on the part of the authority, which draws most of its members from the north of the borough, to give Orpington hospital a fair deal in respect of staff and other resources. I cannot count the number of times that I have frustrated efforts to change the official development plan to the detriment of Orpington by initiating Adjournment debates.

In the financial year just ended, Bromley health authority was well over its budget. Drastic cuts, masquerading as rationalisation plans, were made to save money. Where did the cuts largely fall? You have guessed it, Mr. Deputy Speaker—they fell largely on Orpington hospital. They leave it without any general surgery, intensive care units or a casualty service of any sort. There is not even a minor injuries unit. There are fewer wards and fewer beds. The Canada wing is in danger of becoming a white elephant. In these circumstances, a ghastly tragedy could occur at any time for want of on-site surgery, anaesthetists and inter-hospital transport. It should be remembered that the nearby M25 is the scene of many major accidents involving casualties on a large scale. We need surgery services at Orpington hospital.

It is ironic that the money that is sought to be saved by the cuts—£1·5 million in a budget of £82 million per annum—amounts to the same sum as that which is thrown away on surveyors and other expenses for the abortive super-hospital. As if to prove that it is indifferent to the waste of public funds, the regional health authority, South East Thames, whose general manager was general manager at Bromley when the bureaucratic scheme was launched, has recently given another £1·5 million to pay for continuing design fees and other expenses.

I have heard from one designer who is involved that the entire project is being scaled down because of escalating costs and falling land values. A 500-bed hospital is now being contemplated. Even if the hospital is built, the new Bromley hospital cannot be ready before the year 2000. What is to happen meanwhile? Orpington hospital has been truncated. The existing Bromley hospital is bursting at the seams. Queen Mary's hospital, which is just over the border in the area covered by Bexley health district, cannot cope.

Was there ever such a muddle? It is no wonder that, in January, the community health council passed unanimously a vote of no confidence in the health authority. It was alarmed at the authority's failure to consult and at the waste of management time and resources being spent on the new hospital before planning consent had been obtained. It said that the £1·5 million could have been better spent on existing services. The professional medical staff are extremely worried by what might happen in the present hiatus. They approved of the new hospital on the understanding that it would be under way before any rationalisation of existing services took place. We could be heading for the worst possible outcome—no new Bromley hospital because of insufficient funds and land, and no expansion of Orpington hospital, because the land available has been sold to private developers.

The people responsible for this muddle should have been sacked rather than promoted, and members of the health authority who condoned the inefficiency and faulty judgment involved and failed to correct it should be censured. It is a pity that nowadays the members of a health authority are not drawn from the ranks of the elected councils in the districts concerned, where they could at least be called to account.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Health told me a day or two ago that she has appointed a new chairman for the Bromley health authority, a Mr. Alan Cumming. She seems to have plucked him out of the air. I was not informed or consulted about his appointment. However good he is, he will not have the authority, let alone the experience, to do what is required to stop this nonsense. The Minister herself should intervene and tell the authority that it should stick to the existing plan and in any event get on with building up Orpington as a district general hospital without further delay.

10.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has, for many years, been a doughty fighter for Orpington hospital. In preparing for the debate, I looked over the speeches that he made. Both my immediate predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), and his predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), were called to account by my hon. Friend for the way in which the health service has been planning the hospital facilities for his constituents in Orpington, and quite properly so. On both those occasions, and again this evening, he expressed vigorously and clearly the views that I am sure are widely held in his constituency, and did so in a way that leaves us with no option—nor should we have an option—but to take them seriously.

Before I deal with the substance of what my hon. Friend has had to say about the circumstances in which the NHS finds itself in Orpington I shall set it in the context of the way in which the NHS has to be managed. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the NHS is a vast organisation that cannot be run on the basis that every significant decision within it is made by one of four Ministers sat in Richmond house. It is, I believe, the largest organisation in the world in terms of the number of people that is employs, with two exceptions—the Red Army and the Indian railway, both of which made the mistake of over-centralising to an extent that we are determined to avoid in the management of the NHS.

For that reason, we have set up and recently reinforced a management system within the health service that delegates responsibility to district health authorities and, within health authorities, to the management teams within the hospitals, in order to ensure that the people who are responsible for using taxpayers' money to provide a health care system in each locality feel that they are responsible for the way in which the cash is used in the particular unit in which they work. That commitment to delegation, and then to accountability, which is the other side of the same coin, is something that we in the Department hold as a key objective in the evolution of our health service policy.

My hon. Friend, in talking about the impact of that on Bromley district health authority, regretted the fact that the passing of councillors from the health authority meant that, as he saw it, there was no local accountability to the local authority. I do not apologise for that, because,

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

although we have a commitment to delegate, the NHS is ultimately accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and, through him, to the House. That is why my hon. Friend is entirely right, despite that commitment to delegation within the management system of the health service, to call Ministers to account in the House for the way in which taxpayers' money is used within the health service and the solutions that are arrived at by that delegated system of management.

There is a nice balance to be struck within the management of the health service. Ministers stress the importance of delegating decisions so as to ensure that resources are used effectively in each locality. Despite the fact that we emphasise the importance of that delegation, we do not duck our accountability for the decisions that the bureaucracy ultimately reaches. It is right and proper that the issues that are of obvious and continuing concern to my hon. Friend's constituents should detain the House this evening and that he should bring them to our attention.

The way in which my hon. Friend presented his constituents' concerns highlights the fact that there are two issues affecting the provision of health care in his constituency. Those issues can perhaps be run together, but they are nevertheless separate. The first issue is whether it is right to centralise acute care on a single site, in this case, the Elmfield site to which my hon. Friend devoted a considerable part of his speech.

My hon. Friend suggested that there was an official plan that called for the continued provision of acute care on two sites within the health district. I think that he will accept—although he may disagree with it—that for some time, it has been the established preference of the health service management in Bromley and within South East Thames to centralise acute care in Bromley on a single site. To describe the policy of providing acute care on two sites as the official policy of the health service management is no longer accurate.

The reasons why health service managers in Bromley have sought, or wish, to centralise acute care on a single hospital site in my hon. Friend's constituency, or serving his constituency, are not dissimilar from those in other parts of the country. They are familiar arguments. Advances in modern medicine provide us with a great opportunity, which we must seize and use properly, to provide an improving quality of acute care while, at the same time, employing fewer acute beds. There is a long-term decline—not merely in this country, but throughout the developed world—in the demand for acute beds and acute hospital space in the provision of an advanced health service. That argument, coupled with the increased dependence of acute care on high technology, has resulted in a pressure to centralise acute care into high-tech centres of excellence, not only in my hon. Friend's constituency but elsewhere.

That is one side of the argument, but my hon. Friend was right to stress the other side, which is to ensure that as acute care is centralised into centres of excellence, it is not allowed to become too divorced from the communities that it is supposed to serve. He was also right to stress the importance of considerations of local access, clinical viability and the development of centres of excellence.

That nexus of substantive issues is important and cannot be ducked, for it should concern anyone who is interested in the development of an efficient, modern system of health care.

The second set of issues that my hon. Friend mentioned involve planning issues related to the green belt. Quite reasonably, he quoted from the report of the inspector, who appeared to support the proposition that if acute care is to be centralised in Bromley, it should be centralised on the site of the Orpington hospital in my hon. Friend's constituency. As a distinguished lawyer, my hon. Friend will know the danger of relying on judges' obiter dicta. The question that the inspector was asked was not, "Where should the hospital be?" but, "Should the hospital be built at Elmfield?" Although my hon. Friend is entitled to pray in aid the inspector, I think that my hon. Friend will agree that the passage that he quoted from the inspector's report was of the nature of an obiter dicta. I am not sure what the singular of obiter dicta is. It was an obiter dictum, presumably.

It is not a factor on which we should put too much weight. Our planning system does not allow inspectors to tell us where we should build things; it asks inspectors whether a particular proposal—in this case a proposal to build the hospital at Elmfield—should be allowed. It must be right that the local authority, as the planning authority, and the health authority that wishes to build the hospital should retain the power of initiative in deciding planning questions. The inspector can dispose, but he should not be able to propose.

As my hon. Friend said, the London borough of Bromley, will vote on a proposal to change the nature of the green belt in the borough on 1 May, so it would be wrong for me to pre-empt what the council may say about a proposed change in the arrangements. It would also be wrong to pre-empt anything that may happen as a result of the change in the limits of the green belt.

However, it is fair to say that a decision on a major investment, such as has been envisaged by the health authority at Elmfield, would ultimately come to Ministers. Although this evening we can have a discussion that may illuminate some of the issues, I would not wish—it would be quite wrong to do so—to pre-empt the decision that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would make if a revised Elmfield proposal, which it was realistic to expect could be built because the planning law had been changed, came to him. There are a number of conditions in that sentence, all of which would have to be satisfied before a Minister could be asked to approve that proposal.

My hon. Friend has raised a substantive set of issues around the question of whether there should be a single-site acute care provision in Bromley. There are many hurdles still to be gone over before Ministers could be asked to make a specific decision. My hon. Friend's debate has served to remind us of his continuing interest in the outcome of that decision and of the strength of his feelings and those of his constituents about the outcome of that decision, when it is made.

The second issue is the temporary closures announced by the health authority in January this year. It has always been part of the management model of the health service that we consult before we make substantial changes, but that the health authorities reserve the right to make changes without consultation when financial pressures require urgent action. That was precisely the position in which the health authority found itself in January.

However, if a health authority makes such a temporary, short-term decision under financial pressure, it remains under an obligation to consult before the decisions are made final. That is why the health authority has issued the consultation document on the proposals and why the consultation is currently going ahead on the proposals that were implemented by the health authority in January.

My hon. Friend will recognise that the health authority believes that, as a result of the changes, it is still offering the same basic level of service measured by activity or output measures, but on a different pattern around the district which, I can understand, is less popular with my hon. Friend's constituents than the pattern that previously prevailed. In considering whether the changes should be made permanent, it is legitimate to consider not only the fact that there is a £1 million revenue saving for the health authority as a result, but the question of access for my hon. Friend's constituents to the health care that is provided.

As my hon. Friend will know, if the community health council chooses to sustain its opposition, which it has expressed clearly in its letter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 24 January, and to put forward an alternative proposal for the management of health care in Bromley which can still deliver the underlying objective for each health service manager, which is to live within the budget, the temporary closures could come to Ministers for them to make a decision. Once again, it would be wrong for me this evening to pre-empt any decision that my right hon. Friend may make as the result of such an appeal by the community health council.

My hon. Friend has taken the opportunity this evening to draw the attention of the House to difficult issues in his constituency. Both the long-term question of the centralisation of care and the short-term question of the changes implemented in January could ultimately come to my right hon. Friend for decision. I assure my hon. Friend that his arguments to the House this evening would be taken seriously into account in any decision that my right hon. Friend made in those circumstances.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 26 April 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

St. Francis Primary School, Notting Hill

9.36 am

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the governors, teachers, parents and neighbours of St. Francis primary school, Treadgold street, Notting Hill, in my constituency of Kensington. The petition states that the redevelopment of the school is a matter of great urgency because of the highly unsatisfactory conditions in which 325 children are being taught. The proposed redevelopment depends on the closure of Treadgold street, in the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The petition has been signed by more than 2,000 people, which constitutes some 5 per cent. of my electorate in the constituency of Kensington.

The petitioners pray

that your honourable House requests the Right Hon. Secretary of State, Department of Transport to grant immediate permission for the closure of Treadgold street so that work on the redevelopment, the plans for which already have been approved by the Department of Education and Science and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, may begin without further delay.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

9.38 am

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Although this is a private Member's Bill, I hope that the House will not think it boastful if I say that it is an important Bill. It will enable new rules to be set that will govern the way in which nearly 500,000 shipments of radioactive and nuclear material go by road in this country every year.

It is a radical Bill in its way, for it gives the Department of Transport powers of entry and inspection and allows penalties to be exacted on those who break the rules when carrying highly dangerous radioactive material on our roads. The regulations that will be enabled by the Bill will set the safety standards for the nuclear and radioactive industries at the highest international levels. They will determine the parameters for nuclear tranport in the generation ahead—a generation which is likely to see the rapid growth in that industry, which is so important to modern life, whether providing nuclear fuel for power plants or cancer-searching radioisotopes to the hospitals. Within the power of the atom lies the certain source of our future energy needs. As we unlock it, we will gain in knowledge—an ally and not an enemy—but only if we are rigorous in controlling that power and in restraining the methods by which it is used, and in the case of the Bill, ensuring that when radioactive material is moved from one place to another it is secure.

Although it is an important Bill, it has not been a controversial one. I am afraid that in this House we often muddle the two. We think that anything that does not kick up a political dust storm cannot be of real worth.

The Bill slipped through to Third Reading with uncommon agility. The Second Reading was over and done with in six minutes flat. The Committee stage, I am afraid, took longer, but in eight minutes from start to finish no critics appeared and thus I bring the Bill to the Floor of the House unamended. In the incomprehensible way, to me at least, that these things work, this Bill, which was ninth in the list of private Member's Bills when it started, is now second and, with a fair wind, it looks like being the first private Member's Bill to reach the statute book this season. There has been good reason for that turn of speed because, by passing the Bill into law, Parliament is bringing Britain into line with its international commitments that were given as long ago as 1985. The deadline for meeting those commitments disgracefully ran out last year without any action having been taken by the United Kingdom, although all our major trading partners have by now taken the necessary steps to comply.

Britain is a leading member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an arm of the United Nations in Vienna, which lays down standards for the world's radioactive and nuclear industries. That authority has long been concerned with the quality of the regulations that govern the

[Mr. Dudley Fishburn]

movement of radioactive materials by road. After all, that is perhaps the moment of their greatest vulnerability. A fuel rod that will soon be surrounded by tonnes of concrete in a power station is on nothing more substantial than a truck when it is being delivered. A radioisotope, which is safe in the hands of a surgeon, has to be handled by a driver or a porter in a hospital.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is concerned, first, because of the sheer number of shipments—about half a million in Britain every year. Some of those shipments are in large trucks trundling to nuclear power stations from the railhead. Sometimes small parts of radioactive material are almost chucked into the back of an engineer's van on the way to measuring the stress in, say, a North sea oil rig.

The powers that the Department of Transport has to oversee such shipments need to be brought up to date because they date back to the last time that the House considered these matters, which was in 1947—a time when the nuclear industry was in its infancy and when there were probably no more than 100 shipments a year by road.

That is one cause for concern, but there is a second. Whenever a shipment of radioactive material goes by boat across the channel, for example, or by air, as do tens of thousands of packets every year, due to the thriving market that Britain has built up in medical exports, the regulations are modern and effective because as soon as they travel outside this country they are governed by regulations set by international agencies. However, if one puts a dollop of radioactive material in the back of a road vehicle, by a curious loophole of our legislative history, the method of enforcing standards of safety and packaging for that material dates back to 1947. Hence the reason for the Bill.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has requested that all its members have a central, competent authority for road transport to make and to enforce the rules. In Britain's case the Bill makes the Department of Transport that authority, which is why I welcome the Minister's presence this morning.

The Bill does not set down the rules. It is an enabling Bill because it is not a matter for laymen like ourselves to write such rules. Besides, the needs and requirements will change constantly. The Bill enables the Secretary of State for Transport to set regulations, which will cover such aspects as the design and nature of containers for radioactive materials, their resistance to burning or crushing, how many small packets, when put together, can be transported safely—as the total radiation grows exponentially—and how such packets should be labelled.

Regulations in such a highly expert and scientific area will be set after close discussion with the industry, and that is entirely right. It is worth pointing out at this stage that the nuclear and radioactive industries have been wholly behind the Bill. For the most part they already more than meet the highest standards and they understand the need to modernise the legislative framework within which they operate. That is something that the nuclear industry welcomes, not something which it fears. Why? Because without the Bill the Department of Transport is only able to make general regulations which fail to reflect the world standards in packaging, labelling and transport documentation. However, such standards are needed if we are to convince other countries that the United Kingdom applies the United Nations transport regulations of 1985 to its radioactive industry.

Although this legislation would apply only to domestic road transport, it would also cover radioactive material intended for international transit. Therefore, by adopting the International Atomic Energy Agency's standards we shall bring ourselves into line with other countries which compete with the United Kingdom in world markets. Some of those countries have a reputation for using non-tariff barriers to protect their own markets. They say that they will not let in British supplies of medical radio isotopes or nuclear material because they are not packaged up to international scratch. That is an excuse which they can cling to until we pass the regulations for which provision is made in the Bill. We must be able to demonstrate that packages used to transport radioactive material nationally and internationally comply fully with standards laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency. At the moment we cannot.

In view of 1992, what is the position of other EC member countries? After all, they are now our major trading partners, and all the EC countries are members of the IAEA. As such, they are under the same obligations as the United Kingdom, and almost all of them have already adopted the international regulations that I am seeking to introduce by means of the Bill.

The European agreement for transporting dangerous goods by road, to which all EC states are a party, came into effect on 1 January 1990, more than a year ago. In line with other international regulations, it uses the standards laid down in this enabling Bill as guidelines. The provisions of the Bill are aimed at ensuring that the regulations made under it fully reflect the International Atomic Energy Agency's philosophy of building safety into the packages used to transport radioactive materials. It is a philosophy which the agency and its member states have operated effectively for the past 30 years. In stark constrast to much of the criticism of the nuclear industry, we have had an extraordinarily strong record both in this country and in the western world of developing the industry along safe and reasonable lines.

Clause 1 will empower the Secretary of State to appoint inspectors to implement the Bill and to enforce any regulations made under it. Clause 2 will give the Secretary of State power to make a comprehensive set of regulations to cover all aspects of the transport by road of radioactive materials. In clause 3, further provisions set out the circumstances in which an inspector appointed under the Road Traffic Act 1988 could stop a vehicle transporting radioactive packages. An inspector could prohibit the transport of such packages or the use of a particular component in the packaging of nuclear material. Those powers are not available at present to the Department of Transport. However, other agencies that work in the field of nuclear material, such as Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in the Department of the Environment, already have such powers. The Bill therefore gives the Department of Transport powers that it would otherwise not have. It closes a loophole.

If an inspector believes that someone is failing to comply with the regulations, he will be able, under clause 4, to issue an enforcement notice. Such a notice will specify the failure and the steps that must be taken to remedy it. Again, that is something which other agencies have

available to them. What is novel is that under the Bill the regulations apply for the first time to this very important industry.

Clause 5 gives powers of entry and sets out the circumstances in which inspectors and examiners can enter vehicles and premises with or without consent. It also specifies when an inspector may seize evidence.

Finally, clause 6 makes it an offence to contravene or to fail to comply with the regulations made under the Bill. The same clause also contains penalties for the committing of such offences. It will allow prosecution to be either by summons or by indictment, depending on the severity of the offence. Again, the general thrust is that the clause serves only to bring the Secretary of State's powers on the transport of nuclear material by road into line with those that are available in other areas of the nuclear industry.

With those provisions, the Secretary of State will be able to ensure that when he makes regulations they can be effectively enforced. Then we shall be sure that the increase in the transport of nuclear material for industry, medical use and engineering can be effectively controlled.

It is a good Bill. It addresses an immediate and real need. It closes a loophole. It will set guidelines for a generation. Those guidelines will be the world's best practice. The Bill is so sensible and overdue that the Opposition have mounted no criticims of it, for which I am grateful. It is supported by the industry, by users and by the Government. It sets a new legislative benchmark for the movement of what are potentially the most hazardous materials known to man. It dusts off legislation that was last touched in 1947. It is necessary if we are to meet our international obligations. Therefore, I commend the Bill to the House.

9.51 am

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on bringing the Bill before the House. As it stands, the Bill is not controversial and, to the extent that it goes, we very much welcome it. However, there are wider considerations that it is appropriate to bring before the House on Third Reading.

Today is the fifth anniversay of the Chernobyl disaster. Nearly all of us can remember exactly where we were five years ago today when we had that terrible rainstorm and realised that a good part of the contamination was spreading from Chernobyl all round the world and finding its way to parts of our country. It is right and proper, therefore, that today of all days, five years on, we should be dealing with a measure that concerns the transportation of radioactive substances. If ever the House needed a reminder of how important an issue this is, it need look no further than at what happened at Chernobyl.

It is also important to point out that five years after Chernobyl there are still problems and that there will continue to be problems for thousands of years. They will affect the people who live in that part of the Soviet Union. There will continue to be problems over the safety requirements for the reactors that continue to function there. Moreover, there will continue to be problems over the transportation of radioactive material. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to do everything that can be done to impose the highest possible standards for the occasions when there is no alternative but for radioactive substances to be transported by one mode or another.

Although I do not take issue with the hon. Gentleman who introduced the Bill, I take issue with the Government. The Opposition believe that an integrated transport system is needed that will enable goods, whether or not they are dangerous, to be transported safely by different modes of transport. We believe that the highest possible safety standards should apply to all those modes and that such standards should apply to radioactive goods, just as they apply to the transport of all forms of dangerous goods.

The Opposition are greatly concerned about the fact that although in this Session the Government have introduced five transport Bills and found sufficient parliamentary time to deal with issues that they consider to be the highest on their list of priorities, they have not found time to address this issue. They have introduced a measure to privatise the trust ports, which are likely to be sold off. Today we learnt that the hospital trust at Guy's is to shed 600 jobs. However, the Government have not found time to bring before the House a Bill that would deal comprehensively with the transportation of all dangerous goods by all modes of transport—ship, rail, road and air. We criticise the Government for their piecemeal approach. A major cornerstone of our policy is the integration of the transport of all dangerous goods and the making of detailed regulations to cover their transportation, including packaging, monitoring, enforcement and all the other issues that need to be covered if we are to ensure that when dangerous goods are transported the highest possible standards apply.

Only yesterday I discussed with freight forwarders in the south-west region, including south Wales, their concern that regulations governing the movement of goods by road to Europe are incompatible with those that apply to the movement of goods by sea. Their great concern is that the convention governing the carriage of goods by road, imposed by most other European countries as a mandatory requirement, has a get-out clause in this country. There are big loopholes concerning the carriage of all sorts of dangerous goods. The Bill should be viewed within the framework which could exist, but which, because of lack of political priority, does not exist.

The regulations governing the transport of radioactive material in the United Kingdom implement International Atomic Energy Agency regulations, which are kept under continual review. Major revisions take place every 10 years and the most recent was in 1990. The point has already been made that it is disgraceful that the latest regulations were not implemented at the earliest opportunity and that the introduction of tighter regulations has been left to a private Member's Bill. I condemn the Government for that.

Within the United Kingdom, different regulations apply to transport by the four modes of road, air, sea and rail. The Bill is designed, as we have heard, to update the legislation on the transportation of radioactive material by road and to bring it into line with the IAEA regulations. We welcome the fact that the Bill gives the Secretary of State powers to make regulations and that inspectors or examiners are provided with the authority to impose prohibitions on the driving of a vehicle or on the transportation of a radioactive package. They will be able to serve enforcement notices if there is a failure to comply with the prohibitions. It is also important that powers of

[Ms. Joan Walley]

entry should be provided for inspectors or examiners and the Bill should be enforced by means of a series of penalties if offences are committed.

We have one concern about the Bill which we could not raise during its earlier stages and which we might not have raised anyway, because we want the Bill to reach the statute book. Had a comprehensive Bill been introduced, we should have wanted the regulations to provide for prior notification of the movement of any radioactive substances. Local authorities, the emergency services and the nuclear-free zone movement feel very strongly about that. We believe that there are compelling reasons why the emergency services and local authorities should be made aware in advance of the passage through their areas of all radioactive, toxic and hazardous substances. It is impossible to draw up effective emergency plans if the emergency services are given no information until an accident occurs. I urge the Minister to give that some consideration when drawing up the regulations.

More information about freight lorries carrying dangerous materials could prevent accidents, injury and loss of life. Two years ago there was an accident near Peterborough where a lorry carrying explosives caught fire. The fire brigade was called and, tragically, one firefighter died when the explosives detonated. The fire brigade had not been notified of the contents of the lorry and therefore had been unable to make contingency plans. I hope that the Minister will have regard to that important matter.

Luckily, the contents of the lorry were not radioactive. It would have been much more devastating had the fire brigade been called to deal with an accident involving the release of radioactivity without being given prior warning.

It has always been claimed that low-level radioactive substances make up the vast majority of freight transported by road and are not considered to be a great threat to safety and the environment. However, spent fuel rods for research make regular journeys by road from Harwell to Dounreay for reprocessing. A considerable quantity of such goods is transported by road.

Up to 50 research reactors in 22 countries use the same type of fuel and may wish to do business with plants in Britain. Foreign business could eventually build up to £25 million a year. The transport methods and routes which could be used in that context are uncertain, but it is likely that more spent fuels would arrive by sea at Scrabster. However, large shipments from Berlin, Holland, Saxony and perhaps from Australia would have to come into larger ports and thereafter be transported by road.

There would be a greater threat to the environment from the risk of an accident involving spent HEU fuel in transit. The International Atomic Energy Agency requires flasks for transporting spent fuel to be designed to survive the impact of a 9 m fall, which is equivalent to an impact speed of about 30 mph; being engulfed by fire for 30 minutes at a temperature of 800 deg. C; and immersion at a depth of 200 m for one hour. The independent consulting engineers Large and Associates consider those tests not particularly onerous.

Last year there were several attempts to ship from Germany to Hull radioactive material which was to be sent to Dounreay by road. Only the refusal of dock workers in Rotterdam and Hull to handle the cargo prevented shipment in an unsafe vessel. The shipment was first attempted by a container ship. Then it was proposed that it should be carried by roll-on, roll-off ferry. Such an approach in shipping can be easily translated to all modes of transport, with industry taking the attitude that the flasks are so indestructible that it is unimportant how they are transported. However, nuclear explosions in the relatively controlled environment of Chernobyl and Three Mile Island caused disasters on a devastating scale. The risk of transporting weapon-grade radioactive substances are obvious causes for concern and are one reason why in the United States there is a moratorium on imports until proper environmental assessments have been made.

Had there been a comprehensive Bill on the subject, we should have tabled an amendment to ensure that regulations apply equally to transshipments dealt with by the Ministry of Defence and by the Department of Transport. The road transportation of nuclear weapons which are not subject even to the most elementary regulations because the Ministry of Defence is exempt from them is another cause for concern.

I do not know whether the Minister is aware of a report by the panel on the safety of nuclear weapons. On 18 December the United States House Armed Services Committee was informed by eminent physicists that flaws in past computer modelling can be indentified and that a major consequence of new modelling is the realisation that unintended nuclear detonation presents a greater risk than was previously estimated.

I should refer to representations that have been made concerning the road transport of nuclear weapons. That issue is not covered by the Bill, but would have been in a comprehensive Bill. It is particularly important in the light of the American report on nuclear weapon safety which was highlighted in *The Guardian* earlier this week.

Many local authorities, including that in Stoke-on-Trent, have made representations to the Department of Transport. They have considered the report of Large and Associates entitled: "Transportation of nuclear weapons through urban areas in the United Kingdom." That report was commissioned by the steering committee of nuclear-free zone local authorities, which are greatly concerned about possible disasters, including a major release of radioactivity from a nuclear warhead which could affect areas up to 40 km away and the consequences for the immediate population. If the Department of Transport has any concern about an integrated transport policy, it should consult the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Defence to come up with some emergency arrangements which, instead of leaving us ill prepared to deal with accidents, would enable us to take the necessary precautions.

It is also possible that road accidents could involve unintentional detonation of weapons. The worst possible scenario would be a nuclear explosion, not just a limited leak or a radioactive cloud. The fact that at least two journeys involving radioactive freight are made every week gives rise to considerable concern. I relate those findings in the context of today's debate to emphasise the need for a totally integrated approach to the transportation of radioactive and hazardous substances.

The Labour party supports freedom of information and open discussion about public safety issues. We believe that we can learn from the American experience of ensuring that information is publicly available instead of hidden behind a cloak of secrecy. Public safety can only benefit

from increased openness and local authorities with responsibility for dealing with disasters should have the necessary information to enable them to deal with accidents involving the transportation of nuclear waste.

We believe that environmental considerations should be paramount in any transport policy involving safety. Efforts should be made to minimise the amount of radioactive substances transported, instead of planning to move such substances from A to B along the safest route and allowing profits to be made.

The introduction of inspectors is certainly a step in the right direction towards greater regulation and safety. However, those inspectors must not be policy administrators from the Department of Transport, but must have experience of dealing with road accidents and be experts in safety and dangerous materials. The Bill refers to the financial considerations. I have grave fears that not enough inspectors may be appointed. How many people does the Minister expect to be appointed to deal with those new regulations? If they are to be associated with the radioactive waste movement unit and inspectorate at the Department of Transport, it is essential that there are enough inspectors to enforce the regulations.

I draw the Minister's attention to the question of spot checks. Back in June 1989, the Atomic Energy Authority was found guilty of allowing one of its vehicles to be used in an unroadworthy condition and was fined £1,600. It is really not on for such materials to be transported in vehicles that are not safe to be on the road. There are huge question marks over public safety.

Let me give an even more recent example. In late February this year a load of spent fuel from India—part of a 30-year-old contract—was travelling by road from Felixstowe to Dounreay. At Dounreay, it was found to be contaminated and the contamination was traced back to Felixstowe, where a crane was dismantled and taken to Harlow for checks. Even though there is much secrecy surrounding the transportation of radioactive material, we know that there was contamination at Felixstowe. But as there was no legal obligation on the carrier to monitor en route, it was not discovered until the load reached Dounreay. The contamination involved will be a persistent problem for a 200-year period at least, given that caesium has a half life of 30 years. That is why we believe that the new regulations should include proper provision for spot checks so that a load can be monitored anywhere along its route.

With the large-scale transportation of weapons and standard radioactive substances on our roads, people will rightly be concerned that the regulations are rigorously enforced. Where necessary, regulations should be strengthened to ensure maximum environmental and public safety. The Bill takes us one step nearer to that objective. It would have been much better had the provisions been incorporated in a comprehensive Bill dealing with all aspects of the transportation of dangerous goods and the various modes of transport used. Having said that, I do not wish to delay proceedings on the Bill, which is long overdue. I hope that the Minister will respond to the points that I have made and that the Bill will soon reach the statute book.

10.12 am

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I join hon. Members in welcoming this important Bill and commend my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on the thoroughly professional way in which he has carried it through the House. I hope that it will meet with equal success—and lack of delay—in the other place, and that it will reach the statute books very soon. I apologise to my hon. Friend for not having been able to speak in support of the Bill on Second Reading, but he had only six minutes, and he seemed to be doing perfectly well without my intervention.

My hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt defend himself, but I feel that I cannot let the speech of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) go without comment. The hon. Lady demanded an integrated transport policy. Heaven preserve us from such a monstrosity. Fortunately, no Labour Government have ever managed to achieve such a thing. The Department of Transport is quite big enough. The idea of a huge department in Whitehall deciding where all the transshipments of every commodity are to go and how they will all match—and, of course, consulting the unions at every stage—fills me with horror.

Ms. Walley: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: No. The hon. Lady has had half an hour; it is my go now.

That is not the way to run a modern, complex, industrial and commercial society. It just does not work, and it is about time that the Labour party realised that and did with that policy what it has done with most of its others, which is to drop them in favour of more intelligent philosophies.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North referred to the delay. I understand that the Bill was introduced in the last Session, but was delayed because of technical problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington therefore deserves even more credit for introducing it in this Session.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North said that the emergency services should be advised every time there is to be a transshipment of dangerous material, particularly radioactive material. As I shall explain further in a moment, I have considerable interest in the transportation of radioactive material. A fair number of the 500,000 transports every year go through my constituency involve work conducted by my constituents. The thought that the emergency services must be notified on every single occasion fills me with horror. Must we really devise a system of telling the emergency services, setting up road blocks and God knows what? It is a preposterous proposal.

Is the hon. Lady saying that Derbyshire county council should be advised every time Derbyshire royal infirmary requires a new isotope for its cancer treatment machine? How long would it take for the bureaucracy to deal with the request? What is my constituent with cancer to do in the meantime? Is he or she to wait until some stupid little bureaucrat in Matlock has decided whether the competent professional company that has produced the isotope is capable of transporting it safely through south Derbyshire and installing it safely at the hospital? The whole idea is absolutely ridiculous.

Ms. Walley: Does not the hon. Lady think that there is any merit at all in the proposal? Does not she realise that we are dealing with radioactive substances, nuclear weapons and highly inflammable material, and unless the emergency services know what material is being transported they might deal with it in a wholly inappropriate way? Public safety is at stake and should be given the highest priority. It is possible to deal with the matter in a reasonable way.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady is shifting her ground. That is not what the nuclear-free zone exercise involved. She now says that most nuclear material and most dangerous material does not fall into the relevant category. That is not what she said earlier, and she has not answered my question.

Ms. Walley: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: No, I will not give way to the hon. Lady again. It is about time that I had my say. The hon. Lady can sit and listen for a minute.

Let me pursue the matter further. Like the hon. Lady's local council, Derbyshire county council is a member of the nuclear-free zones international committee, or whatever it is called. Some years ago, when it got involved in this silly activity, Derbyshire announced that no nuclear or radioactive material would be in use anywhere on its patch. That gave rise to guffaws of derision because it was plain—and the hon. Lady has shown this again today—that those who proposed such policies did not have the faintest idea how a modern society functions in the 1980s and 1990s.

We have large amounts of nuclear material in Derbyshire, as is the case everywhere in the country. The quantities may not be huge, but nuclear materials are used in a large number of places. For a start, we have some of the finest hospitals in the country, which are outstanding in their treatment of cancer. We are immensely proud of them. I want them to function properly in the interests of the patients concerned. We have extremely strict rules to protect the staff who use the equipment. As a former Minister of Health, I am only too aware of how important such equipment can be, how strict the rules are and how good the training is. Thousands of people owe their lives to the availability of nuclear material for treatment.

In my part of the world—not far from the hon. Lady's constituency—we have industry of the highest standard. Nuclear material is used to establish the quality and high standards that we need in modern engineering. We have some of the highest-tech industry in the world. We are world beaters. We have no fears about 1992 or a Japanese invasion. We can take on anyone and beat them. One reason for that is that we are not frightened of new technologies. We create, design, implement, install and monitor those technologies and we are certain that we know how to use them. The materials have to be transported.

Most important of all, Derby is the heart of the nuclear industry in Britain in ways that are perhaps not generally appreciated. It is in the nature of the way in which the industry has developed in Derby that on the whole the industrialists have kept fairly quiet about it. The time is approaching, however, when we must recognise the quality of the work that is being done and its importance to the nation and the rest of the world. I am afraid that that will mean more transportation of materials in future, and that is why the Bill is so important.

We manufacture nuclear power stations in Derby. A large number of businesses are involved in the manufacture, design and contracting of nuclear power stations which go all over the world. We also have a company of which we are immensely proud—Rolls-Royce and Associates. It was set up some 40 years ago when the Americans agreed under various defence contracts to transfer technology on the nuclear power pack for submarines from the United States to Britain. RR and A was then set up and it has been functioning since with not a whisper of criticism. Indeed, I suspect that many people do not even know that the firm is there, right in the heart of Derby. It employs over 1,000 people. It has probably the largest concentration of PhDs outside any university. We have nuclear physicists of the highest calibre in commercial industry. We are immensely proud of the work that they do.

I visited Rolls-Royce and Associates not long ago. To say that I was immensely impressed is an understatement. My query to it was why the company did not talk more about the work that it did, for now it makes the nuclear power packs for not only submarines which carry nuclear weapons but many other submarines. It is now standard practice to equip most submarines with power packs that do not need renewing in the conventional way. They are nuclear power packs. They run silently and for many months without any need for maintenance. They are extremely safe. There is no problem in recruiting people to work on those submarines.

It always struck me as ironic that much of Derby was represented for many years by that noted pacifist Philip Noel-Baker when meanwhile in the middle of the city we were manufacturing the most essential part of nuclear submarines. Perhaps it is not so ironic if one considers that the very existence of the nuclear deterrent and nuclear submarines have kept the peace for so long.

I asked Rolls-Royce and Associates for its views on the Bill. I received a letter this week from Mr. Tony Jaggers, the company quality manager. He said:

"we believe that the Bill is a responsible attempt at regulation. Compliance should only enhance the image of the nuclear industry."

He was right about that. We need to take the industry a substantial step further. We need to lose our fear of the nuclear industry. We need to put on one side our feeling that radioactivity is a magic miasma against which we should have incantations and regulations and that we should cloak the industry in the bureaucratic blanket that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North suggested.

That is why this legislation is so timely. We are updating legislation which goes back to 1948. If the Labour party had been so worried about the transport of radioactive materials, it had plenty of opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s to update the regulations. It never took them. It is a credit to this Government that we have.

It is about time that we started revising our ideas, especially about nuclear power. Let me describe my experiences. My constituency is in the Trent valley. We have been mining coal for a long time. Within sight of my home in south Derbyshire there are four coal-fired power stations. There are several more just over the hill. It is well known in my constituency that I bought a cottage in France, in the Loire valley. I like valleys. Not far from the

cottage is the nuclear power station of St. Antoine. There are four nuclear power stations in the Loire valley. Therefore, as a housekeeper and a domestic person, I can make comparisons between life in the Trent and Loire valleys.

The first and most obvious difference is that the air in the Loire valley is a lot cleaner than that in the Trent valley. I can go back to my house there and find that it is not dusty. The air is breathable. The plants in the garden do not have a rime of dust on them. Yet in south Derbyshire I and my constituents are for ever trying to keep our homes clean. There is a permanent film of dust in every house, in every garden and on every car. I can leave my car for a week in France and at the end of the week it will still be clean. If I leave it for three days in the car park at Derby station, it needs to go to the car wash.

We have taken for granted and willingly accepted for too long the risks associated with non-nuclear power and all the dangers that go with it. Does anyone in Britain count the cost of our being so dependent on non-nuclear power? Does anyone work out the effect on the chests and hearts of my constituents and other people who live in areas where power stations endlessly pollute the atmosphere, even with all the effort——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am finding it difficult to relate what the hon. Lady is saying to the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mrs. Currie: I am making a point which relates to what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North said and the importance of the Bill to the future development of our country. We have for so long taken it for granted that we cannot use nuclear power in this country or that it should be kept to a small proportion. Countries which do not take such a view, and therefore transport more nuclear material, do not have that problem.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Has my hon. Friend read the latest edition of *Euratom* in which it is announced that the Swedish Government, which had a policy of phasing out all nuclear power stations, have reversed that policy on a multi-party basis? Irrespective of the party in power, the Swedish Government will move towards nuclear power precisely because of the arguments that my hon. Friend makes.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I am sure that he is right. It is noticeable that the Swedish Government are changing their policies on many issues and perhaps moving into the modern capitalist world in several welcome ways. My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

The Bill is much more important than the relatively short debates on it have shown. It will enable us to transport nuclear material more safely. If we need to revise all our ideas about the type of power that we shall use in future, we need to be sure that we can transport the materials safely. Of course, we can. But whenever people talk about nuclear power, they talk about the risks and the cost. The aim of the Bill is partly to reduce those risks.

However no one has ever worked out the true costs associated with not using nuclear power. No one has worked out the costs of pollution and its effect on the lives of people living near non-nuclear power stations. No one has ever worked out the costs of cleaning up after coal mining. Planning applications have been made in my constituency for cleaning up many worked-out coal mine sites. The cost is horrendous. No one has worked out the costs of deaths in the coal mining industry.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North mentioned Chernobyl. It is entirely appropriate that we should think about such matters now, on the fifth anniversary of that dreadful disaster. She mentioned Three Mile island. She did not mention the two young men who died in the roof fall in a coal mine in my constituency not long ago. She did not mention the 24-year-old man who was pulled out after the accident minus his foot. The hon. Lady went on about unexpected explosions. She did not mention that most of the coal mines in her area and mine were subject to spontaneous combustion for many years. She did not mention that one of the results of that was an 18-month underground fire in the south Derbyshire and north-west Leicestershire coalfield. That caused a lot of fear and worry partly becauses it manifested itself to everyone in the neighbourhood. The constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) dug up their potatoes from their allotments ready roasted. That is what the coal industry does. My constituents have walked away from that industry without a backward glance.

We have an old power industry in my area, the coal industry, which is facing decline. We also have a new industry, the nuclear power industry, which I am sure will take the place of the old one.

In the years to come as, with the help of this Bill, material is transported by road through my constituency according to the highest possible standards—the Bill establishes standards which are world leaders—Rolls-Royce and Associates will not just put its nuclear power packs just into submarines but will adapt them for domestic and commercial use. I am happy to predict that the day will come when from the start we shall provide how equipment for nuclear power is to be transported, how it is to be inserted, perhaps buried in the ground, and how the disposal procedures are to operate so that many problems associated with the industry will no longer cause anx[illegible].

We now have half a century of experience of using and transporting nuclear materials in this country and abroad. Naturally, there are risks. It is not possible to wrench energy from nature without some sort of risk. The Bill is an intelligent and sophisticated part of the world's efforts to reduce that risk, and I commend it and my hon. Friend's efforts.

10.30 am

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I join my colleagues in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on having the good fortune to come so high in the ballot and on his choice of Bill. I am particularly pleased because I canvassed for him before he was elected at that great by-election victory in his constituency. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), I apologise for the fact that I was unable to be present on Second Reading.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on piloting his Bill so expeditiously through Committee. As he said, the Committee sitting started at 10.30 am and ended eight minutes later, at 22 minutes to 11 o'clock. An even greater achievement was that he managed to get the Bill through Committee unamended. That must be a tribute to his

[Mr. John Townend]

eloquence and good standing. As one who has always believed in financial rectitude, I am impressed that he did not draw the £200 that is available to Members who introduce a private Member's Bill: His career in this place will prosper. I should like to see him eventually moving with those attributes to the Treasury.

All hon. Members will owe my hon. Friend a great debt on behalf of their constituents. The transport of radioactive materials is important and the general public are anxious that it should be carried out under maximum safety regulations. I understand that there is a large number of shipments a year and perhaps my hon. Friend will clarify how many. I noticed that a figure of 300,000 was mentioned in Committee, whereas 500,000 was given on Second Reading. That is a material difference and it would be helpful if my hon. Friend could clarify the matter when he replies to the debate.

The shipments range from nuclear waste to medical isotopes and sometimes go to ferries for export, to airports or to hospitals. My constituency is adjacent to the ferry terminals in Hull from where North Sea Ferries operates five ferries a day to Zeebrugge and Rotterdam. My home town of Hull, which used to be the country's third port but which declined year after year because of the national dock labour scheme until it was no longer in the first 10, is benefiting from this Government's wisdom in abolishing the National Dock Labour Board. As a result, traffic through the port is increasing rapidly.

Some of the 300,000 or 500,000 shipments, whichever is the correct figure, will undoubtedly travel along roads in my constituency, so my constituents are particularly grateful for the Bill. They have considerable experience of vehicles carrying hazardous loads travelling on our local roads because we have a large chemicals plant near the ferry terminal, at Saltend, We also have North sea gas terminals and a certain amount of hazardous material is transported to them. Therefore, road safety in relation to hazardous loads is a high priority in their minds.

Clearly radioactive materials are most hazardous loads. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South that people sometimes get carried away and go over the top when talking about nuclear waste. Therefore, my constituents believe that there should be strict controls and safety regulations.

The present controls are derived from the Radioactive Substances Act 1948 and are now inadequate. The United Kingdom is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency which is centred in Vienna and is a specialist agency of the United Nations. As members of that important body, we are bound by its rules. As it has insisted that all its members should have more up-to-date regulations to control the transport of nuclear materials by road, my hon. Friend's Bill is opportune and appropriate.

It has been mentioned that the Bill should have passed through the House last year. It would have done but for a technical hitch. Clearly it has the support of the Government. My hon. Friend has been public spirited in giving his slot high in the ballot over to a Bill which is of such public importance.

As my hon. Friend said, it is an enabling Bill. It allows the Department of Transport as the competent authority to make regulations, which the Minister will be able to keep up to date, and to respond to further regulations issued by the IAEA in Vienna.

Clause 2 sets out all the subjects to be covered by the regulations. My constituents will be particularly relieved that under clause 2(1)*(a)* the Secretary of State may make regulations

"to prevent any injury to health, or any damage to property or to the environment, being caused by, or by an incident arising out of, the transport of radioactive material".

I particularly support clause 2(2)*(a)* which concerns

"the design of packaging for radioactive material and the manufacture and maintenance of packaging components"

That is important because the public need to be assured that, if there is an accident involving a vehicle carrying radioactive materials, there is no possibility of that packaging being damaged to the extent that radioactive materials could leak from the vehicle and contaminate people or goods. The packaging therefore must comply with strict design specifications so that it can withstand any impact that it is likely to receive as a result of a serious road accident.

Clause 2(2)(b) relates to clear labelling. That is also important, because, in the event of an accident, it is necessary for the emergency services to be aware of the problem that they may face. Given the nature of radioactive materials, it is equally important that their storage and handling, as well as their transportation, are strictly regulated.

Clause 2(2)(c) relates to

"the placarding of vehicles used to transport such packages"

That is important for two reasons: to aid the emergency services—the police and fire service—in the event of an accident; and to reassure the public. The public are frightened of hazardous materials being carried in secret. It is therefore important that hazardous loads are clearly marked when transported.

Clause 2(2)(d) relates to

"the keeping of records and the furnishing of information".

That is important not only for reasons of safety but for public confidence. It must be right that any person who contravenes or fails to comply with any regulation made by the Secretary of State should be guilty of an offence —it could well be a serious one.

Clause 3 relates to prohibitions and directions. It must be correct for an inspector or an examiner to have the right to prohibit the driving of a vehicle which has been used to carry radioactive materials or packages if either that vehicle or any radioactive package carried in it fails to comply with the regulations made by the Secretary of State.

It is right that clause 3(1)(b) should enable an inspector or examiner to prohibit the driving of a vehicle if

"the vehicle, or any radioactive package which is or was being transported by it, has been involved in an accident".

The inspector or an examiner has a similar right under clause 3(1)(c) if

"any radioactive package which was being transported by the vehicle, or any radioactive material which was contained in such a package, has been lost or stolen"

It is vital that such dangerous materials should be transported in properly designed packages. It is therefore important for an inspector to have the power available to him in clause 3(2) to prohibit the transport of any radioactive package that he believes has failed to comply with the regulations made by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend has spoken specifically about the design of the packaging and the safety of the vehicle, but are there any constraints in the Bill relating to the person who will drive that vehicle? If a person passed his heavy goods vehicle driving test 15 or 20 years ago—before he had his bronchitis, arthritis and his eyesight started to deteriorate—would he still be allowed to get behind the wheel of a vehicle transporting radioactive material? Are there no controls over such a person? If not, that is a weakness in the Bill which we should consider, even at this stage. We should ensure not only that the packaging and the vehicle are right, so that people are happy, but that the drivers are right. After all, most accidents occur as a result of human failure.

Mr. Townend: My hon. Friend raises a pertinent point which I do not believe has been dealt with in the Bill. It is a pity that my hon. Friend was not on the Committee as he might have tabled a relevant amendment. No doubt when my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington replies to the debate he will he tell my hon. Friend whether he has considered that point and whether there are particular reasons why there is no specific clause on that matter in the Bill. There is no doubt that it is no good going to all the expense of introducing safeguards for the packaging and labelling of the radioactive materials and the placarding of the vehicles if there are no strict controls over those who can drive the vehicles. That matter should be considered.

I want to make progress as I know that there is another important Bill before the House today. [HON. MEMBERS: "Keep going".] I am pleased that hon. Members find my speech so fascinating and want me to continue. I shall do my best to oblige.

If an accident occurs, the first requirement is to ensure the safety of the public and for that reason clause 3(4) is essential. It is vital that the inspector should have the power to remove a vehicle to a safe place. Subsection (4) states:

"Where an inspector or examiner imposes a prohibition under subsection (1) above, he may also by a direction in writing require the person in charge of the vehicle to remove it (and, if it is motor vehicle drawing a trailer, also to remove the trailer) to such place and subject to such conditions as are specified in the direction; and the prohibition shall not apply to the removal of the vehicle or trailer in accordance with the direction."

That is an important power.

I have one further question to put to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington which I hope he can clarify. Does the Bill apply to Scotland? I notice that Northern Ireland is mentioned and has been dealt with separately, but it is vital that the Bill should apply to Scotland. I know that we have the queer situation in this place where sometimes we have to produce separate Bills for the two countries.

When one imposes regulations, one must also consider the possibility of their being breached. In a serious situation involving health and safety the penalties for a breach of the regulations should not be insignificant. Clause 6(2) provides:

"Any person guilty of an offence under section 5(5) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale."

I am not sure what that level is, but I hope that that fine is substantial as it is important that the regulations are complied with because we need to keep public confidence in the transportation of radioactive material.

Clause 6(3) states:

"Any person guilty of any other offence under this Act shall be liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both;"

That seems a reasonably stiff penalty. Subsection (3)(b) sets down the penalty on summary conviction as

"a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months or to both"

Subsection (4) provides:

"The court by or before which any person is convicted of an offence under section 2(4) or 3(8) above in respect of any radioactive material may order the material to be destroyed or disposed of and any expenses reasonably incurred in connection with the destruction or disposal to be defrayed by that person."

I was rather amused by clause 7, which reads:

"Any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the provisions of this Act shall be payable out of money provided by Parliament."

I have not noticed whether that provision is in every Act, but it seems strange. Nobody would expect the Secretary of State to pay out of his own pocket the money spent as a consequence of the Act's provisions.

I shall close by saying that I am convinced——

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): It would be helpful if the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) put it on record that his real interest is not in this Bill but in the one that follows. The following Bill is an important animal welfare measure to which the hon. Gentleman takes exception. Will he explain why he did not attend the Second Reading debate, which involved only a six-minute speech, and why he did not attend the Committee where the proceedings were completed in eight minutes? Will he also explain why he has not tabled any amendments up to Third Reading but has now made the longest speech on the Bill? Will he confirm that he has no interest in the Bill but merely seeks to delay proceedings so that he can kill the animal welfare measure?

Mr. Townend: The hon. Member is most presumptuous. He cannot have heard my speech. I apologised—as did my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South—for not being able to be present for the Second Reading debate as I had constituency engagements. On Fridays most hon. Members have engagements.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the next important Bill. If he looks behind him, he will see that there is nobody there. Therefore, the Bill cannot be that important to the Labour party. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my speech, he would have understood that, as busy roads from the ferry terminal and from the port of Hull run through my constituency, I have a legitimate constituency interest in this Bill. Because of the important chemical works and North sea gas terminals in my constituency, my constituents are more aware than those of most right hon. and hon. Members of the dangers of carrying hazardous materials.

The hon. Gentleman is right: I have a great interest in the next Bill because my constituency has the largest concentration of pig farmers in the country. If that Bill is passed, many of them will go bankrupt, so I am also here for that Bill. However, the hon. Gentleman was wrong and presumptuous to say—or to insinuate—that I have no interest in this Bill or no right to speak on it. He went over

[Mr. Townend]

the top when he spoke about attendance at the Committee. He knows as well as I do how rarely hon. Members who are not members of Committees attend those Committees.

Mr. Ron Davies: The record is accurate. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I was listening to his speech at the Bar of the House and I followed his arguments carefully. I did not suggest that he had no right to speak on the Bill. I recognise and uphold that right. I was questioning his motives rather than his right. I am grateful that he has confirmed his objection and his wish to kill the animal welfare measure which follows the Bill.

I accept the hon. Gentleman's assertion that he has an important constituency interest. I should have thought that his cause and the interests of his constituents would best be served by bringing the debate to a close so that we can proceed to Third Reading and hasten the Bill's passage into law.

Mr. Townend: Again, the hon. Gentleman is presumptuous. If my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Spalding——

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Not Spalding anymore.

Mr. Townend: If my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) listens to my amendments and has a heart for the poor pig farmers in my constituency, he will accept them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must not anticipate debates that may come later.

Mr. Townend: I apologise, but, with respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) accused me of having said that I wished to kill the Bill. I did not say that. I am saying that, if the amendments were accepted, I should be happy to vote for the Bill because they would mean that our pig farmers would not be at a disadvantage compared with European pig farmers.

It is important for my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington to see that all hon. Members who vote, vote for the Bill. I shall give him the opportunity to see that by calling a Division. I am convinced that the Bill will be passed and I do not expect anybody to vote against it. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington. After a relatively short time in Parliament, he will have made a small piece of parliamentary history by having successfully introduced and steered the Fishburn Bill through the House.

I strongly support the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South about the importance of nuclear energy. There is no doubt that the industrial revival in France is very much based on cheap energy which comes mainly from nuclear power. As she said, as we advance into the nuclear age, the safe transportation of nuclear waste will become increasingly important. In a few years the people who do not realise it now will realise then what an important contribution the Bill will have made. There is no doubt that many people in this country have suffered from hydrocarbon fuels. We know the problems about coal mines which my hon. Friend mentioned.

I shall not detain the House any longer as we have important business to do, but again I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington.

10.57 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): If I correctly detect the feeling in the House, it is that we should move as quickly as possible to conclude Third Reading.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on successfully steering the Bill to Third Reading and confirm the Government's full support for his efforts. It is an important Bill and, were it not for my hon. Friend's generosity in giving up his place in the private Members' ballot for this measure, we should not have been guaranteed that it would be on the statute book this Session.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) raised a number of issues. She explained to me that she must attend a constituency engagement—as I, too, must do shortly—so I shall write to her with the details of those issues. However, most of them were irrelevant to the core of the Bill. She was especially interested in the issue of inspectors. At the first stage, there will be approximately 10 inspectors and 215 traffic examiners. That is the correct level of enforcement to begin with, but it will be kept under review. I have great pleasure in commending the Bill to the House.

10.59 am

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on introducing the Bill. However, he has done so on behalf of the Government. With respect, I must say that this is not a private Member's Bill; it is a piece of Government legislation. As it is a piece of Government legislation, we should be debating it not on a Friday morning, but properly in Government time. It should be introduced by a Minister and opposed by the Opposition and we should debate it in that context. Although it may have been slightly offensive to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) made a contribution, we must put it on record that although we congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington on getting a Bill through the House of Commons, we believe that it is not a private Member's Bill, but Government legislation. Is it good or bad Government legislation?

Guy's Hospital

11 am

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of which I have given you notice. Will a Health Minister make a statement to the House about the cut of 600 jobs at Guy's hospital? Will anyone take responsibility for that, or is the Government's attitude, "Guy's? It has opted out and is nothing to do with us any more"? Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, use your influence to bring a Minister to the House to answer for the shortage of funds that has led to the jobs being axed, or is it the case that now that Guy's has opted out, the only accountability is to the balance sheet, not to the patients or the local community? The Prime Minister is to have a health summit tomorrow. Scrapping the national health service changes must be at the top of his agenda.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would be helpful if you could tell the House whether you have been given any idea of the Government's response to the knowledge that they were given this morning that requests were being made for Ministers to come to the House to answer the complaints about the sudden announcement of the cuts at Guy's hospital, which is in my constituency.

The case raises an issue for the first time. It is the first such announcement since self-governing hospital trusts came into operation on 1 April. The constitutional problem may be that Ministers are reluctant to come to the House because they are suddenly saying that they are no longer answerable for self-governing hospital trusts. If that is why the Secretary of State or his Ministers are not here —I understand that although the Secretary of State may not be in London, Ministers are in the Department today —it cannot be right.

The argument for self-government is that the hospital is now directly accountable to the Government and that the local health authority has been cut out. The House needs an assurance that at the least on Monday if not today, because we must give the Government the opportunity to get their argument together, given that they will meet at Chequers tomorrow to discuss health service policy, the Secretary of State will come to the House to explain how it is possible for 600 jobs, one eighth of the work force, to go from the local hospital without a reduction in care for the community.

I am often in the hospital——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is raising a point of order. He cannot go into the merits of the case, especially during private Members' time.

Mr. Hughes: I will be brief. Ministers need to come to the House because the statement made on behalf of the hospital yesterday—not publicly, as there has been no communication with elected representatives and no alerting of local Members of Parliament—is that there will be no reduction in care. It has even been said that the cuts are being made to advance the care of the patients. That cannot be true. Someone must explain to the House how it is possible for employees of the public health service to make what is clearly a misleading statement from which many people are likely to suffer. If we can have an announcement today that there will be a statement on Monday, it will at least be possible to question the Secretary of State on what could be a matter of precedent affecting many people, many hospitals and many workers in the health service throughout England and Wales.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The self-governing trust to which hon. Members have referred is Guy's and Lewisham, so the cuts affect Lewisham hospital in my constituency. I have had no notice of the cuts and I have not been consulted. I wish to add to the call made by my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) for a statement in the House so that we may question Ministers.

In Lewisham, we face the closure of Sydenham children's hospital and the moving of its facilities to our site. Will that be placed in jeopardy? Will phase 2 of our hospital be placed in jeopardy? We cannot tell, but we are told that the cuts are across the board. A 10 per cent. cut in staff at Lewisham hospital would be extremely deleterious to our health services. As my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham said, Ministers must be made responsible for the action. I beg you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your good offices to ensure that Ministers come to the House either today or another day to answer for what will be, I am sure, a severe reduction in the health services available to my constituents.

Mr. John Townend *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman speaking on the same point of order?

Mr. Townend: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please speak very briefly because we are cutting into private Members' time.

Mr. Townend: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These things happen all the time. One should not always accept the idea that because staff are cut, services will be cut. One might consider the catering side of hospitals——

Ms. Ruddock: This is not a point of order.

Mr. Townend: It is a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot debate the matter now. If the hon. Gentleman has a point of order for me, I will hear it.

Mr. Townend: It is quite unreasonable for the Opposition to demand on a Friday that a Minister should come to the House. There is no urgency in the matter. A Minister could easily make a statement next week. There is no urgency for a statement to be made before the weekend. Ministers are supposed to be running the country, so it would be inconvenient for them to come to the House today. The demand is unnecessary.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I speak as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. I recall that the trusts were established by delegated powers. As far as I can recall, there were no provisions in that delegated legislation for the removal of parliamentary accountability and the responsibility of Ministers to make statements to the House when there were such enormous, cataclysmic and catastrophic announcements of 600 redundancies at a given hospital. I thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if you were making inquiries on behalf of the House, which is

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

anxious to have a statement from the Government, it should be borne in mind that Ministers still have responsibility for the catastrophe.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There has been no request for a statement on the matter, but no doubt what has been said will have been heard by members of the Government Front Bench. The hon. Members concerned will be able to seek other opportunities to raise the matter.

Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill

Mr. Holt: I drove past Guy's hospital this morning and I was amazed by the amount of capital building work that is going on there. Having seen that and then having listened to remarks about 600 job cuts did not make sense to me. However, I should be told off by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I digressed for one minute from the Bill.

I have already congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington and I was making the point that the Bill was really Government legislation. As such, coming on a Friday, it interferes with genuine private Members' time. The Bill will not be subjected, as was the Bill concerning the Tees and Hartlepool port authority which I sponsored, to being thrown out on the capricious whim of a few Members of the other place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington drew attention to his constituency in relation to the transportation of atomic waste. I represent Teesside, where the chemical industry is at the heart of what we do. We have tremendous problems. We have the largest fire service in the country. Recently we have been involved in detailed and long talks over the marking of all the vehicles that come into Teesside from all round the world. In Cleveland, we used the British marking while everyone else used the European standard marking. The Government urged us to go over to the European model. We tried to convince the Minister that the signs used in this country, and widely accepted in this and some other countries, were better than European signs and that argument raged over the transportation of chemicals. Will we have the same arguments over the movement of atomic waste, raw materials, isotopes and so on? If so, we could find ourselves in an expensive bargaining game.

It is all very well to have before us this type of Bill, either privately or supported by the Government, but I wonder how long it will be before the European legislature decides to impose its own rules, regulations and markings and whether we shall have to change all over again. In those circumstances, it might have been wise to leave the matter until the Europeans have determined the issue, in the same context as the movement of chemical and hazardous materials in the Teesside area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington referred to people's perceptions and feelings about atomic waste and atomic power stations. On Teesside we have Hartlepool power station, which is producing electricity cheaply for distribution on the national grid. It is an excellent power station. I recall not long ago the people responsible for the welfare and well-being of the toughest youngsters in the Durham area—those who in old-fashioned terms would have been called borstal boys—taking a group on a visit to Hartlepool atomic power station.

The tough lads and lassies were ushered into a bus in Durham and transported a few miles to Hartlepool. It was found, on arriving at the power station, that the youngsters would not leave the bus. Although only a few brick walls lay between the bus and the power station, they did not want to go in. It was as though they were near Chernobyl. Although they were told that they were at no risk, their perception was such—the same applies to many members of the public—they did not like the idea of being at the power station.

Such is the aura surrounding atomic energy and we must remove that fear. One way to do that is through the type of measure that is before the House today. We must constantly examine and update legislation. Much has happened between 1947 and 1991. If we do not re-educate the public in this matter, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, we shall fall behind our European competitors, particularly France, in the provision of cheap electricity.

The British furniture industry, for which I speak in the House, recently had new legislation imposed on it for fire prevention which involved the use of new types of foam in upholstered furniture. The result is that, at great expense, all furniture manufacturers in Britain have installed new equipment and employed new production methods. We are now producing furniture which is safer than furniture produced anywhere else on the continent.

Yet the European Parliament is about to introduce new regulations affecting furniture manufacturing. That will involve foam, chemicals and all other matters used in that industry, but the new European regulations will not be as strict as those that now exist in Britain. That puts the Minister in a dichotomy; does he uphold our stronger laws or accede to instructions from Brussels?

If, having passed this Bill, the same happens over the movement of atomic waste, we shall find ourselves in a legislative maelstrom. Indeed, we might as well have stayed, legislatively, where we were in 1947. Have the changes that we have made over the years given us the best that we could have? Even at this stage of the Bill, I question whether my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, acting on behalf of the Government, or even the Government themselves, have thought through the whole question of the marking of vehicles.

It is important to know what consideration the Government have given to controls that may be imposed on the drivers of the vehicles involved. For example, will there be an age limit and will drivers need medical examinations, including regular eye tests? It is all very well to say that a vehicle must have an MOT test every few years to ensure that its tyres, gears and so on are in good working order and that it has all the necessary equipment. But what about the human beings who drive the vehicles?

Our experience on Teesside, which involves the movement of many chemical lorries, is that invariably accidents occur not through mechanical failure but through human error. Sometimes the roads are slippery, but all too often accidents occur through human error such as tiredness or lack of concentration, or because drivers have been listening to the radio or thinking about last night's football match or episode of "Eastenders". As a result of the multitude of matters that go through people's minds, accidents occur.

When there is a chemical accident on Teesside, there is a major alert and all the emergency services immediately go into action. I fear that hellish travel and traffic problems also occur. Indeed, in a recent accident on the main roundabout on the A19, traffic was held up for many hours. That involved the spillage of only a small amount of toxic material, but we cannot afford to take chances with the movement of toxic, dangerous and nuclear material.

We have a debt to the general public. That has led my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington to introduce the Bill, although hon. Members will agree that we were not over-convinced by the Minister's contribution. Could we have been convinced by Government explanation, apology and enlightenment involving only one and a half minutes of explanation from the Minister?

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend feel that a covert deal has been done by the Minister? He did not give a proper reply to the debate or answer the questions that were put to him. Could that be because he is anxious to get on to the next debate, the Government having decided to back the Bill which will cause many problems for my pig farmers? I have been accused by the Opposition of manoeuvring. Does my hon. Friend think that this is a case of parliamentary manoeuvring?

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend tempts me to discuss that issue, but would he expect me to ascribe such motives to the Minister? Heaven forbid that a Minister would do anything that could be called gerrymandering——

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the hon. Gentleman mean filibustering rather than gerrymandering?

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, which shows that he is more familiar than I am with the use of such words.

Mr. John Townend: My hon. Friend represents a constituency which contains many chemical works. Has he had problems on the roads over the transportation of hazardous loads and are his constituents as worried as mine about such matters and do they require reassurance? Is it likely that loads of nuclear waste will be transported through his constituency?

Mr. Holt: That reminds me that I should put on record the fact that I am a director of a chemical company with production units on the river in Teesside. Therefore, I have much first-hand knowledge of the chemical industry and know what we must consider by way of environmental practices. Without a shadow of a doubt, my company's No. 1 priority is safety and I believe that to be true of ICI and all the other major chemical companies in Teesside. On my visits to various chemical companies, I have always made a point of meeting the transport manager and seeing the safety experts because there is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) said, a widespread fear and concern that we are dealing with material that is liable to be volatile at any time. There is also a power station in the constituency.

Sir Richard Body: Will my hon. Friend give hon. Members some guidance on what they should do in the forthcoming Division for which my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) has said he will call and for which Tellers will be provided? Will my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) vote against the Bill? Does he feel that the Bill goes far enough? Will he give us guidance on which way we should vote because, in view of what he said earlier, it seems that some of us should be persuaded to vote against the Bill when my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington presses it to a Division?

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend will have to be patient. When one learns how this place works, one often finds that as more and more legislation progresses, hon. Members take more interest. There is so much legislation that they cannot always be fully aware of and involved in every detail.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the hon. Gentleman does not know the difference between gerrymandering and filibustering, he should be reticent about giving advice on matters procedural to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body).

Mr. Holt: I did not give my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) any advice. I took on board the point of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), that it would have been presumptious for me to give advice to my hon. Friend who, I know, is interested in this debate. However, I do not think that my hon. Friend has too many power stations using atomic energy or many chemical works in his constituency. But I am grateful to him for being here.

Sir Richard Body: The railway system in my constituency is being used for the transportation of these dangerous materials, which has caused great anxiety.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington is against the Bill and proposes to press for a Division. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaugh support my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington in his opposition to the Bill?

Mr. Holt: I repeat that my hon. Friend must be patient. We shall all find out what I am going to do at the end of the debate, when I shall say which way I shall lead the House on Third Reading.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that there has been some presumptuousness in the House today? My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) will have to wait and see what happens at the end of the debate and see how I vote.

Mr. Holt: We shall all have to wait and see how we vote. The important thing is to see how many people vote. We shall have to see whether the Government, as this is their Bill, have managed to persuade the payroll to materialise out of the woodwork and present themselves in the Lobby on a Friday, or whether this is genuinely a one-line Whip day, when the wishes of Back-Benchers prevail, not the Executive.

I have a sneaking feeling, because I have not been contradicted in the suggestions that I have made three or four times, that this is Government legislation. As it is Government legislation, I feel reasonably confident that the Government will have done something in the background to bring in hon. Members. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston would like to ask all of them how they are going to vote, how they made up their minds how they were going to vote and which salient points of the debate they took on board? Perhaps they were influenced by a telephone call from the Whip telling them to be here and support the Government legislation on Friday morning. I doubt whether those people have listened to the arguments in the debate or made up their own minds. I freely admit that that is my practice on most Fridays when I vote. That is the way in which the vast majority of hon. Members make up their minds on many pieces of legislation on which they vote day in, day out, vote in, vote out because that is how this place operates. I shall tell my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston which way I shall vote later.

It is worth noting that, while people come out of the woodwork to speak on points of order on a London hospital, there are no Liberals or Labour Members present, except one Labour shadow spokesman, for this debate, which is about the movement of atomic material. When people come to my glorious constituency and drive along the road to Teeside they come across a sign saying "Nuclear Free Zone" put up by Labour-controlled Cleveland county council. That means that the nuclear power station at Hartlepool must be a figment of our imagination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding it difficult to relate what the hon. Gentleman is saying to the Bill. We are on Third Reading and the debate should be restricted to what is in the Bill.

Mr. Holt: I am talking about the tranportation by road of nuclear waste material. It will be transported by a lorry that has been tested, has proper tyres and has undergone an oil change. That lorry will be driven up the A19 and could be involved in an accident. When the driver comes across the "Nuclear Free Zone" sign will the lorry shudder to a stop as he puts on the brakes? Does the Bill tell the lorry driver what to do when he comes to that sign on his way to or from Hartlepool power station to take nuclear material in or out? The Bill does not. It states that the lorry must be in good order and the packaging must be right, but it does not say anything about the man or woman driving the vehicle—but it is a piece of Government legislation.

Having enjoyed being a nuclear-free zone for so long under the loonies, the London borough of Brent has now done away with the nuclear-free zone signs. The last of the signs was recently installed in the civil museum in Brent to mark the passing of the loony left and the signs in that borough. Unfortunately, Cleveland is still controlled by the loony left Labour local authority, which has a right to determine the movement of nuclear material by road and train.

My hon. Friend mentioned that trains, possibly with nuclear material on board, pass through his constituency. I wonder who knows which trains have nuclear material on board. Are there special signs? It appears that, in the Bill, the Government have omitted to mention anything relating to trains.

Mr. John Townend: My hon. Friend must have misheard me. I did not mention trains passing through my constituency. I was worried about the transportation by road of such waste in my constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill clearly deals with transport by road and it would be out of order to refer to any other form of transport.

Mr. Holt: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was drawn along that path by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland and Boston. I was seeking only to answer his point about trains carrying radioactive material passing through his constituency. Perhaps the fact that the Bill relates only to roads is one of its defects. It will be undermined by forthcoming European legislation, which will relate to all the transportation systems for such material. It may not be long before the Government have to return to the House with another Bill. Will that be on a Friday? Will they ask some hon. Member who is lucky enough to have come high in the ballot to adopt it as a private Member's Bill?

I am not really knocking the fact that the Government behave in that way. On occasions, I am glad that

Government Bills go through the private Member's Bill route on a Friday. I was here not many Fridays ago when the House debated another Government-inspired and sponsored Bill to provide for vending machines and television sets in betting shops. That came through the door——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must deal with the Bill. It is my job to protect the business of the House and the hon. Gentleman must keep in order. He must relate his remarks directly to what is in the Bill.

Mr. Holt: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened to the whole of the debate and I am simply trying to discuss some points that have already been made. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South referred to her cottage in the Loire valley and said that the atomic power stations there did not create dust. She was in order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will recollect that I stopped the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) at that point.

Mr. Holt: Your memory is better than mine, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you did stop my hon. Friend. That was when I intervened to remind the House of what happened when the Swedish Government changed their policy on the use of atomic power stations.

My hon. Friend for Kensington moved the Third Reading with alacrity and smoothness, but nowhere near that shown by my hon. Friend the Minister. The manner in which he responded and the fact that he added nothing to the reasons why the Bill is being dealt with in this way made me think that perhaps he had a heavy pressing engagement outside the House. Hon. Members who participate in debates on a Friday—including my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston—want to know why people vote in a particular way. Because my hon. Friend the Minister has left, he cannot intervene in my speech and answer some of my legitimate questions. What about other forms of transportation for atomic and dangerous materials? Will sufficient roads be built? Will roads be identified as priority routes on which the hazardous material must be transported? Will certain roads be banned for the transportation of such material? Can only specific vehicles be used to carry such material, or will any vehicle be permitted provided that the packaging, as set out in the Bill, is correct?

Was not it discouraging to see on our television sets during the past few days that those who transport atomic warheads have been highly criticised by an independent body—not the Opposition; a body far more learned and thorough? That had Government support, as the Bill has Government support. I have a responsibility to my constituents to be absolutely sure, before I vote on proposed legislation, that it is in their best interests. I am not convinced that the Bill is in their best interests, especially in view of the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister. Of course, if I were to be polite, I would refer to his lack of speech. He did not answer any of the points made. He has gone and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—who is waiting for the next debate—is holding the seat on the Treasury Bench. I doubt whether an Agriculture Minister would wish to intervene in a road transport debate.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): My hon. Friend is being uncharacteristically unfair. I urged my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic to leave so that he could fulfil his important engagements. Before he did so, he gave an undertaking to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley)—who has also left to fulfil engagements—that he would write to her on any detailed points. This is a Third Reading debate and I feel that my hon. Friend's speech was more than adequate, especially as the Bill was exhaustively discussed during earlier stages.

My hon. Friend the Minister would be pleased to write to my hon. Friend for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) on any technical or detailed points. I confirm that my hon. Friend the Minister concluded his speech by saying that the Government support the Bill.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but the fact is that the Minister responsible has left. That underlines my earlier point that Government legislation on a Friday is wrong, especially if Ministers have previous engagements that take them away in the middle of the debate when hon. Members are making their points. I do not make a slur on my hon. Friend; perhaps it is a problem with the way in which the Government organise the business of the House. I am not being personally critical; I am criticising the way in which the system works. I accept the assurance that my points about the roads in my constituency will receive a written reply. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is a most courteous and diligent man, but that does not detract from my argument that Ministers should be in the Chamber to reply, not just to hold the seat.

I return to the question of my constituency—its roads, the road patterns and the vehicles that will be carrying the hazardous material. We will not always know what the vehicles are carrying. We do not know what the markings regulations will be. Langbaurgh has been waiting since 1938 for bypass for the market town of Guisborough. If vehicles carrying hazardous waste have to go through Guisborough, until the bypass is built, my constituents will be worried. The vehicles will have to pass through a busy market town with markets on both sides of an old cobbled street, with a steep, sharp bend at one end. We have been waiting for the bypass and perhaps we should have one before such materials are allowed to travel through Cleveland in road vehicles, however well protected the materials and however young, fit and able are the drivers, or however good their eyesight.

If the Minister were here, I would have mentioned to him the fact that Guisborough almost has a bypass. A few months ago a new stretch of dual carriageway spur road came along, stretching from one part of my constituency to the outskirts of Guisborough. A lovely roundabout was built and 20 ft of brand new roadway leads off it. One day that will be a bypass.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman once more that we are talking about the transport by road of radioactive materials. We are not talking about road works.

Mr. Holt: They cannot be transported by road if we have not got the roads, and I am trying to argue that case.

[Mr. Holt]

To transport such materials through my constituency, as provided for in the Bill, roads need to be built and that bypass needs to be built.

Perhaps that subject is on the fringe of being out of order, but it is a road—or to be precise it is not a road, because it has not been built yet, as is the case with the Brotton bypass, which we should have but which we do not have——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought for one moment that the hon. Gentleman was about to be very helpful. He virtually admitted that he was out of order. I ask for his co-operation to ensure that his remarks are in order.

Mr. Holt: I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was skirting close to the edge of the road and I am carrying no hazard warning signs; if I were, they would be out of order as far as the European Commission is concerned.

This is a serious matter and perhaps I have treated it with a little levity. However, it is important that, when Parliament is asked to pass legislation, it is given all the information that it requires. I am not sure that we should be proud to say that in Committee we got rid of the Bill in six minutes or 12 minutes, or whatever the figure was, or that it had a thorough, detailed investigation there.

On Third Reading we are not necessarily able to go into all the ramifications, but can only say whether we approve or disapprove and vote for or against the Bill. However, it remains incumbent upon us to probe and to look for answers from Ministers.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, the promoter of the Bill, were a member of the Government it would be different. I wish him well and I hope that he soon is, as his talents lie in that direction. However, at the moment he is not in a position to answer for the Government.

Sir Richard Body: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his stamina, because he has succeeded in killing off the subsequent legislation for this afternoon, which is quite an achievement, given the paucity of matter for debate in the Bill. Is he aware that during his speech he has driven out of the Chamber everyone who came to the House concerned with the Bill other than its promoter, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn)? That is a remarkable achievement for which he deserves to be doubly congratulated, because there is no one on either Front Bench who is concerned with the Bill—they have all gone. Everyone else has gone, because they are satisfied with the Bill. True my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) is here. We are fascinated to discover whether he will support the Bill. He has said that he will call a Division, no doubt because he is against it, although everyone else seems to be in favour.

Given all those facts, does not my hon. Friend consider that, having succeeded in killing off the subsequent legislation, we might now be spared too much detail about the necessary road works in his constituency and about some of the other matters that we have been hearing about for some time? Now that he has achieved his objective, could he not sum up his essential arguments as to why he objects to the Third Reading of this Bill?

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because he has given me one or two thoughts that had not occurred to me. That enables me to remind my hon. Friend that I have not driven anyone anywhere. My hon. Friend is still here. The hon. Member for Bridlington is still here; I have not driven him away.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Is it in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) to go on for 45 minutes, talking like a five-year-old schoolboy, and for him deliberately to obstruct a Bill that many hon. Members have stayed here this morning to see brought into legislative effect—an animal welfare measure that many people in this country want? Is he not ashamed of himself? Would you order him to bring his remarks to a close?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As long as the hon. Gentleman is in order, he is entitled to address the House, but he is having quite a job keeping in order.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to answer some of the questions asked during this debate, questions which were obviously in order because they were not ruled out of order.

May I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Holland upon Boston that he need not worry about my stamina because I was here for the entire 14 hours during which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), myself and one or two other hon. Members managed to talk, quite conclusively and within the rules of the House, about putting fluoride in water. I believe that that was the longest speech on record by any hon. Member and that it is recorded in the "Guinness Book of Records". I was here for the entire 14-hour debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that because I had forgotten about it.

Allowing for interventions and points of order, and for giving way so generously on so many occasions, I do not think that I have spoken for long. If I have changed the direction of Parliament or have moved legislation in one way or another in such a short time, it is quite an achievement. Perhaps if I keep going for a little longer on the Bill, legislation may well be the better for it.

However, I do not want to travel along those roads, even on a road Bill, if it causes you to bring me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or to tell me that I am stretching the patience of the Chair and of the House. If you tell me that something is out of order, I respect that and come back to the subject as quickly as I can. I am a little tangential from time to time because my hon. Friend—but I see that he has gone. My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston says things that tempt me on to subjects for which I do not even have a note. I had not anticipated that. Sometimes I have to reflect for a moment about interjections. Earlier my hon. Friend the Minister made a helpful interjection.

I am concerned that there are fears for animal welfare. I did not know that there were any atomic animals as yet. Many people have views on the transportation of atomic materials and many people have expressed strong views in the past about anything to do with radioactive waste.

Sometimes it is when a seemingly short, two-paragraph Bill is before us that important legislation is passed. It is incumbent on hon. Members with constituencies close to a power station where hazardous materials and toxic waste may be transported on the roads continually, day in and day out, night after night, seven days a week to consider the Bill. I wonder whether there is any reference in the Bill

or whether the Government have given consideration to the possible hazardous mix between chemical and atomic materials. Will anyone ensure that a vehicle carrying a heavy load of toxic waste is not travelling at the same time as a vehicle carrying atomic waste from the power station? If they were nowhere near each other, there would be no danger whatsoever, but who will co-ordinate the transport? To the best of my knowledge, no one will do that.

The Government have not thought about co-ordinating traffic movements. They seem to be living in never-never land. They believe that once one has written "fragile" on a label, the parcel will never be thrown around. If that is the case, the Government can never have used the Royal Mail. The same applies to lorries. They may carry markings, but will people always respect them? They will not. That is not the way that people drive vehicles.

Why is not hazardous material given a police escort when it is transported? If it is so dangerous, why does the Bill not provide for it to have a police escort while it is being transported along our streets through the quiet of the night and at all other times? Legislation provides that a vehicle carrying a long steel girder or an old boat must have a police outrider, back and front. There is even legislation which provides that if one wants to carry a ladder over the end of a lorry a bit of rag must be tied round the end of it. Provided, however, the lorry is all right and the packaging is all right, nuclear material can be transported, and all is well.

I wonder whether the chief constable of Cleveland will ever be informed, or his traffic superintendent? I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston will be informed when nuclear material is transported on trains going through Lincolnshire? I wonder whether anyone will be aware that hazardous material is being transported? We hear that there are 300,000 such journeys each year. Boy, that is going to tie up a bit of police time! How many inspectors will there have to be to ensure that anyone who is concerned with the transport of this dangerous material has got it right?

I have asked a large number of questions relevant to the Bill and I have done so legitimately. I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington can answer them. He is not a Government Minister and this is a Government Bill. Now I see that there is a Government Whip on the Treasury Bench. It must have been thought that this legislation would go through on the nod, that no one would be particularly interested in the movement of atomic waste. They must have thought that a little Bill of this nature, a private Member's Bill, would slip through. Well, slip through it might; but if it means that in future it will provide a legitimate excuse for those who might have an accident to say that they had done everything within the law, as laid down by Parliament, and that they did not have to inform the police, or to ensure that there were regular checks of the vehicle or regular driving tests for the drivers, it is perhaps just as well that a Back Bencher like me should have got up, kicked the Government in the backside and told them that they ought to have done their job properly. I do not believe that they have done their job properly.

I believe that the Government have misled my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington. He is an honest, decent guy. He introduced the Bill thinking that the Government were behind him, as I did when I introduced the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill. I honestly, genuinely and sincerely thought that the Government would support me. As I had the Prime Minister voting for the Bill in the Division Lobby, I felt secure in the knowledge that that Bill would reach the statute book. It did not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has now strayed into discussing another Bill. He must talk about this one.

Mr. Holt: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one tries to compare Bills to show that all Bills are not the same, that they are different and that consequently they should be treated differently. I am just trying to point out to my hon. Friend that the Bill that we are considering seems to have the same pedigree as mine and that its fate is likely to be the same as mine, but for different reasons. My Bill was not inadequate. There was no reason why it should not have been passed. The House of Commons wanted it to go through and voted for it, just as it voted for my hon. Friend's Bill. No hon. Member put forward legitimate arguments against the Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority Bill. It was left to a House of Lords Committee to sink it, without right of appeal. Its failure was more peremptory than what happened under Stalin in Russia.

There have been occasions when I have wanted to speak but have been unable to do so. Today I did not really want to speak, but I was persuaded to do so.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): We know why: the hon. Gentleman will be named.

Mr. Holt: I know that some hon. Members have just arrived; perhaps they could not get up this morning. Having arrived, perhaps they would have the courtesy to keep quiet while another hon. Member is on his feet. If, however, the hon. Gentleman wants me to give way, I shall happily give way to him if he has anything to contribute to the debate on the transportation of nuclear hazardous waste. One of the hallmarks of the debate has been the lack of contribution, interest and knowledge on the part of the Opposition. To try to be rude during an hon. Member's speech does not add to the quality of the debate, but it highlights the deficiencies in the thinking of the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis). I do not believe that that enhances Parliament's role one little bit. Up to now we have enjoyed a reasonably good debate. The hon. Gentleman who has just come in has not heard the debate and does not know what it is all about, yet he feels that he can make a contribution to it.

Mr. Lewis: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that what I am talking about is the next debate on the Pig Husbandry Bill. We know what he is up to. I repeat what I said from a sedentary position—that he will be named.

Mr. Holt: If the hon. Gentleman had been here even for one minute before he made his intervention and had listened to any of the debate, he would have found it difficult to sustain his criticism. No one else has sought to criticise my contribution. I have been asked to explain a few points and I have given way on a number of occasions. I did so because we on this side of the House normally act with a degree of courtesy and decency. We do not behave in the way that so-called Front-Bench spokesmen for the Opposition do.

When I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, I did not hear one word about this Bill. Perhaps I ought not to have given

[Mr. Holt]

way, but then you might have taken me to task, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not giving way. However, the hon. Gentleman only wanted to talk about another Bill that is to follow this one. I am not aware of what he wants to talk about. If he wants to enlighten the House about his thinking, I am prepared to give way and allow him to tell us what it is about the road transportation of atomic waste and other atomic materials that is so vital and that has been missed out of the argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, or my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South. But now all that we are getting is a turning of the back and a chat with someone in the second row. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is getting instructions about what he ought to have said when he intervened a few moments ago.

It is not quite an hour since I rose to my feet, so I think that some hon. Members who are worried that the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill may not see the light of day must have missed what I said earlier about my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton having spoken for 14 hours on a previous Bill. To be fair to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton, he covered the entire Bench with notes to make sure that he did not forget anything, and indeed he had many strong arguments. After only one hour, I may well be concluding my speech.

Mrs. Currie: I hope that my hon. Friend will not make a mistake about what happened. I was present when my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) made his speech. It was four hours, and not 14 hours, although it certainly felt like 14 hours. The main problem was that my hon. and learned Friend started speaking at about 4 o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Holt: With great respect to my hon. Friend, I think that she will find that that speech lasted about 12 hours. I may have been exaggerating a little when I said that it was 14 hours. It did not start at 4 o'clock in the morning; it finished at 4 o'clock in the morning, having started at about 3.30 on the previous afternoon. I was in my usual place on that occasion, so I was sitting on the end of the Bench where my hon. and learned Friend had put his notes. I remember that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South was sitting on the other side of the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These reminiscences are very interesting. I realise that the hon. Gentleman was led astray by the hon. Lady, but I am sure that he will now direct his speech to the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Holt: Would I allow my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South to lead me astray?

Mrs. Currie: Yes.

Mr. Holt: Of course I would, given half a chance. I hope that *Hansard* has not written down too much of that, or we shall both be in trouble when we go home!

I had intended to speak for only a few moments, but an hour is not very long to draw attention to important matters affecting the roads in my constituency and the lorries travelling along them. However, I have had to give way to unnecessary points of order from Opposition Members. Points of order are usually the only contributions we hear from Liberal Members, who have been completely absent today. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) wonders how I will vote on the Bill. I wonder how the Liberals will vote on it. They certainly have not made their position clear, but that does not surprise anyone.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I do not want to encourage my hon. Friend to continue because I am in favour of getting the Pig Husbandry Bill before the House because it is such an important measure. I accept his acknowledgement and I hope that he will do all he can to allow that Bill to come before the House.

Mr. Holt: I am not quite sure why my hon. Friend wants to steer me in that direction. My hon. Friend knows that my knowledge of Ealing is quite extensive, but I am not too sure whether there are any pig farms there. I wonder how many pig farmers my hon. Friend is representing today. If there are any in Ealing, perhaps he will let me know, because to the best of my knowledge there are none. My hon. Friend knows that I was born in the neighbouring constituency——

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that this is a Third Reading debate? While we recognise that the hon. Gentleman has the absolute right to speak at whatever length he chooses, whatever his motives, surely on Third Reading he has to be precise and his remarks must be addressed to the motion. I do not wish to challenge any of your earlier rulings, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but you have drawn the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that he has strayed wide of the mark. May I put it to you that, as this is a Third Reading debate, you have a responsibility to instruct the hon. Gentleman to bring his remarks to a close?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would be reluctant to do that at this stage, but I hope that when hon. Members make interventions they ensure that they are directly relevant. The hon. Gentleman who has the floor is finding it difficult to keep in order. If interventions tempt him out of order, it makes it that much more difficult for the Chair to protect the later business of the House.

Mr. Holt: I am not quite sure why the hon. Member for Caerphilly keeps interrupting while I am trying to wind up my speech. Every time I try to bring it to a conclusion somebody interrupts me.

As I am getting a little dry, I wonder whether I could pause for a drop of water. Hon. Members will know that I have permission to stop for a drink of water because of my medical condition.

On my way here I happened to be listening to the radio and I heard a gentleman talking about the society for plain English which is trying to get rid of gobbledegook. The Bill contains words and phrases which would lead the society for plain English to wonder what it meant. It refers to "70 kilobecquerels per kilogram". I thought that we were still the United Kingdon and I had not realised that we had become European to that extent. I do not remember when Parliament passed legislation saying that those who draft legislation were to do it in such a way that no one understood it, unless they were French.

I hope that in the absence of a Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington will tell those of us who are still English and who remember learning English weights and measures at school what "70 kilobecquerels per

kilogram" means. Perhaps he can tell us how that information gets through to those who employ the lorry drivers and whether the lorry drivers will know whether they are within the law when they pick up their time sheets in the morning and go to the yard to collect their vehicles. Will they say, "Hang about, what does 70 kilobecquerels per kilogram mean?" How will they measure that? I do not think the Government have thought that through. I do not think that my hon. Friend has thought it through, and nor did he expect me to ask that question. Before we give the Bill a Third Reading, can somebody tell me in plain English what is meant by "70 kilobecquerels per kilogram"? That is in the legislation we are being asked to pass and we are still the United Kingdom Parliament.

The Bill goes on to refer to "such lesser specific activity". I hope that the lorry drivers know what that is. I expect that they would probably be more inclined to want greater specific activity.

Who will pay and train all the examiners who will be examining the vehicles? Where is the money resolution for the money that Parliament will have to vote so that those people can be trained to carry out the examinations that will be necessary? I hope that my hon. Friend has an answer to that.

Mr. Fishburn: The money resolution has already been passed.

Mr. Holt: So the money resolution was passed before anyone knew how much it would cost. If local government tried to get away with that, Ministers and shadow Ministers would be leaping around screaming, but it appears that the Government can behave in that way without anyone getting upset.

One aspect of the Bill gives me cause for concern in my capacity as a member of the Select Committee on the Environment. The Bill refers to devices for cooling. One might have thought that the Bill would specify whether CFC coolants are to be used—or, indeed, contain an instruction that they should not be used. We now know that the release of CFCs into the atmosphere is the major cause of the ozone problem and global warming. To the best of my knowledge, however, we have not yet been able to find a commercially viable alternative to CFCs for use as coolants in vehicles and elsewhere.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): This is disgraceful.

Mr. Holt: Does the shadow deputy Chief Whip wish to intervene? I am more than willing to give way.

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman's speech is an abuse. He is not making a Third Reading speech and he should have been brought to order on numerous occasions. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have allowed him to digress in response to interventions from hon. Members who wish to talk out the next Bill. I ask you now to bring the hon. Gentleman to order and to tell him to make a Third Reading speech, as he should have been doing for some considerable time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will leave that matter to the Chair.

Mr. Holt: I do not impugn Opposition Member's motives, and it is wrong that they should seek to impugn the motives of Conservative Members. I have always found that bullies like things when they are going their way, but are always the first to complain when things do not go their way. Fortunately, I do not have much to do with bullies. Bullies do not frighten me—so do not try it here—and I know that bullies will not frighten you either, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I stray out of order, you will give me that little haul on the reins—as you have already done several times—and I shall immediately return to order. I have been told that I am not making a Third Reading speech, but I have been asking legitimate questions and talking exclusively to the Bill. If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, feel that the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has any meaning, so be it. We have known for a long time that members of the Labour party do not like honest decent debate, and on this occasion they have shown their hand even more than usual.

Before that rather rude interruption, I was talking about devices for cooling and CFCs. The Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington may or may not go through, and I sought to draw to his attention the fact that it is not good enough merely to refer to coolants. One must define what they are, especially as we are discussing the safe transportation of hazardous materials. That makes it incumbent on us to include a definition. New kinds of coolants may be used in future. The Bill seeks to put right the errors, wrongs and sins of legislation introduced in 1947. In 10 or 20 years the generic title "coolants" may include substances that may have a chemical input and may act as a catalyst in the event of a horrendous accident. We never know what accidents will entail until they happen. Almost all accidents are about people not being able to prepare themselves in time. If we glibly include the word "coolants" without defining it, in 10 or 20 years my successor—not the successor of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, because my hon. Friend is still a young man—will say, "Why did they do that when they had the opportunity of the Third Reading debate to discuss it? Why did they include the generic term 'coolants' without specifying chemical values?" I should have welcomed an explanation from the Minister of why the Government favoured the inclusion of those words. I am not sure whether the Government would know entirely what they meant by "thermal insulation" either.

I have suggested that there are weaknesses, defects and problems relating to the Bill, even though it is a short Bill. Perhaps Opposition Members are so much in favour of atomic energy and the atomic industry that they want the Bill to go through without anyone debating it. I am sure that Labour activists throughout the country will ask why it was left to a Conservative to raise issues concerning nuclear power and public safety questions arising from the use and transportation of nuclear materials? Where are all those with CND badges? Where are all those who have opposed everything that has been done in respect of nuclear power for the past 50 years? Clearly they lack the staying power to come to the House on a Friday or the intellecutal power to understand the Bill. *[Laughter.]* Did I say something funny? Certainly there is a great lack.

I am pleased about one thing. My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston said that my speech had driven everyone out of the Chamber. That has proved to be false. There are four times as many hon. Members present now as were present when I rose to my feet a few moments ago. If I keep going for a few more hours—as I have suggested I just might—perhaps even more hon. Members will return to hear this debate on the important subject of radioactive materials.

Sir Richard Body: I merely drew attention to the fact that, with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), who introduced the Bill, all those concerned with it had left the Chamber. That is a remarkable achievement—especially as both Front-Bench spokesmen walked out. I do not think that that has ever happened before. It has certainly not happened in the 30 years that I have spent in the House. It is a remarkable achievement, and I congratulate my hon. Friend.

Mr. Holt: I had never expected such plaudits. In any case, it is not true. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) had walked out before I rose to speak. Only my hon. Friend the Minister, having heard a few words of my argument, realised that it was better to be somewhere else. Perhaps I should plead guilty in that respect. In response to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston, with his 30 years' standing, I would only say that I bet that some hon. Members who have left will wish that they had not. I bet that by the time that the matter has been analysed, some people will wish that they had not been here at all. They may well have come here today anticipating that we would reach the Young Persons (Alcohol Abuse) Etc. Bill, which is item 6 on the Order Paper. That was the Bill in which I was really interested. I expected that the sponsors of that Bill would be present. However, I do not think that we will reach item 6.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I am a latecomer to the debate. Not only do I have an interest in the Pig Husbandry Bill, on which I hope to speak as several amendments have been tabled by me and other hon. Members, but I have a keen interest in the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill. Throughout my time in the House of Commons I have been approached by constituents who were fearful about safety issues. They had good reason.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot debate again the Pig Husbandry Bill. It has been raised many times already this morning. On that subject, we are moving rapidly towards tedious repetition.

Mr. Holt: I hope that you do not accuse me of tedious repetition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was not the first to refer to the Pig Husbandry Bill; it was the hon. Member for Jarrow. The second person was my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston, the third was my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington and the fourth was my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). Indeed, *Hansard* will show that, far from being repetitious on the Pig Husbandry Bill, I have made little reference to it. I may have strayed gently on one occasion in response to promptings from the Opposition Front Bench. But I do not want to upset you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by talking about the Pig Husbandry Bill.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West, let me point out that I have a great deal to say on the Pig Husbandry Bill, which may exercise the House for a little longer than I am likely to exercise the House on the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill.

I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) has arrived in the Chamber. We are discussing a Bill which affects Northern Ireland. That is unusual. We do not normally have legislation in one tranche.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My hon. Friend refers to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). Does my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) agree that it is exceptionally good to see my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster in the Chamber today because Northern Ireland is specifically excluded from the Pig Husbandry Bill? He is having to wait a very long time to express his views on that important Bill.

Mr. Holt: I had not realised that the Pig Husbandry Bill did not apply to Northern Ireland. That highlights the nonsenses of the way in which we legislate in this establishment. A Bill about the transport of radioactive materal by road includes Northern Ireland, so that we do not need a separate piece of legislation, but the Pig Husbandry Bill does not extend to Northern Ireland. We shall need two or three pieces of legislation to cover the whole of the United Kingdom. How will the poor people of Northern Ireland suffer as a consequence of the House failing to do its duty? However, I shall not be tempted to go into that matter, despite my hon. Friend's intervention. It would be wrong of me to do so and I want to stick to the Bill before the House.

I notice that the Bill provides in clause 5(2):

"If a justice of the peace, on sworn information in writing or, in Scotland, on evidence of oath".

Scotland is mentioned in the Bill. I am sure that my hon. Friends wonder why the Bill mentions Scotland only on page 5 in clause 5(2). Why does it not mention Northern Ireland specifically? I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington wants his legislaiton to be fair to the United Kingdom as a whole. Why does not the Bill simply say, "a justice of the peace" or "a justice of the peace in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales"? Why have the parliamentary draftsmen brought Scotland into the Bill separately?

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster for being here and to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) for pointing out that the Pig Husbandry Bill does not apply to Northern Ireland. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, who has a great fondness for Scotland, will want to explain why Scotland is mentioned but not Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is just as much an integral part of the United Kingdom as anywhere else, although sometimes legislation may not apply to it.

It worries me that the southern Irish Government have no nuclear waste disposal facilities of their own. They haul any waste which they need to dispose of over the border into Northern Ireland and from there it goes on to the mainland.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As there is no reference to Northern Ireland in the Bill, surely the hon. Gentleman is out of order in mentioning it in this Third Reading debate. I ask you again to insist that the hon. Gentleman bring his remarks to a close. He is clearly out of order, and he has been so for most of the one and a half hours during which he has spoken. I urge you to make sure that he complies with the rules of the House and brings his comments to a close.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will leave the matter to the Chair. I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt). I have stopped him on many occasions when he has been out of order. However, when he is discussing what is in the Bill, he is in order and the House must hear him.

Mrs. Currie: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the Bill applies to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that the Bill mentions Northern Ireland. Therefore, I wonder why it highlights Scotland in clause 5(2). I am sure that the matter is no different in Scotland. I should have thought that it was the same. It seems that the Bill contains unnecessary wording.

It is perhaps not always obvious to members of the Opposition Front Bench that when one is debating it is not always possible to confine one's remarks entirely to the wording of the Bill. One must always draw from outside for comparisons. One could not examine the Bill in full if one did not do so. I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your protection against the unwarranted attacks from the Opposition Front Bench. The Opposition seem obsessed with putting the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill on the statute book. I would bet a few pennies to a pound that that is not in line with what the Labour party conference would want them to do. However, Opposition Members are not standing in front of their party conference, and nor will they be doing so for a while. [*Interruption.*] I am being barracked by my own side. That is the ultimate cruelty and irony.

Clause 6 deals with offences committed by a body corporate and penalties. I am not sure exactly who would carry the can. If the chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority or Nirex engaged the services of someone in Northern Ireland to transport nuclear waste and, for whatever reason, the vehicle failed to match up to the specifications, would the chairman be charged? Although I accept that ultimate responsibility lies in that direction, it stretches the point too far to suggest that the body corporate should carry the can for 300,000 movements by road per year. The fat-cat lawyers would get even fatter and cattier. There would be more and more legislation as more and more offences were committed, more and more people were taken to court and more and more defences were introduced. The Bill will be just like all the other legislation that we pass here—sometimes for the good of the people, but always for the good of lawyers. This legislation will be in that mould.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington can tell me whether it is a good idea for the chairman of Nirex to have to go to gaol for two years if somebody breaks this legislation. I wonder whether he has discussed the matter with the chairman and whether the chairman has agreed that it would be a good idea for him to have that responsibility. We all know how capricious juries can be, but it would be strange to find the chairman guilty.

I wonder how this Bill lines up with European legislation on the subject and similar national legislation about the transport of radioactive material by rail and air. Neither of those two measures is before us, so perhaps this legislation is a little premature. Perhaps the Government should have introduced a comprehensive Bill covering all transportation of such materials.

I am convinced that there are flaws in the Bill even now and I have highlighted some of them. I hope that when my hon. Friend replies he can give a full, thorough and lengthy response to my points. I want to support him and to be convinced. More important, my constituents want to be convinced that this simple, nine-clause Bill would be good for the country, for Parliament, for the nuclear industry, for the road transport industry and for them.

Other hon. Members must speak for their constituents, but I believe that my constituents will find certain aspects of the Bill incomprehensible, not least "70 kilobecquerels per kilogram". Perhaps they all understand that. They are such jolly nice people. I do not and I am sure that Opposition Front-Bench Members do not, because I have already given them three opportunities to intervene to put me right and tell me where my education went wrong.

I wonder whether my hon. Friend has thought through what the legislation means by "placarding of vehicles". What is the legal definition of "placarding"?

Sir Richard Body: I cannot hear.

Mr. Holt: I was just saying that I wondered whether my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, when he drafted the Bill—it is his Bill, not the Government's Bill, as we all know—looked up the thesaurus to find out the exact meaning of "placarding". I wonder what the legal definition is. Perhaps my hon. Friend, the lawyer at the back here, can tell me how many days in court he will spend and how many hundreds of pounds he will be able to make from defining what "placarding" is.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I should point out that I am not a lawyer but a chartered surveyor.

Mr. Holt: I realised that my hon. Friend was one of the wealthy fraternity, but I had not realised that he was in that special wealthy category. I apologise if I demeaned him by calling him a lawyer. I apologise to any lawyers who are present, too.

Perhaps, even as a chartered surveyor, my hon. Friend, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Holland and Boston, can tell me when they vote——

Sir Richard Body: I am only a poor pigman. I am not a lawyer.

Mr. Holt: Surely that is a contradiction in terms. I have never met a poor pigman, but I have met a few rich ones. I have met some, however, who were getting poorer and if certain legislation were passed some pigmen would certainly be much poorer.

Mr. Ron Davies: Order.

Mr. Holt: For a moment I thought that I was being called to order, but I realise that the voice came from the Opposition Front Bench.

Sir Richard Body: Is there any evidence of pigmen getting poorer? I have been unable to get any such information from friends and colleagues. Is that true?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman's questions do not relate to the Third Reading.

Mr. Holt: I was having some difficulty understanding where poorness and placarding came together. Presumably my hon. Friend the Member for Holland and Boston, who lives on the outskirts of London, has never

[Mr. Holt]

been up to North Yorkshire. If he visited that area and met some of the genuine farmers he might find out about the problems that are liable to be experienced if a certain piece of legislation is passed. It would be out of order, however, to mention that now and my hon. Friend should stop tempting me to do so. If he does, I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will haul me back.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that I have already hauled the hon. Gentleman back to the Third Reading.

Mr. Holt: Yes, I accept that, but I was just saying that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Boston with Holland who was out of order. I was merely trying to correct that by saying that I could not relate what my hon. Friend said about——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the House understands the situation. May we get back to the Third Reading?

Mr. Holt: I realise that you took the Chair a few moments ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, but if you had been here earlier you would have noted the great difficulties encountered by some Oppositions Members in trying to follow any of the argument. They are truly incapable of reading such a Bill. I have tried to spell out the Bill simply so that the three Labour party Members present will understand.

Before I was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston I was talking about placarding. It is clear that my hon. Friend does not want me to make progress so that we can move on to something else, or he would not keep on interrupting. The same goes for the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

What is the legal definition of placarding in accordance with the Bill? Is it the same as that in the thesaurus? What does it mean? Imagine how my constituents will react when they realise that they must implement the law as it is contained in the Bill. Haulage contractors will say that it is all very well for me to pass the Bill, but that they must tell their drivers what placarding means. Does anyone know? Does it mean that people will be stopped on the outskirts of Teesside on the A19 by a policeman because he is not sure whether those vehicles carry legal placarding?

We are supposed to be talking about the movement of radioactive material, which is a serious subject. I believe that the Government have tried to slip something through the House on this serious matter. The Opposition are incapable of properly opposing anything and they did not think about the Bill. They did not register the Bill and allowed it to go through without delay, as is clear when one considers the length of time the Bill took to complete its Committee stage—12 minutes. The Opposition's scrutiny of legislation of this nature amounted to 12 minutes. I wonder how they will explain that to all the Labour party executive committees up and down the country? As they have nearly all been reselected perhaps the official Opposition will be all right.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Holt: If it is on this issue, I shall do so gladly.

Mr. Davies: It is clear what we would say to any Members of the Labour party who might questions our actions on the Bill. It is a private Member's Bill and it is not the practice of Her Majesty's Opposition to involve themselves, in a party political sense, in such private legislation.

Mr. Holt: I hope that I hear those words again the next time that we introduce a Bill on abortion. I recall that last time things were different when we discussed such a private Member's Bill on a Friday.

The hon. Member who has his hand over his mouth has tried to intervene four or five times. I am not sure whether he is trying to catch my eye or trying——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that if the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) were trying to catch the hon. Gentleman's eye, he would rise to show clearly that he wished to intervene.

Mr. Holt: I wish that that was so. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would rise, because he has now sat for some time making noises behind his hand. I wonder, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether you should ask the Serjeant at Arms to send for the nursing sister.

Mr. Ron Davies: Is is worth putting it on record that the hon. Member involved is the Opposition Deputy Chief Whip. We were discussing the hon. Gentleman's proposition. The hon. Gentleman suggested that, on matters of private legislation, the Labour party took a party line and he used the example of the abortion legislation which the House discussed recently. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the principle that I outlined applied to that legislation as well as to all other legislation. So that the record is clear, my hon. Friend and I went into different Lobbies when we voted on the previous legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Perhaps now that that matter has been cleared up the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) will make progress with his Third Reading speech.

Mr. Holt: I am sensitive to what you have said, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we are talking about radioactive material which can be volatile. The hon. Member for Caerphilly said that the official Opposition did not have a view, but that does not stop individual members of the Opposition holding views. Or do they all have to wait, like sheep and goats, until they are told what to do by their Front-Bench spokesmen? Are they allowed to speak or to intervene only on days when they have been told what to speak on? I thought that at least some members of the Labour party were concerned about radioactive material, its use, its transportation and its dangers and about this legislation. However, their absence today and their lack of contribution in Committee shows that despite the many years of posturing by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Opposition and others, they are not, at the end of the day, especially interested. If they were, they would have been here and would be supporting me in force. It would not have been a short debate of a few hours —it could have continued for days. But the Opposition are not here in force because they are not interested in radioactive material or in the Third Reading.

Until I was interrupted, I was talking about the regulation on placarding of vehicles. I have received no

information fom either my hon. Friend who sponsored the Bill on behalf of the Government or from the stand-in Minister—who is here in place of the Minister who should be here—about what placarding means. If, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said from a sedentary position, it means a cardboard cut-out, I wonder what type of cardboard cut-out—of a policeman, of a co-driver or of a fireman? The legislation does not tell us.

Unfortunately, as you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister had to depart and now I see that the sponsor of the Bill has also had to leave. Who will answer at the end of our short debate? Not only hon. Members, but especially people outside the House want to know what is meant. The Bill refers to

"the preparation, labelling, consignment, handling, transport, storage . . .and . . .placarding of vehicles."

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has returned. When he makes his winding-up speech, he will no doubt give me a clear explanation about what he meant by "placarding". I want to know why he included the word in the Bill because it seems to be an unnecessary piece of verbiage. I cannot recall any other road transport legislation for radioactive material. Perhaps the word comes from the Radioactive Substances Act 1948 which the Bill seeks to amend. Placarding may have been in vogue in 1948, but today it is no longer so.

Sir Richard Body: Has my hon. Friend picked up a piece of paper containing notes for his speech which he discarded some time ago? I thought that we had already heard about placarding once. Will my hon. Friend pick up another piece of paper and give us a fresh point about the Bill?

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have no pieces of paper; all that I have is the Bill. I have drawn everything from the Bill. If I did not, you Madam Deputy Speaker, would pull me up and say that I was out of order. I have stuck religiously to the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is tempting me.

Sir Richard Body: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh will refresh his memory. My memory tells me that we heard all about placarding about 45 minutes ago. Shall we have in the next 45 minutes a repetition of all that we heard in the previous 45 minutes? It was all very good the first time round, but the second time round, it may lose its force.

Judges used to say to young barristers that good points do not need too much repetition. If my hon. Friend's point is good, we can take it in and leave it at that. However, if it is made two or three times, it will not be as effective.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that lesson in debating. My school was probably not quite as grand. At my school, I was told that if one had a point, one should make it, make it and make it, so that people would eventually understand it. If one makes the point only once and then wanders off esoterically into something else——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, our procedures in the House do not allow such repetition. I know that in the course of his speech the hon. Gentleman has repeated himself on a number of occasions. I do not want to call him to order just yet, but I must point out that he is trying the patience of the House. Unless he can now be more pertinent in this Third Reading debate, I am afraid that I may have to use the powers given to me by the House.

Mr. Holt: That is quite a threat. To some extent, it is a threat to free speech. Unless I strayed way out of order, I should find it difficult to accept a ruling from the Chair which forced me to sit down. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The loud-mouthed yobboes and bullies of the Opposition may be trying to bully you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but they certainly will not bully me.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do not hold your breath on that one.

Mr. Holt: For about an hour, Opposition Members have been trying to coerce, bully and silence me because that is the way in which the Labour party reacts. If Labour Members do not like an argument, and if it is too strong and salient for them——

Mr. Dixon: It is beginning to smell.

Mr. Holt: Labour Members do not seek to out-debate or to use an intellectual argument *[Interruption.]* They use the yobbo tendency and shout and scream, as they are now. I do not want to go down the yah-boo tendency route of the Labour party. We are not here to do that. We are here to debate the Bill and I was looking forward to a contribution from any Labour Member explaining, among other things, how the Labour party intends to square its view on the Bill with its supporters throughout the country——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member that that is not the point in question on the Third Reading. I am sure that he will now oblige me by debating what is in the Bill.

Mr. Holt: It is clear from the Bill that vehicles will travel on roads carrying radioactive material. Those vehicles will go through areas which are claimed to be nuclear-free zones. Those areas have been designated nuclear free by the Labour party. As the Labour Front-Bench spokesman on the subject is not in his place, I had hoped that a Labour Member would explain how the Opposition square this legislation with the nuclear-free zone concept and how they will vote on the issue at the end of the debate. After all, Labour Members will have to square their view on this with their supporters in my constituency and in Cleveland as a whole, where we have a nuclear power station and a nuclear-free zone.

Do Labour Members believe that certain roads should be proscribed while others should be allowed for such vehicles? The fact that the Bill would permit the transportation of radioactive material on any road anywhere is a weakness. I had hoped that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, or preferably the Minister, would explain how the Bill would be amended to ensure that its defects were put right. I am surprised that the Labour party has not made its views on that clear.

The transportation of radioactive material is not something for kiddies on Saturday afternoons. We are discussing serious business. If this material is to be transported properly, it must travel in good vehicles on good roads. The Bill does not stipulate what types of roads will be used and whether some roads, such as narrow country lanes, will be banned.

[Mr. Holt]

Generally speaking, drivers take the shortest and quickest route, which may not be the most convenient and safest. If safety is paramount and is what this exercise is all about, drivers should be told the routes that may be used. The police and emergency services should know those routes, after they have been approved by fire and police chiefs. In other words, when speaking of the vehicles, we should also consider the roads on which they will travel, or the legislation will be defective.

Many of us have a problem that is commonly faced in Parliament with measures such as this. I approve of what is in the Bill and have no desire to stop its progress. The trouble is that it does not go far enough and it is weak and defective in certain areas. Those weaknesses allow for dangers which need our attention. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington will say that he is aware of those weaknesses and is anxious for them to be corrected. I had hoped that a Minister would confirm that and say that further legislation would be introduced to make up for the deficiencies, including transportation by rail, sea, air and canals.

I fear that the Bill will lead people into believing that they live in a fool's paradise. It will be like the nuclear-free zone sign. People believe that once they have passed the sign, they are safe. That is the biggest piece of hogwash of all time. People may equally believe that once the Bill is passed, they are safe. It could be misleading and give people a false sense of security. I want the Bill to be passed, but I want a promise that there will be further legislation. I want someone to tell me that the fears that I have expressed are well founded. If they are not, I want someone to tell me that I have got it wrong. With respect, I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, although he is the Bill's sponsor, is in a position to do that because he was not given a sufficiently good brief by the Government.

I do not suppose that those questions have been asked, probed or looked into. If they have, the Minister responsible should have been here to answer them. It is all very well to say that we came along with a nice piece of legislation, the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, full stop, and we can now go home because it will be dead safe on the roads and the Bill ensures that the packaging is right. It might be, but as yet we have had no answers about whether the driver will be tested or the roads proscribed.

However, we are told that there will be inspectors and examiners, who will be trained using public money. We have already been told that that money has been allocated. But to what end will those officials inspect and examine and what will they be inspecting and examining—the packaging, the vehicles or, more particularly, the humans who are to drive the vehicles? Without that knowledge, there is something missing. That does not mean that the Bill is wrong—it is not. It is a good Bill, but it is weak and needs attention. It cannot and should not be allowed to rest as it stands. I shall not vote against it or urge my colleagues to do so. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington intends to call a Division at the end of the debate—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend is shaking his head to show that he has changed his mind. Has my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) been at him again?

Mr. John Townend: I just want to debate pigs now.

Mr. Holt: I have been speaking for not quite two hours, which is not very long.

The Bill intends to put right errors and omissions in the legislation passed in 1947. On that basis, it could be more than 34 years before there is further legislation, although I hope that it will not be that long before a Minister answers the questions that I have posed or before we have further legislation to cover some of my worries.

Despite the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston may tell me off for repeating myself, we should know what placard to use and what the Government's intentions are in relation to testing the humans involved. We need a definition for roads—are roads and lanes the same thing? Will the vehicles be allowed to go down lanes? None of those issues is properly explained and there are many weaknesses.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has done well in getting the Bill this far. I know the frustration of proceeding with a private Bill, only to have it rejected. I steered mine through fives votes in the House and lost it on only one vote in the Lords. It was lost on a technicality; their Lordships said that my private Bill was premature because a Government Bill was coming along behind it. The Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill is a hybrid of a Government Bill proposed via the private Members' route. It would be good if a proper Government Bill were introduced by a Minister so that legitimate questions and fears could be assuaged. But as things stand now, that is not what we have. It is almost an introductory Bill. It is as though the Government said, "There is something wrong, and has been for 30 years, and we must put it right with an introductory Bill. If anyone says anything about it, we shall simply say that it is being introduced through the private Members' route." That is not the right way to do it.

I apologise if I have spoken for a little time, but I thought it necessary to point out to the Government and others that this place is not to be taken for granted. It is a serious debating Chamber and serious issues must be treated seriously. However much levity one might introduce into one's speech, there is always a serious message. My message is that for the people of Cleveland, the Bill has not gone far enough. The Government should get their act together and introduce a proper Bill dealing with the whole area of the transportation of radioactive material. Whether or not people like it, it will be a major issue in coming years. More and more radioactive material will be used to create power and for medical purposes.

In 1947, people could no more envisage what would happen today than we can envisage what will happen in 34 years' time. The problem is that once we pass legislation, it lies for ever in front of us. Every now and then, somebody refers to an Act in 1612 or 1802 or whatever. We could be equally guilty of passing legislation that could fall into that category. I do not think that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would wish to preside over that. I do not think that my hon. Friends who have spoken in the debate would wish to be parties to that. Of course, I do not know that the Minister feels.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington that it was a good try and if there is a vote I shall support Third Reading. However, the Bill has deficiencies and I have enjoyed having the opportunity to highlight them. I thank my hon. Friend and the House for their patience.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Pig Husbandry Bill

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

1.2 pm

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): I beg to move, That the order for consideration of the Bill be discharged and the Bill be withdrawn.

I owe you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the House an explanation for this action. I also owe it to the many thousands of people who have supported the Bill, not least the pig farmers who have campaigned for a long time for changes in the law because of the disrepute into which certain types of pig farmers have brought that sector of the industry.

This week, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food published regulations on pig husbandry.

During the past day or so, I have had the opportunity to read the draft, and I could find no differences of any consequence between those regulations and my Bill. Indeed, the regulations are largely the same as my Bill, almost word for word, in all its important parts. I congratulate and thank my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for what they have done—it is quite notable.

My right hon. Friend's action has put this country ahead of the remainder of the European Community. So often, we hear that Britain is lagging behind, and are told that we must wait for the men in Brussels to take the initiative while we drag our feet. In this instance, we are doing the opposite, and I wholeheartedly congratulate the Government.

There is no doubt that the majority of pig farmers entirely support what the Government are doing in these regulations. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has given ample time for consultation. Views have been expressed, and I am delighted that the Minister has paid good heed to the representations that have been made.

Moreover, I heard this week from DG6—only some of us know about that—which is a powerful body of people in Brussels, the department of the Commission which is concerned, among other things, with animal welfare.

Dr. Jansen, who is, I understand the chief veterinary officer of the Commission in Brussels has welcomed the regulations wholeheartedly and has said that if they go through, the European Commission will go ahead and approve draft regulations that will extend throughout the Community. That means that this country will have set the pace in animal welfare and it will probably be the first time that we have done so or that the Community has done anything about animal welfare.

Also, the Commission proposes to produce quickly draft regulations that are in line with the Welfare of Animals at Slaughter Bill, which has already passed through this House and which I introduced earlier in this Session. That Bill will soon be before the other place.

In matters of animal welfare, we shall certainly be ahead of the Community in two respects, and that is something worth recording.

In a letter that is coming to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Dr. Jansen has said that as soon as the regulations are enforced, his position will be strengthened

[Sir Richard Body]

and he will be able to put forward draft regulations. Let us hope that the Community will then follow our example. There is no reason why it should not.

Dr. Jansen and officials in the Commission take that view because there was a full conference in Brussels on the subject late last year. They reached the conclusion that there was no necessity for the practice of sow stalls and tethers, which have existed in this country for about 28 years. The practice originally came from Sweden and certain other countries are beginning to introduce it, but only on a limited scale. Therefore, the Commission hopes that the draft regulations will put a stop to any further introduction, in any part of the Community, of the close confinement of sows.

I had hoped that we would have some time for debate on the Bill because there are important issues to be discussed, but I recognise that certain hon. Members have made it perfectly plain that they did not wish it to be debated.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) here because she has expressed her views on animal welfare on other occasions, and they are not unknown to a number of people. From what I have heard from farmers in the midlands, they do not altogether share her views.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), with his usual gusto and good humour, has done his bit for those of his constituents who now have huge herds of 1,000 sows and sometimes more.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I am not sure how my hon. Friend knows what my views are on animal welfare. In the eight years I have been in the House, I have never spoken on the subject.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It must be the only one!

Mrs. Currie: As for the views on animal welfare held by farmers in the midlands, if there is an opportunity this morning I intend to express the views of farmers in my constituency on the animal welfare issues that are raised in the Bill.

Sir Richard Body: I am sure that my hon. Friend is not inclined to entice me to repeat what has been said by a number of people who have overheard her comments. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Her views on the subject are known.

Mrs. Currie: They cannot be.

Sir Richard Body: My hon. Friend can huff and puff, if she wishes——

Mr. Sedgemore: She is a whinger.

Sir Richard Body: —but her views on the subject are known.

Mrs. Currie: They are not.

Sir Richard Body: It is true, as my hon. Friend said, that she has not expressed her views in the House—I agree about that—but she has expressed them right enough.

Mrs. Currie: I have not.

Mr. Sedgemore: Dick knows.

Sir Richard Body: She has expressed them, but I do not intend to repeat them.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend does not know what they are.

Sir Richard Body: Indeed I do.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. There is a motion before us for debate. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will keep to it. Then we shall have fewer interventions from a sedentary position from all parts of the House.

Sir Richard Body: I could invite the House to take a tour around my constituency and consider all the road schemes that may or may not be pushed through. We listened to all that for about an hour, but I shall not do that. I intend to stick to the point, but it ought to be recorded that a few hon. Members tried to prevent any debate on the Bill. I had hoped that we might debate it.

I am not concerned about the Bill going through; as I have already said, the regulations are on the way and will be approved. We shall then have all that the Bill would have done, not only in this country but throughout the European Community, for the reasons that I have just given. The battle has been won. However, I had hoped that we might have a reasonably short debate on two points, the first being the European issue with which I have dealt. The European Commission is anxious to proceed along the lines of the Bill. I had also hoped that there might be an opportunity to rebut spurious scientific evidence about the 35-day period. I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington would have quoted a few scientists. I had hoped to have the opportunity to show that that evidence is mistaken and that for every scientist that my hon. Friend could produce, there are many others who would say exactly the opposite.

Pig farmers overwhelmingly take a different view from that upheld by the small band of scientists who support the close confinement of sows throughout virtually the whole of their lives. I had hoped that it would be possible to explain that neither the Bill nor the regulations need prohibit the segregation of sows. All that the Bill and the regulations do is to prevent them from being so segregated and confined that they cannot move around.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many of us are here today to support the Bill that he saw through its Committee stage and that we are deeply disappointed that two hon. Members have sabotaged the Bill? Such a procedure is perfectly within the Standing Orders of the House. Nevertheless, it is deeply regrettable, as the Bill received its Second Reading after a clear majority of 118 hon. Members had voted for closure.

Sir Richard Body: Three hon. Members were involved and one or two others were going to come along later to help to sabotage it. However, it was a futile exercise because we shall achieve the aims of the Bill. Unfortunately, those aims will not be achieved in an Act of Parliament, and will not be debated in detail, as we had hoped. Had hon. Members raised scientific and practical points, their concerns could have been met.

The great majority of pig farmers who do not have 1,000-sow herds are in favour of the Bill and of cleaning up pig farming.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): My hon. Friend really does not know east riding where there are pig farms of all sizes. I have not had one letter from a pig farmer opposing my stand on the Bill. I have had 100 per cent. support in opposing the Bill. I challenge my hon. Friend to come to east Yorkshire and address a meeting of my pig farmers. He will find out that he is wrong and that he does not have the support of pig farmers. Some of them are in the Strangers' Gallery. He is misleading the House. I am sorry that he is withdrawing his Bill without hearing the debate because we have the facts——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Did I understand the hon. Gentleman to say that the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) was misleading the House? If that is the case, will he now withdraw that remark?

Mr. Townend: I apologise. I will rephrase that remark. My hon. Friend made an incorrect statement when he said that the majority of pig farmers supported the Bill. I challenge him to have a referendum with the pig farmers on that. I have a file full of letters which all——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us keep the debate in good order. The hon. Gentleman asked for an intervention. I shall try to call him later, but if he has finished his intervention I would be obliged if he would allow the hon. Gentleman responsible for the Bill to speak.

Sir Richard Body: I might be out of order if I remind the House that the only reason why I was selected by my constituency some 25 years ago was that I spoke with authority about pigs. The only reason why I chose to speak about pigs at my selection conference was that it was the one subject that I knew a bit about and I thought that I could stand up for myself on that issue.

My hon. Friend might be right about meadow units. I accept that, but they are not representative of farming or the great majority of pig farmers. I have been in the pig business for a long time and I have been to east riding four or five times to speak to audiences of pig farmers. I must say that on the last occasion I went there, they did not seem much like the majority of pig farmers elsewhere. They all arrived in Mercedes and other large cars. They did not seem to know much about pigs, but they knew all about computers and management. Some years ago a farmer in my constituency gave up pig farming. I asked him what he was going to do next and he said that he planned to concentrate on vegetables, mainly cauliflowers. I said, "That will be a tremendous difference", and he said, "No, it is all marketing. The same principles of marketing apply to pigs as to cauliflowers." That constituent had the same attitude to animal welfare as some of the farmers in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, whatever the attitude of the pig farmers of east riding towards his Bill, the public will not stand for those practices any longer? The public buy the pork that comes from the pig farmers of east riding and elsewhere and they are the principal impetus behind the worthy Bill that the hon. Gentleman is promoting.

Sir Richard Body: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right, but it goes a bit further than that. The House has been discussing the matter for a long time. As long ago as 1981, the Select Committee on Agriculture spent a long time hearing all the arguments before producing a report that was against the use of sow stalls and tethering except under certain conditions—the kind of conditions embodied in the Bill and draft regulations. When the House supported the report in 1982, there was not a dissenting voice.

Ten years ago, there were no 1,000-sow units. Huge factory farms did not exist. They were about to appear and we thought that we should jump on them then. Unfortunately, however, we did not, and the result is that we now have some units with 3,000 sows. One man who telephoned me at the weekend has 10,000 sows on a huge mega-farm—if one can call them farms. That is almost unbelievable. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), but it is not only public opinion that is against the practice; the House condemned the system through its Select Committee and in a debate on the subject as long ago as 1982.

We are making progress. We are virtually there. The regulations are on the way and, as I said, the Commission has given the assurance that it, too, will be taking action. The House can be pleased with what has been achieved. It would seem that three hon. Members—perhaps one or two more—wish to sabotage our attempts. I am afraid that, in future, they will find that rather more difficult because of the Community. I am no supporter of the way in which the Common Market operates, but we must face the fact that, in future, many of our laws will be made not by this House but in Brussels. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Yes; the legislation on this subject and on slaughterhouses will be made elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say that this country is leading in Europe. We are ahead of the other countries, and they are following. That is an achievement, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on what he has done.

1.22 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): In supporting the motion, I wish first to express my great sadness that the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) has been forced to move it. This is a sad day because the House is sending a signal to the country and to the European Community that the British Parliament will allow itself to be sabotaged—in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—and will allow vested financial interests to stand in the way of minor improvements in animal welfare.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston. I fully acknowledge the support that he has received from the Minister for the principle of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman and the Minister are two honourable exceptions in the present-day Tory party. We have seen this morning that the Tory party is prepared to sacrifice minimal improvements in animal welfare for very marginal economic benefits. I recognise that other Conservative Members who have sponsored or supported the Bill are also exceptions, but we have seen the true face of the modern Tory party in the tactics that we witnessed this morning. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt)——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The bookie's runner.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend refers to the hon. Gentleman as a bookie's runner. I would not put a bet on with the hon. Gentleman and I certainly would not fancy

[Mr. Davies]

him running. His tactics this morning showed neither courage nor integrity. He abused the procedures of the House. He did not wish to challenge the Bill that would now have been before us, choosing instead to subvert the procedures of the House to prevent the House from discussing and deciding on the matter. His actions were both undemocratic and anti-democratic. He would have done himself more service if he had been prepared to oppose the measure openly and frankly.

The debate and the Bill deal with a cause that has inspired millions of people. By his actions this morning, the hon. Member for Langbaurgh has brought disrepute to himself, the House of Commons and the Tory party. He was not alone. He was aided by those waiting in the wings. he was preceded by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who spoke for 18 minutes, and the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), who spoke for 27 minutes. The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) was waiting in the wings, as was the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague). They are all signatories to the amendments.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I will give way to the hon. Lady, because I have named her. However, first I wish to finish my specific point.

The amendments were not designed to improve the Bill or to allow us to debate its benefits or economic consequences. They were tabled for the express purpose of allowing those hon. Members to kill the Bill this morning.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that I signed the amendments to the Pig Husbandry Bill. He is wrong and I ask him to withdraw that.

Mr. Davies: The record will show clearly that I accused the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South of speaking for 18 minutes. When I referred to the amendments, I specifically referred to the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West and the hon. Member——

Miss Emma Nicholson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I ask the Chair to confirm that I did not have my name down to speak in the previous debate, that my name was not involved in any amendment and that it is a figment of Opposition Members' imagination that I was waiting in the wings to speak in the previous debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Let us cool the debate. These are matters for debate and I hope to call the hon. Lady shortly.

Mr. Davies: I do not wish to cool the debate. I am particularly angry this morning because I have seen the practices——

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall answer the point that the hon. Lady raised in a moment.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Is the hon. Gentleman going to give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member at the Dispatch Box said a moment ago that he was willing to give way in his own time. I am sure that he will do so.

Mr. Davies: Of course, I will. Faced with a lady who wishes to intervene and a lady in the Chair, I have no option but to give way. The charge against the hon. Lady is that she is a signatory to the amendment tabled for debate this morning. I refer her to the amendments——

Miss Emma Nicholson *rose*——

Mr. Davies: The hon. Lady must restrain herself. She was not present while we listened for two hours to the most tedious speech from her hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh, who is a partner in her crime. I, who have been listening for two hours, take it amiss that she has been in the Chamber for only five minutes and wishes immediately to intervene. She is a party to the crime of this morning's hijack of the proceedings. She wants her hon. Friends to be allowed to give it, so she must take it for a moment.

Mr. John Townend: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No, the hon. Gentleman should sit down. My point is that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West is a signatory to the amendments——

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: For goodness sake, for the fourth time——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must restrain herself. The hon. Gentleman at the Dispatch Box said that he would give way when he had finished his point. Will she please restrain herself until he gives way to her?

Mr. Davies: My point is that the amendments were tabled for the express purpose of killing the Bill. The hon. Lady is a signatory to the amendments. If she wishes to justify that, or withdraw her name from the amendments, I willingly give way to her.

Miss Emma Nicholson: The hon. Gentleman is withdrawing from his earlier statement, when he said that I was a partner in crime and was waiting in the wings to speak in the earlier debate. Does he agree that that was incorrect? My name was not down to speak in the earlier debate. I came here to speak on the Pig Husbandry Bill. The hon. Gentleman is taking my name in vain. Indeed, he is turning out to be a classic Labour male chauvinist pig or, might I suggest, a real sorry bore.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Lady is perfectly entitled to her view. The record will show that my point is clear and that it was clear when I made it initially. We have had one debate already this morning. It was deliberately prolonged by the hon. Members whom I have named precisely to ensure that inadequate time remained for this debate.

Miss Emma Nicholson *rose*——

Mr. Davies: The hon. Lady must restrain herself. I know that she is getting excited, but she must——

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No. The hon. Lady must understand that when a Member is addressing the House he has a right to finish a sentence without these constant interruptions.

The hon. Lady is a party to this morning's attempt to kill the Bill. Her name is on the list of amendments. I am fully aware that she intended to come to the House to speak to the amendments to the Pig Husbandry Bill. All Labour Members know that the purpose of the amendments is to kill the Bill, as the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) made clear.

Mr. John Townend: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman now. There will be further opportunities for him to speak.

Mr. Mullin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall give way to my hon. Friend because he was present for the Second Reading of the Bill. He has been in constant contact with the hon. Member for Holland with Boston and has shown himself to be supportive throughout all the proceedings of the Bill in this House, as have my hon. Friends the Members for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) and for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey). If any of them wishes me to give way to them, I shall certainly do so because I know that they are concerned about improvement in animal welfare standards.

Mr. Mullin: My constituents and I care strongly about this matter. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that those responsible for this morning's sabotage and the vested interests that put them up to it do not derive any advantage from what happened? Indeed, on the contrary, does he agree that it is important that they derive a serious disadvantage and understand that their actions this morning will be to the detriment of the vested interests that they represent? I realise that my hon. Friend is about to say that a Labour Government will certainly support such a measure in the European Community and, if necessary, through legislation. Does he agree that when the issue returns to the House we should think in terms of reducing the phasing-out period from 10 to the original five years? That would signal to the vested interests that the more they carry on with this sabotage, the harder it will get for them.

Mr. Davies: That is a powerful argument and I shall return to it in a moment.

I pay full credit to the Minister who will introduce regulations which will give effect to the particular purposes of the Bill. I have told him privately and will now do so in public that we shall do all we can to facilitate the passage of that legislation.

The present difficulty arises because this is a private Member's Bill and it would be inappropriate for the party to arrange any whipping or attempt to make a party political response to the Bill. All my hon. Friends who have supported the measure have done so as private Members. It is noteworthy that when the closure was forced on Second Reading, every Labour Member who voted, supported the Bill. It is true that the Labour party is absolutely committed to not only this welfare measure but others. I give full credit also to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who represents the Liberal Democrats, who share our objectives in this matter. It is true that thus far we have been acting as private Members and that when the matter is introduced as a Government measure, we shall give it our full support. Inasmuch as this private Member's Bill has been wrecked, I undertake that when we have a Labour Government, as I am confident we shall in the not-too-distant future, we shall review these measures.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh spoke for two hours this morning, but he has not had the courtesy to remain for this debate. However, he achieved one thing this morning: an incoming Labour Government will review the regulations. The attempt to hijack and sabotage the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston may have been successful, but that action may rebound on those hon. Members responsible. They will not be allowed to profit from their infamy.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Holland with Boston had the support of many of my hon. Friends and his colleagues when he sought to move the closure. The Bill received an unopposed Second Reading. Those hon. Members who killed the Bill this morning did not have the courage, integrity or the troops to call a Division against the Second Reading. They let the Bill go in the knowledge that they would attempt to subvert the will of Parliament at a later stage.

The hon. Member for Holland with Boston had the full support of the Government. They wanted the Bill to be amended to bring it into line with their objectives. I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge that we had a constructive debate in Committee when we explored the relevant issues. A number of amendments were accepted with near-unanimity which took account of the representations made, the need for the Bill and the Government's reservations. There was unanimity about attaining those objectives.

We improved the Bill and it came back to the House for what we hoped would be a formal Report stage and Third Reading. Little did we know that those hon. Members to whom I have referred would set about their task of tabling wrecking amendments with the purpose of killing the Bill.

Those hon. Members have succeeded in killing the Bill and I suppose that that is a credit to their parliamentary tactics, but it is a discredit to them as members of the human race. They have done a personal disservice to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston, who is a respected member of their party because of his support for animal welfare. Although the hon. Gentleman is a man of integrity and commitment to the cause of animal welfare, it is clear that he does not have many friends in the present Tory party. Those hon. Members, by wrecking the Bill, have done a disservice to the cause of animal welfare as the British House of Commons has been shown incapable of accepting even a minor measure that would result in minor improvements in animal welfare.

How will such actions strengthen the arm of the Minister, committed as he is to argue for animal welfare in the European Community? The Minister may argue at the EC that Britain wants to enforce the highest standards and to improve animal welfare. How will he defend his case when those who do not want to adopt the supposedly traditional British standards of animal welfare turn to him and say, "Yes Minister, but what happened to the Pig Husbandry Bill?"

Where is the great British commitment to animal welfare when financial vested interests were used to hijack the British House of Commons.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that most hon. Members will be disappointed that the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) has not succeeded. I must defend the integrity, however, of my parliamentary colleagues. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) alleged that they are acting for vested interests, but I am sure that they are acting in what they believe to be the best interests of their constituents. I am quite sure that if they had an interest in such matters they would have declared it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is barely a point of order for me because I am sure that those hon. Members would, or will, declare their interests. I hope that they will have an opportunity to respond during the debate.

Mr. Davies: I am not suggesting for one moment that those hon. Members who killed the Bill will receive any personal gain from doing so. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) is wrong if he thinks that I made such an assertion. If I had done so I would have referred to the declaration of interests and I would have specified my charges. I have made no personal accusations, but vested interests have wrecked the Bill. Some of those vested interests represent the pig farmers whom the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West mentioned earlier and whom he considers with such disapproval. Those farmers might be the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall not give way again. The hon. Gentleman raised a phoney point of order and he should give me the courtesy of his attention when I reply to it. I suggested that they had deliberately inspired hon. Members to kill the Bill. They did so because they did not wish to be involved in the capital expenditure that would be necessary to bring about the improvements. They believed, wrongly, that they would suffer a small financial disadvantage if the Bill were passed. That is why the Bill has been killed and that is why I make the charge. The Bill is about improvements in welfare standards and it has been killed because it would marginally infringe on the financial interests of those who would be affected. That is my charge and I do not withdraw it. I am glad, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you ruled that my charge was valid. I believe that the hon. Members who have killed the Bill have done a disservice to their constituents by their actions and they have demeaned the House and themselves.

The Bill was a small but important measure. It would have brought about minor improvements in welfare and in dry stalls by preventing a practice that has been widely recognised as cruel, unnecessary and unacceptable. The Bill was important not merely because it would have prevented the practice of using stalls and tethers, but because it would have been a message that the House was prepared to legislate and to demonstrate a commitment to be at least a first step in matters of animal welfare. That is why the defeat of the Bill saddens me.

The Bill was not presented as the personal whim or crusade of one individual. It had the support of everyone who has studied the practice of sow husbandry.

Sir Richard Body *indicated assent.*

Mr. Davies: The hon. Member for Holland with Boston agrees. It was widely supported on Second Reading when hon. Member after hon. Member testified to the strength of public feeling. Hundreds of letters were written and more than 100 hon. Members took it on themselves to come to the Second Reading debate to commit themselves to the cause of the Bill. There was not only support from those of us who are public representatives, but specific and specialist support from others who had considered the Bill. The veterinary profession was almost united—the hon. Member for Holland with Boston will challenge me if I am wrong about that—in advocating the Bill. Academics who have studied husbandry have supported the Bill, as did the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Compassion in World Farming—whose Bill it was—and the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which was established to advise the Government on animal welfare and the European Commission. The Government support the principles behind the Bill even if they do not support the precise form in which it has been drafted.

Although the Bill has received broad support, it has been destroyed by the vested interests to which I referred, ostensibly to further economic interests. I believe that hon. Members who have spoken so far and who believe that they have served the financial cause of their pig-producing constituents have done them a disservice, not only for the reason given by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) but for another reason: I believe that the British pig industry will be disadvantaged because consumers will begin to show a preference. The hon. Member for Bridlington may mock, but I look forward to a proper system of food labelling so that our constituents, when they do their weekly shopping, will be able to express support through their purchasing power for non-intensive systems and for systems that rear animals in conditions which they consider acceptable. The hon. Members to whom I refer therefore, have done their constituents a disservice in the financial sense.

One benefit of the Bill has been a proper debate about the impact on sow and pig rearing of the stall and tether system. All the evidence from the academics and veterinarians who have studied the matter is that the alternative systems which the Bill would encourage are more efficient pig producers than the stall and tether system. The alternative systems give a greater opportunity for breeding at a marginally faster rate. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that litter sizes and the growth of piglets are superior under the alternative systems.

Sir Richard Body: The hon. Gentleman mentioned academics and veterinarians. Does he agree that stockmen share their view? Just over a year ago, I took part in the launch of the National Herdspersons Society to try to raise the standard of stockmanship. Members of that organisation are wholly in favour of raising standards and of ending the sow stall system because it has driven out of farming so many good stockmen. They say that one cannot be a good pigman unless one likes pigs, any more than one cannot be a good shepherd unless one likes sheep. They say that one cannot support and condone the system of sow stalls on its present scale if one has any feeling for or wish to work with pigs. That view has been repeated many times by professional stockmen for many years. It was emphasised to the Select Committee on Agriculture in 1981. The prediction was made on behalf of the stockmen

that good stockmen would get out of the pig industry if the sow stall system continued. We have had to learn that lesson.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman is correct in the matters to which he has drawn our attention, as he is in so many other matters relating to farming.

The express concern of the hon. Members who have killed the Bill was that Britain would be out of step with Europe and that British interests would be jeopardised. I do not believe that. There is now clear evidence—the Minister may wish to address the point—that the Commission would have accepted the standards in the Bill and that it would have ensured that the standards were adopted throughout Europe. The cause of animal welfare in Europe has been weakened by the decision this morning.

There is some consolation in our debate. At the end of the day, victory will go to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston. He has ensured that we have had a full debate, that the public are aware of the issues, that the public have had the opportunity to express their concern and that the wide range of specialist and scientific opinion to which I referred has been given the opportunity to present its case to the House. I am sure that the Minister will acknowledge that his hon. Friend has ensured that when the Minister tables the regulations, stalls and tethers will be phased out. Those of us of all parties who are prepared to argue the case for animal welfare will have to acknowledge our debt to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston. I pay full tribute to him.

I understand that the Government have put the regulations out to consultation in almost final form. I have not yet had a chance to look at the proposed regulations in detail, but I understand that they will give full effect, if in a different way, to the proposals in the Bill. I congratulate the Minister on that. The regulations will have our full support when they come before the House and we will do whatever is necessary to facilitate their passage through the House.

The hon. Members who have attempted to kill the Bill this morning will not be allowed to profit from what they have done. One of the earliest acts of an incoming Labour Government's Ministry of Food and Farming will be to review all farm welfare measures. We shall then look, as a matter of Government policy, at whether the regulations now being tabled should be continued.

1.50 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I shall be brief to enable other hon. Members to take part in the discussion, and I hope that I can restore some of the harmony and consensus that existed on Second Reading and largely in Committee.

I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) has had to withdraw his Bill, and I understand why he has taken that step. There was a great deal of consensus in Committee. All the issues were widely explored, particularly the vexed question of when the end of the phasing out period should be. Amendments were proposed to bring the date forward and to bring it in line with the Government's position. It is remarkable that hon. Members on both sides with deeply held views on animal welfare concluded that the phase-out period which is now in my hon. Friend's Bill, and which will be the same in our regulations, was an appropriate time.

I thank the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) for his kind words and, at the outset, I wish to put on record firmly that the Government agree with the objectives of the Bill. As I said in Committee, we take, and will continue to take, the matter of pig welfare seriously. On every occasion I have spoken about the Bill I have said that the Government would rather the objectives of the Bill were achieved by way of regulations made under the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968. The House will be aware that the Bill, as amended in Committee, contains a number of tortuous formulae which are necessary only because we are working with primary legislation.

I also made it clear that we would have preferred our regulations in the first place, but, because the Bill was considerably amended in Committee, it would have had the support of the Government. We welcome it and could have lived with it. I would also have told the House today, had we dealt with the amendments, that the Government could not have accepted any of them as tabled and would have wished the Bill to have passed as it stood. But I shall not go into any of those details now. I suspect that we shall cover them when we debate the regulations, which will be laid and be dealt with under the affirmative resolution procedure.

As we have no Bill, we can have regulations instead, and I intend that that shall happen. Those regulations can be introduced quickly and relatively easily, and they will have exactly the same effect as the Bill. Officials in my Department are maintaining a draft version which mirrors the progress of the Bill. The latest version was issued for brief comment on Tuesday of this week, with a short period given for further comments to be made. We kept that measure ticking over because we believe that regulations could be better than the Bill.

We wanted a fall-back position in case this eventuality, as happened today, occurred. We gave a commitment that the Government intended to introduce regulations if the Bill fell. It now seems that the Bill will fall, so we intend to introduce the regulations.

I should give a slight warning. My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston quoted the support of the Commission. I understand that although the Commission has not put a block on the regulations, the deadline for notifying the EC has not yet expired. We have until 6 May, and it is possible that there will be objections to them. If the Commission is giving us the green light, that is excellent news. If we get the Commission fully on our side, while that is good news and will allow our regulations to proceed unhindered, it will not mean that all other EC countries will fall in line pdq.

We will have a tough fight on our hands to persuade other EC countries, with the full support of the Commission if we have it, that they should follow the British lead on animal welfare. I can assure the House that when our regulations are in place—if the House agrees to them—we shall press most strongly in Brussels and other EC countries for similar legislation to apply there so that we are not at a competitive disadvantage and animals in those other countries are not at a welfare disadvantage.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said that the will of the House had been frustrated today. May I say on the Government's behalf that the will of the House will

[Mr. David Maclean]

not be frustrated today. Many hon. Members agreed with the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston and the Government would agree with it if it were amended. The regulations, which we have put out for consultation, mirror that. I give a clear undertaking that we intend to proceed with those regulations and, barring any hiccup from the Commission or our parliamentary procedure, they could and should be law by the summer.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members will appreciate that there is little debating time left. I hope to call all hon. Members. If they apply common sense and speak briefly, I may be able to do so.

1.57 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I shall speak for the fewest possible moments because I know the keen interest of other hon. Members to ensure that their voices are heard.

I warmly welcome the Government's adoption of measures identical to those proposed in the Bill. I read carefully everything that was said on Second Reading, for which I was present, and in Committee. I supported the Bill and its principle on Second Reading. My views on it are on the record. I asked the sponsor no fewer than five times if I could be on the Committee so that I could make some other points. He was unable to hear me in that context, which is the sole reason why I put down my name to speak today. I was glad to put my name with those of other hon. Members in support of the amendments. They are important amendments which should have been heard in Committee, and if I had been fortunate enough to be a member of the Committee I would have spoken to them then.

I am a lifetime supporter of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The deputy chief veterinary officer of the RSPCA was, at my instigation, the only speaker at a meeting of the constituency farm council of Torridge and Devon, West more than a year ago when we discussed other aspects of intensive farming.

I proposed the Slaughter of Deer Bill which, I am sorry to say, was blocked by members of Her Majesty's Opposition. It was a private Member's Bill and I accept that it was not blocked by Front-Bench spokesmen; Members of both major Opposition parties blocked it, for which I am sorry. I have a track record of speaking on animal welfare matters in the House and have put forward my own Bill.

I am glad that the Minister spoke so strongly in favour of the principles and practice of the Bill. I am also glad that he will now have time to consider the points made in the amendments. We shall perhaps have another opportunity to discuss those points with him. I welcome that and look forward immensely to working with him.

1.58 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I have no vested interest in the pig industry. I see that the "Oxford English Dictionary" defines someone with a vested interest as someone with a personal interest in the state of affairs with an expectation of gain.

I am sad that the Bill has been withdrawn. If my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) had not withdrawn it, we could have had a debate of an hour and a half and I would have had an opportunity to propose the amendments in my name. They were not wrecking amendments; I did not intend to wreck the Bill and I made an offer to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston to withdraw my opposition if he would accept my amendment dealing with the 35 days issue. We proposed that amendment on the basis of welfare as well as economics. As other hon. Members wish to speak, I am sorry that I will not have the opportunity to make those points.

My other main amendment would have prevented the Bill from coming into operation until there was equivalent legislation in other Community countries. I was saddened to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister said. When my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston said that he wished to withdraw the Bill, I thought that there would be rejoicing in east Yorkshire tonight. The pig farmers realise that their livelihoods are at risk. I tell Labour Members that as a rural Member of Parliament, it is my job to represent my constituents—just as it is the job of mining or textile Members of Parliament to represent their constituents.

There has been a clear change of Government policy——

Sir Richard Body *rose*——

Mr. Townend: With respect, other hon. Members wish to speak and my hon. Friend has had a good crack today. I have been waiting all day to speak. I was prepared to speak for three hours and I would have talked out the Bill because it would undermine the British pig industry.

In March 1989, the former Minister said in a Ministry document:

"It is clear that any legislation should be on a Community-wide basis."

The major objection of the pig industry is that, when moving towards a single market, the Bill would not allow them to compete on a level playing field. The Government now intend to impose regulations that will make their position very difficult.

On Second Reading, the Minister accepted that the Bill would disadvantage British trade, so I do not foresee objections from other EEC countries. He also said that the Bill had to be enacted within five years, or we would be flooded with pigmeat produced under the system that we had banned. That is likely to happen at the end of eight years because the revenue differential will be the same.

The Minister also said that the new proposals would increase running costs because

"they must have a higher quality of animal husbandry and better qualified pig men. The level of the additional costs will depend on the type of system used and the value of additional inputs."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1991; Vol. 184, c. 617.]

We expect the Labour party not to back British industry, but we expect the Conservative party to defend British industry and British agriculture. The Minister says that he will attempt to obtain EC regulations. I do not think that there is a cat in hell's chance of that. Some 90 per cent. of pig breeding in Denmark is under the dry sow system, as is 80 per cent. in Holland and more than half in Belgium, France and Germany, and the system is expanding rapidly in Spain. In Holland, it would be practically impossible to move to loose houses because it does not have the straw.

European Governments back their farmers for political and national reasons. If we legislate as the Government suggest, our pig farmers will be at a disadvantage. Can the House imagine other Common Market countries introducing legislation to lessen the advantage to their farmers? Can the House imagine the French introducing legislation that would place further burdens on their farmers while giving our farmers an advantage? It is inconceivable.

I know that we are up against it, but we shall continue the battle. Whatever regulations the Government may introduce, if they are imposed on our industry and not on our competitors, we will oppose them. There has already been one example of that on veal calf crates. They have been abolished in Britain, so when the calves are born they go to Holland, where they are fattened in the very crates that are illegal in this country and the veal then comes back to Britain.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said that British farmers had lost an opportunity. Does he really believe that if the Bill had been passed and the cost of our pigmeat increased, the ordinary punter in the supermarket would be prepared to pay a premium for British bacon over Danish bacon? Labour Members do not live in the real world. It is difficult enough to try to sell British bacon in competition against the long tradition, heavy marketing and high quality of Danish bacon and we have made a lot of progress. However, if one attempts to appeal to a niche market—to sell to the sort of people who will make that decision—one will condemn oneself to a small part—10 or 15 per cent.—of the market.

There is a deficiency of £6 billion a year on our food account—larger than that for cars. The Government are introducing an initiative to reduce that deficiency and to increase exports of food products and decrease imports. Considering our balance of payments problems in the past 18 months, we certainly need to do that.

How can one expect our food industry to increase exports if it cannot compete on a level basis? When my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston talks about pig farmers in my constituency, he does not know what he is talking about. They vary from the smallest to the largest pig farmers. We have the largest concentration of pigs, and we are the major producers of pork in the country.

The reason why British bacon has been gaining market share is the quality and price of the bacon produced by those farmers. My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston wants to go back 25 years to the old farmer in his muddy boots. He does not think that they should have desks or computers. Why have they come to meetings in nice cars? Because they are successful. One thing that the former Prime Minister did for this country was to show that we have to be successful if we are to survive. When I hear all this claptrap I think that it is a criticism of successful farmers who are able to produce more. For years the Government have been calling on farmers to produce more and to reduce imports. If they have been successful and have invested the money, they will have made profits. Therefore, they have a right to a good car, just as my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston has a good car out of his parliamentary allowance.

I am ashamed of what has been going on and of the way in which pig farmers have been treated. I shall fight and fight again to make the Government change their mind.

2.6 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The arguments used by the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) did not do pig farmers a good service. I probably represent a level of pig production comparable to that which he represents. In the past few weeks, I have sat down with large-scale pig farmers and their advisers in my constituency and I am well aware that they are concerned about welfare.

If there has been a full debate on the Bill today I would have been prepared to engage in that constructive debate and to ensure that their concerns were taken into account as we move into the transitional phase. That is legitimate, as the Government have said that they will introduce regulations and I think that farmers' worries need to be considered. However, I do not in any way withdraw my support for the Bill.

One of the reasons why I support the Bill is my belief that public opinion is demanding this change of our farmers, and it does farmers no good to have representatives such as the hon. Member for Bridlington telling them that he is not interested in what the British public want or what Parliament wishes as regards animal welfare demands. Essentially, that is what the debate is about and that is what we should have been debating this morning.

I welcome the fact that the Government have said that they will introduce their own regulations in a similar format. I hope that the Minister will not regard this as a discourtesy, as it is not intended as such, but I think that his position has become clearer, and was put in more forthright way, than it was on Second Reading. Our debates on the Bill have helped to crystallise his Department's thinking and to raise the standard of the debate within the European Community.

We have to accept that there is a north-south divide within the European Community on animal welfare matters. The hon. Member for Bridlington simply says that because of that divide we have to accept that the argument must be lost. I am pleased to hear the Minister say that he does not intend to lose that argument, but will take it to the heart of the European Commission and make Britain the member that will lead the demand for improved animal welfare standards—a demand which ultimately has to penetrate the entire market. In due course, I believe that these matters will even become of greater concern outside the United Kingdom.

I hope that the Government accept that there are those involved in the industry who accept that there should be change but who say that if change must come, their ability to adapt, the time scale, the costs involved and the necessary research should all be taken fully into account. The Minister will be aware of the concern about pigs in large-scale units. However, things can happen to free-range pigs, too. They suffer from udder biting and from broken backs and legs during the lactation period. I am sure that those points would have been made in support of the amendments of the hon. Member for Bridlington, had he moved them. I should not have supported the amendments, but I would have pressed those arguments. The leading pig research unit in Scotland is in my constituency. It has said that if change is to come about—it accepts that it is the will of Government that it should come about—it will need to find ways to separate the pecking order out very early on to avoid such incidents.

Mr. Maclean: Perhaps I could reassure the hon. Gentleman by saying that we intend to continue with a lot of research into this and other matters relating to alternative welfare systems for pigs during the phase-out period, to the end of 1998, and that we shall probably continue with research beyond that date.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the Minister for saying that, which was all that I was looking for in the context of this short debate.

The hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) has done a great service by introducing the Bill. It is a matter of great regret that he has been forced to withdraw it, although I accept that he did so in the context of regulations that are to be applied in any case. It is never satisfactory when Bills are frustrated by procedural means rather than by an honest exchange in debate and a vote on the issue, for that is when the will of Parliament determines what is to happen rather than tactical procedures. It will anger many people in the country who lobbied hard and believed that they had won the day on the Bill. The only saving grace is that the Government have had the integrity to honour the provisions of the Bill. Provided that they continue to do so, those people may be satisfied and mollified. Frankly, though they will not think much of Parliament. I could not defend Parliament's behaviour to them and I would not attempt to do so.

2.11 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I, too, am sorry that the Bill is being withdrawn. I wanted to speak on behalf of my constituents. I took part in an earlier debate this morning on an issue that affected my constituents. My name is also down to speak in the debate on the Registered Homes (Amendment) Bill because I have an interest in that. I take amiss some of the remarks that were made by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), and also the uncharacteristically ungracious remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) as I came into the Chamber.

My interest has always been human welfare. Part of that has to be the provision of clean, cheap, safe food. That includes the welfare of people who work with animals. Animal welfare is of great importance. If my postbag is anything to go by, I suspect that some of those who write to me on animal welfare issues—whales, dogs or whatever—are frequently more agitated about those matters than those who write to me about human welfare issues.

The problem is that some of the animal rights proposals, which might have formed part of the Bill and might still yet form part of the regulations, are anthropomorphic. They assume that animals have the same feelings and needs as we have. They tend to forget the brutality that some species show to each other, expecially at certain times in the reproductive cycle. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to that point, and it is one to which I should like to return.

I ought to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston, who introduced the Bill, that any pig farmer who supports the Bill's provisions does not need the Bill. He could introduce new rearing methods all by himself. There is no law that says that he cannot introduce different methods. He can indulge in whatever form of husbandry he is happiest with and that he feels his stock is happiest with.

There is a substantial pig farm in my constituency. I am well acquainted with Mr. John Robinson, the manager of Midland Pig Farms. I have visited the establishment on a number of occasions. It is expanding. There has been a substantial amount of investment in it, and it produces some of the finest quality meat to be found anywhere in Europe. I am very pleased that it is there. The farm does not use girths or tethers, but it does use stalls for breeding sows. The boars have plenty of room. The fattening sheds are large and comfortable. The gilts run outside. Clearly, therefore, there is a technical reason why the sows are in stalls. There is plenty of room for them not to be in stalls. That is not the problem. I understand that the main purpose of the stalls is simply to prevent the sows from rolling on the piglets, which is what would happen naturally. No doubt the animal rights people would have a fit about the death of baby pigs, and that would be the cost of changing the system.

The hon. Member for Gordon was correct in saying that there are other problems in breeding sows when put with other sows. The pig farmers in my constituency tell me that the animals fight and go in for unpleasant habits like vulva biting and general bullying. I was told that sows are not very sociable and that a sow's worst enemy is another sow. I was advised that losses of sows under the system being proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston could be as much as 70 per cent. higher than in stalls—for example, in loose housing or cubicle housing. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take those issues on board. If that is right—I can think of no reason why my constituents should tell me a lie—and if losses under the system proposed by the new legislation are 70 per cent. higher—and by losses I understand deaths of animals—what has happened to animal welfare? I stand here as an ordinary Back Bencher asking where is animal welfare if the changes intended to promote it result in the deaths of more animals and changing the system results in more cruelty.

I take on board the points that have been made about making sure that the changes proceed at the same speed throughout Europe. I am always pleased when Britain leads Europe and when we are able to show that our standards are higher than those in the rest of Europe and encourage the rest of our European neighbours to follow suit, but it is worth remembering that in Spain large numbers of stalls are being put in. We know that, because the stalls are being manufactured in Britain. We may well find ourselves importing meat produced in other countries when we have introduced regulations that restrict our own farmers.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston has seen fit to withdraw his Bill, but we look forward to what the Minister and the Government propose in future.

2.16 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I shall be brief, as I hope that we shall salvage something from the wreckage of this morning and that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) will be able to introduce a measure that will be of great benefit to his and my constituents.

I am particularly sorry that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) found it necessary to make the Bill a partisan matter. I have the honour to be the

vice-chairman of the all-party animal welfare group. The chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) is not known for her socialist leanings, but that group stoically and consistently has given support to the measure brought before the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). It is not a partisan matter; it is an all-party matter and the all-party animal welfare group counts among its numbers large numbers of hon. Members from both sides of the House.

I am particularly sad that my hon. Friend has found it necessary to withdraw the Bill this morning, not because we have lost the measure—we have not, and I hope that the public will understand, because of the statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister, that the measure will go forward—but because the wrong message may go out from the House to Europe. It is our proud boast in the House of Commons and in the country that we blaze a trail in animal welfare matters and that we have not been afraid to go before the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament and to say that we will not tolerate unpleasant practices that do no service to the health and welfare of the animals that we seek to protect. That is why many of us gave our forceful support to the Pig Husbandry Bill and to the measures being put forward to implement the minimum values rule on the exportation of live animals, particulary equines. Many people in the House and the country feel extremely strongly about that. It would be a tragedy if a message went out to the European Commission, the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament that suggested for one minute that we were going soft on any of these issues.

Despite what has happened this morning, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will go to the Council of Ministers and the Commission and say, with all the force that he can muster, that the United Kingdom will continue to blaze a trail in Europe on animal welfare matters. I hope that he will be neither ashamed nor afraid to say that long and loud and that we will never tolerate practices that do not coincide with animal welfare.

2.20 pm

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks.): My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) will recall from the Second Reading debate that my principal concern about the Bill was that it might introduce unfair competition. It was interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman talk about the initiatives that may come out of directorate general 6. That is most encouraging. If there were real determination in the European Commission and across the Community to tackle the issue as one Community, we would all happily accept and support any initiative that resulted. But some of us are still a bit sceptical—as the House heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend)—whether such unity of action will be forthcoming, and my hon. Friend the Minister urged caution in that respect. It is easy to get the Commission to talk about things. It is much harder to get it to agree on them and enforce them throughout the Community. Certainly what we have heard from Italian Ministers and other Italian sources in the past couple of weeks has not in any way suggested that it will be easy to achieve European Community agreement on these matters.

We look to my hon. Friend the Minister to press the matter in Europe before he introduces regulations in place of the Bill. We look to him, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) said, to blaze a trail and say that if we are to take action, we expect the European Community to fall into line and adopt the same procedures—otherwise, as the Minister implied, British farmers will be at a competitive disadvantage.

It is because some of us were, and remain, worried about that, that we tabled reasonable amendments to the Bill which would have been considered had my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston not sought to withdraw it. We have every right to resent the remarks of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who accused us of tabling wrecking amendments. The hon. Gentleman also spoke disparagingly of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) on the grounds that he left the Chamber when he had finished speaking. The hon. Gentleman has now done exactly the same himself. The hon. Gentleman accused my hon. Friends and me of representing vested interests and of committing a crime by tabling amendments in an attempt to defend our constituents' interests. We are meant to defend our constituents' interests; that is one of the reasons why we come to the House. I hope that if, in a few years' time, the hon. Gentleman tables amendments to legislation that threatens businesses in his constituency, he will not be accused of committing a crime or of representing vested interests just because he is attempting to alleviate matters. The hon. Gentleman's speech was foolish and intemperate and, following it, he has sunk in stature as an Opposition spokesman. He must have been taking too many lessons from the Leader of the Opposition, who often displays a similarly intemperate and ineffective manner. I wish that the hon. Gentleman had remained to hear my remarks. He will have to read them instead.

My hon. Friend the Minister should press as hard as he can in Europe for a common European agreement. I urge him also to meet again those of us who are concerned about the effects of the regulations to discuss whether there are other ways in which they can be improved. It is difficult to over-emphasise the importance of fair competition—a level playing field, to use the cliché that we hear so often in agriculture debates these days.

There is a serious danger for the pig industry in Britain. It has not had any special support. It has not relied on subsidies. It has had to cope with a free market in recent years and it has done so without the support of the taxpayer. The industry would be asked to compete with one had tied behind its back if the regulations were passed without European Commission agreement on them. We would probably see more pigmeat imported into Britain, produced by the very system to which people have objected—the stall and tether system.

I am sceptical about the argument that the consumer will lead the way by looking for meat that is produced in a better way. We are short of evidence about that. Price still dominates, so the importance of European agreement is high. If we did not have European agreement, we would once again have shot ourselves in the foot. We always seem to be more keen—rightly so—than our European Community partners on enforcing regulations.

The Minister has already reassured the House, but I want him to take away from the debate the message from many of us that we look to him to press the matter with the utmost vigour in the European Commission and the

[Mr. William Hague]

Council of Ministers. I hope that he will also pay attention to the misgivings that many of us have—they were the reasons behind one of our amendments, although it was not a wrecking amendment. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Caerphilly back in the Chamber. I have been talking about him in his absence and now he has come back to listen to the rest of what I have to say. I remind him that our amendments were not wrecking amendments. They were designed to improve the legislation in the interests of our constituents.

One amendment dealt with the first 35 days after weaning. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take account of that amendment and listen again to the arguments. The first 35 days are a particularly important time in the 165-day cycle of the sow. The greatest problems of stock management and welfare arise in the first 35 days after weaning, if one does not have either a good stockman —my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston knows a great deal about good stockmanship—or a stall system. It is in the first 35 days that the stockman's skills are most often required. One needs ease of access to the sow, easy identification of the sow and calm conditions in which to look after the sow. A good stockman can provide those things, but the skills are in short supply. My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston gave good reasons why they are in short supply. But the fact is that they are in short supply and that is the position with which we must deal. Perhaps we do not disagree on that.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will listen to the arguments about the vulnerable time in the cycle of the sow. Certainly, that is the point about which pig farmers in my constituency are more worried than anything else. Their opinion is that enormous damage would be done to the industry if the measure were adopted in this country but not in other European Community countries, and that the greatest damage would be due to the implications for the first 35-day period. The condition of sows in that period varies greatly. They often require individual attention. They have lost their strength from the milk that has been drawn out of them in previous weeks and they need to be looked after individually. It is also important——

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have the Minister for Health here. This morning 600 job cuts were announced at Guy's hospital. Now this afternoon we hear that 300 more jobs are to go at the Bradford hospital trust. The Government are standing by doing nothing while their business managers are cutting the national health service. The Minister is here; will she come to the Dispatch Box?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Lady makes her point at 2.30 pm, I shall deal with it then.

Mr. Hague: It is also important that people understand that during that 35 days serious injuries can often occur. Sows bully and become aggressive towards each other as they try to establish a social hierarchy. That is another reason why particular attention must be paid to the first 35-day period. Again, I hope that my hon. Friend listens to that argument.

Normally towards the end of that 35-day period farmers carry out a pregnancy test, for which they require sows to be still. They use what appears to be head-bone apparatus—

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Hospitals (Job Losses)

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This morning I raised a point of order calling for a Minister in the Department of Health to come to the House to take responsibility for and explain the cut of 600 jobs at Guy's hospital trust. The Minister was not available. We now have a Minister present. We have had further news that 300 jobs are to go in Bradford as a result of the setting up of a hospital trust. The Government are standing by and Ministers are failing to take responsibility while their business managers butcher the health service. Are we prepared to let this go on, or will you, Madam Deputy Speaker, use your influence to bring the Minister to the Dispatch Box to answer our points?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I represent one of the Bradford constituencies and both St. Luke's and the Bradford royal infirmary treat my constituents. The announcement that 300 jobs are to go is a real blow to the people of Bradford. I urge you to support our request for the Minister for Health to make a statement because this is a serious and important matter. Just as we predicted, £7 million is being cut from the national health service budget through the trust in Bradford. The trust has nothing to do with the NHS. It represents the enemies within the NHS, and it is time that we had a statement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. These matters are raised in the House of Commons because they are relevant to people outside. The House of Commons should debate the matter. The Government who introduced the legislation on opting out, which has already resulted in 900 job losses at two hospitals, have a duty to explain why this has happened. Furthermore——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I have listened carefully to the three points of order, all of which are related. As the House knows, on Fridays statements are made at 11 o'clock.

Mr. Skinner: There was none.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Allow me to finish. I know full well that no Minister has informed Mr. Speaker that he or she wishes to make a statement today. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Order. If the Minister for Health wishes to raise a point of order, of course I shall hear it.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is important to make it clear that the whole philosophy behind the reforms in the health service is——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Speaker has not given permission for a debate on this matter. If the Minister wishes to raise a point of order with me, I must listen to it.

Ms. Harman: Further to that point of order——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister cannot make a statement on which she will take questions. Is she raising a point of order?

Mrs. Bottomley *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Harman: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy speaker. Could the Minister, further to this point of order, please say that she will make a statement to the House on Monday about the cuts in services under the hospital trusts?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must pursue these points of order on Monday when we resume our next parliamentary business.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you and your colleagues do something about the fact that the Government have abused our proceedings today? At 8.30 am I alerted the Minister's office to the fact that I intended to raise in the House today the cuts at Guy's hospital and that the matter should be dealt with. I was told that two Ministers in the Department of Health were available in London throughout the morning.

Subsequently, we debated the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill. Although it is technically a private Member's Bill, we know that it is supported by the Government and that they sought a private Member to introduce it. There was a speech of two and a half hours on that Bill and, although it did not prevent the passage of the Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, it stopped the Pig Husbandry Bill being debated to a conclusion. In all probability, that Bill would have had the support of the House. All that time we did not hear a word nor receive a visit from a health Minister.

It is not good enough for the Minister for Health to come to the House now simply to say, if she was minded to do so, that the Government have no responsibility. I am sure that the hon. Lady intended to say that the whole idea behind the health service reforms is that Ministers will not answer for independent, self-governing trusts. That is unacceptable.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that I can help the House. Mr. Speaker has ruled that it will not be too late for him to hear applications on this matter on Monday. The matter must now be left to our next parliamentary day —Monday next.

Private Members' Bills

REGISTERED HOMES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.
Read the Third time, and passed.

BUILDING CONVERSION AND ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 May.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 May.

YOUNG PERSONS (ALCOHOL ABUSE) ETC. BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 3 May.

ESTABLISHED CHURCH BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I have it in command from Her Majesty the Queen to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Bill, has consented to place her perogative and interest, so far as they are affected by the Bill, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 July.

LEASEHOLD REFORM BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Bill has not been printed, so I cannot put the Question.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 May.

FORESTRY COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Bill has not been printed, so I cannot put the Question.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 May.

MENTAL HEALTH (DETENTION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Read a Second time.
Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 May.

HARE COURSING BILL

Read a Second time.
Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

RESERVE FREE TRAVEL SCHEME (LONDON) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Bill has not been printed, so I cannot put the Question.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 May.

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS (ANIMAL TESTING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 3 May.

PARISH COUNCILS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dixon: On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 3 May.

COAL IMPORTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Dixon: On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 3 May.

HOSPITAL SCHOOLS IN LONDON BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 May.

SMOKE DETECTORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): On behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I must tell him that, although I have no power to prevent him from doing so, Mr. Speaker has made it clear on many occasions that he very much disapproves of the House taking a Committee stage without notice. I hope that that has been noted.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 30th April, the Motions in the name of Mr. Francis Maude relating to Estimates and Supplementary Estimates 1991-92 (Class VIII, Vote 14) (Community charge and rate rebate grants, emergency assistance to local authorities, non-domestic rates outturn payments, etc. England), (Class XVm Vote 22) Rate rebate grants, transitional relief and community charge reduction grants, Scotland) and (Class XVI, Vote 11) (Rate rebate grants and community charge reduction grants, Wales) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock or for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon, whichever is the later, and, if those proceedings have not previously been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put successively the Questions necessary to dispose of them—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 1st May, if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John MacGregor relating to Broadcasting, &c., have not previously been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Seven o'clock put the Question or Questions necessary to dispose of them, including the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motions which he may have selected—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Hospitals (Job Losses)

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would you accept an application under Standing Order No. 20 for an emergency debate at the earliest opportunity on the cuts in the national health service?

Madam Deputy Speaker: As I have told the hon. Lady and the House, Mr. Speaker will consider the matter on Monday morning. I advise the hon. Lady to make an application to him then.

Antarctica

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister for Health rose to her feet and said a few words, but declined to continue. Will you inform Mr. Speaker that a Minister was here but, on the advice of another Minister, decided to keep her mouth shut instead of being accountable to Parliament. The Minister was attempting to contribute. Perhaps that will help Mr. Speaker to make up his mind to accept an application for a debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Mr. Speaker is aware of what takes place in the Chamber. Hon. Members are now taking time from the Adjournment debate. I hope that they understand their responsibility in making points of order at this stage.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with all the points of order relating to that.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North) *rose——*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it a fresh point of order?

Mr. Gale: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It must be a matter for the record that the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was a travesty. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health was prepared to speak, but you, Madam Deputy Speaker, ruled her out of order.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to say that I shall block all Government business until we have a statement about Guy's hospital.

2.43 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The subject that I am raising is of great importance both to what goes on in the House and to the views of millions of people around the country. More significantly, we are at the apex of a decision about the future of one of the world's last great wilderness areas—the Antarctic.

The British Government's role in the discussions about the future of the Antarctic is not only less than helpful, but positively dangerous for the protection of a fragile ecosystem whose destruction would have enormous consequences for the whole world. We have an opportunity to make a decision that the great wilderness area should be declared a wilderness park for the benefit of all humankind. In doing so, we could show our concern to preserve the wilderness area. Alternatively, we can go down the road of smash, grab and destroy, to which the minerals exploration charter, which the British Government are pursuing, would lead us.

The Antarctic has fascinated many people over many centuries. One of the greatest poems in English, "The Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, describes the voyage of Captain Cook in which he discovered for

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

Europeans much of the Antarctic. Coleridge gives a brilliant description of the fragile ecosystem in the Antarctic. He writes:

"And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald."

That is an evocative description of a beautiful and wild place.

Tragically, Captain Cook, although a wonderful ecologist who sought to preserve the ecosystems that he discovered and whose writings sought to preserve what he recognised, was killed because of a misunderstanding in the Pacific. Unfortunately, his discovery of channels into the Antarctic led to the destruction of many of the sea mammals there. It led to the whaling industry, which came mainly from Britain. The carnage of the whales of the Antarctic followed and the subsequent damage to the water ecosystem was incalculable. Some of the damage has been repaired by the growth of fish stocks but the whale is still, tragically, a seriously endangered species. The world is at last waking up to the wondrous nature of the whale and to the need to preserve it. However, we must recognise that in our destruction of the whale population, we are destroying one of the largest and most intelligent mammals on this planet. If we continue that destruction, it will lead to the whale's extinction. There is a lesson for us in our treatment of the whale and especially of the huge blue whale. If we allow that treatment to continue, we shall contribute to the destruction of the whole continent of Antarctica.

The history of the Antarctic reveals the acquisitive nature of mankind, which has gone to the area to take from it and to destroy it. However, some have sought to recognise the beauty of Antarctica and to preserve it. Others have sought to exploit it for the potential mineral wealth beneath it. We must recognise that much of the scientific work there has been valuable. Joe Farman's discovery with the British Antarctic Survey of the existence of the hole in the ozone layer was possible only because scientific research was being undertaken in the Antarctic. I stress that it was scientific and not commercial research. Similarly the discovery through drilling into the ice cap of the levels of impurity in the world's atmosphere 100 years ago, 500 years ago and 1,000 years ago was possible only because the Antarctic is an area of peace and of scientific discovery and because it is not an area of commercial exploitation—yet.

We should recognise that if we do not protect what is there, we are destroying not only an ecosystem, but the possibility of discovering more of the damage that human activity has already done to the world's environment—the air and the seas. We shall pollute and destroy for ever something that is incredibly beautiful and incredibly fragile. Antarctica is a dry place and a fragile ecosystem which is easily destroyed.

A fuel oil spill from a survey ship that was minor by world standards did enormous damage in the Antarctic. Damage has been caused through the construction of runways and bases and the bad management of some of the bases has also caused great damage. We should think of the consequences of the Exxon Valdez disaster, which was terrible for Alaska. We should think of the damage caused to the Gulf by the oil spills, which continue. If we translate that to the coldest part of the world, we find that there is less natural biodegradable action by the sea to resurrect what was there.

The Antarctic is a fragile place. That concern about the fragility of its environment led to expeditions and explorations and finally to the 1959 treaty, which was a remarkable document for its time. That treaty was signed at the height of the cold war by many nations which recognised the Antarctic as a place of peace, of scientific exploration and of the free movement and publication of all information discovered there.

But there have been ominous movements in recent years, leading up to the minerals convention of 1988. Those ominous movements saw the Antarctic not as a place of scientific research—a place to be preserved for its wonder and beauty for future generations—but as a place from which minerals could be exploited.

The British Government led the way in promoting the minerals convention and put through the House the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989, which included some fundamental changes in policy towards the Antarctic. I will explain two of those changes. For the first time, it was said that the exploration of minerals in the Antarctic could take place for commercial purposes and that the information gained from the exploration, being of commercial value, should be in the ownership of the mineral or oil company. Once we allow the exploration of potential mineral resources, as sure as night follows day, those who have invested millions in that exploration will want to exploit those resources.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the commitment and knowledge that he showed during the passage of that measure. I assure him that there is a fundamental divide between the Front Benches on this issue. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made it clear in Madrid on the eve of the conference that the Labour party agreed that this last wilderness should be a world park and that the next Labour Government would not be in any way bound by what the British Government decided at the Madrid conference. It is crystal clear that the position of the Government—what can only be described as a messy compromise—is unsustainable and has been fatally holed by the move by Japan announced earlier this week.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, which underlines the importance that the Opposition parties place on Antarctica. We believe that an incoming Labour Government would support the idea of a world wilderness park and would not allow the headlong rush, which the British and American Governments seem keen to pursue, in favour of the minerials convention and the environmental destruction that will result.

When the Antarctic Minerals Act first appeared in the House from the other place, little interest was shown in it, either in Parliament or outside. I strongly compliment the work of the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace in promoting discussion and understanding about the issue, resulting in the avalanche of letters that hon. Members have received. As a result, the Antarctic is, and will remain, a major issue and a crucial decision must now be taken.

The British Government's role in all this resulted in support for the CRAMRA initiative—the convention and the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities

When we promoted the idea of a world park in Committee and on the Floor of the House when the 1989 measure was debated, the Government said that the world park idea had little support and that its creation was not possible. They thought that the only way to protect the Antarctic was by the minerals convention.

I do not accept that. No one nation should seek to grab parts of the Antarctic for itself. An examination of the map of the area reveals that an amazing series of conflicting territorial demands are being made. Chile claims one bit, Argentina another, while another part is claimed by both. The United States claims some, as does Britain, and the list goes on. Virtually every piece of land that forms the Antarctic is claimed by some country.

We cannot allow the idea of territorial claims to get in the way of what must be done to protect the area. Nor can we hand the future of the Antarctic over to the world's oil and mineral companies. It must be settled on an international basis, and the only way to do that is to accept that it is a zone of peace, of non-military activity and of scientific research, so long as all the results of that research are published. Once we allow the idea of commercial ownership of the results of research to enter into the matter, we face serious problems.

At the conference in Vina del Mar in Chile last year, the British Government pursued their idea of a minerals convention, for which there was some support and some opposition. Thankfully, that conference did not decide to support the minerals convention or mineral exploration. Instead, its delegates deferred decision for an environmental assessment, largely promoted by the then Government of Chile, to the Madrid conference which is now taking place.

Matters have changed dramatically at the Madrid conference. Far from being alone and isolated, as New Zealand and Australia were to begin with in their support of world park, their proposal has now come much more into the mainstream of discussion. New Zealand and Australia fully support the idea of a world park, as do a number of other countries, including France. That is important because the power of those countries in support of that idea are considerable.

A large majority of countries have basically supported the notion of a world park or, at least, a long moratorium on mining activities. That majority includes the Soviet Union, which now appears, in the words of President Gorbachev, to support the idea of the protection and preservation of the continent rather than its destruction and exploitation. Among those countries which apparently have the least concern for the environment of the Antarctic are Britain and the United States. It is important that the British Government put on record today their exact intention and what they are doing at the Madrid conference.

The case for a world park is overwhelming. If we turn our backs on the idea of a world park, we shall get mineral exploration, with companies rushing in in Klondike-like competition—perhaps not this year or next year, but in five or 10 years' time. Those companies will be more concerned about what they can get out of the ground of the Antarctic than about protection of the fish stocks, the atmosphere and the land on which they are working. First and foremost at stake for those companies will be commercial interests, and scientific research will take second place. Research into the effects of the pollution of the air over centuries is not of commercial interest, whereas the exploration of oil, coal, manganese, tin and other minerals is. Therefore, there will be a gradual twist and the destruction will continue for a long time.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is not there a risk of military conflict arising if there are disagreements about the claims made under the minerals convention?

Mr. Corbyn: My right hon. Friend makes a valid point because, while the 1959 treaty debars military activity and the deployment of forces in the Antarctic, it is unclear who could give the authority for mineral exploration. Clearly, national Governments would want to support what they would perceive to be the interests of nationally owned or nationally recognised oil and mineral exploration companies. Then the potential danger of military action in the Antarctic, which my right hon. Friend rightly exposed, becomes a much more serious threat.

My case is perfectly simple and is, I believe, strongly and widely supported by millions of people around the country. The executive director of Greenpeace, Lord Melchett, sent a letter to a Foreign Office Minister this week stating:

"In your letter to MPs on 25 March 1991, you said: 'We now believe that consensus may be achieved through a moratorum on mineral prospecting and exploitation activities and we intend to promote this with our Treaty partners.' In fact, in Madrid, your representative said in his opening statement to the meeting, that the UK Government's preferred position was to see the minerals regime, CRAMRA, enter speedily into force, that the Government believe an unqualified ban on mining is irrational, and that you are upset at the rejection by other nations of the minerals regime."

The letter concludes:

"Further, if you are genuinely interested in consensus, I challenge you to say that you welcome the Japanese change of heart, and their statement that: It is important that all the Consultative Parties undertake strenuous efforts to reach consensus on the regulation of mineral resources activities at the Madrid meeting. Based on this consideration, the delegation of Japan is now in favour of a prohibition of mineral resource activities . . . (for) an indefinite period."

Millions in this country and many more around the world see that as a decision of great importance, because we are saying that we can no longer look on every corner of the world as a place to exploit for minerals. Instead, we should look to stop, protect and learn from what is there. People see the Madrid conference as a possibility of the world turning a corner on environmental and ecological issues. The Government are among those who are obstructing the wishes of millions of people to preserve Antarctica as a wilderness park for future generations. I hope that the opportunity provided by this debate will persuade the Government to say that they, like the Japanese, have had a change of heart and will now support the concept of a world wilderness park in Antarctica.

3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on raising this subject, about which he knows a great deal, at this timely moment. As he said, the meeting in Madrid that is considering these matters will continue until 30 April. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall move rather fast, as I wish to put the Government's position on the records before I sit down.

The future of Antarctica is a matter of considerable and justifiable public concern, with which the Government are in full accord. The meeting in Madrid will be an important

[Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd]

stage in developing a consensus for the protection of Antarctica. I emphasise the word "consensus" because there can be no way forward without consensus. It is from that premise that our policy on Antarctica stems.

Our exploration and scientific work in the area is second to none. As the hon. Gentleman said, we have been involved in that part of the world for many years. Britain was first involved this century in 1908, and we were prominent in the drafting of the Antarctic treaty, which came into force in 1961, and to which the hon. Gentleman paid tribute. That treaty forms the heart of the Antarctic treaty system that manages, by consensus, all Antarctic affairs. It developed as a mechanism to deal with the escalating quarrels about the exercise of sovereignty in the Antarctic following the second world war. Its achievements have been substantial. Geo-strategic and sovereignty considerations together with super-power rivalry, were all factors that the treaty system had to encompass and tame.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall give way, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not seek to intervene again.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Government now give an undertaking to release to the Public Record Office all Cabinet discussion documents relating to mineral exploration and military activities in the Antarctic, rather than hiding behind the 50-year rule, as they are now doing?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman takes me by surprise. I cannot give such an undertaking—indeed, it would not be possible to do so in an Adjournment debate.

Later, the treaty also had to weather the conflicts that emerged in the north-south domain with proposals that would allow the continent to be exploited. For 30 years, it has proved itself effective in fulfilling its objectives. As an example of long-term international co-operation and collaboration, it is unparalled. For that reason, the maintenance of the Antarctic treaty system is the cornerstone of British policy in Antarctica.

For much of the treaty's 30-year existence, public interest in Antarctica has been limited, while a good deal of valuable work has been carried out by scientists, especially in the conservation of marine resources. The hon. Gentleman touched on that. We both know that the situation has changed dramatically. Public opinion is now seized of the importance for the whole world of Antarctica. Much of that attention is due to the excellent scientific work of the British Antarctic Survey. We know that the existence of the hole in the ozone layer was first brought to the attention of the world by that survey. Britain has long foreseen the need for environmental protection in Antarctica.

Although the environmental provisions in the existing Antarctic treaty system are far reaching, we believe that they need further strengthening to bring them into line with what we now know about environmental protection. We also recognise that a number of threats to Antarctica need to be dealt with as a priority. That includes not only mineral activity, although that aspect has now taken the limelight and is the focus of public attention. Debates on a ban on mineral activities failed to lead to agreement amongst Antarctic treaty consultative parties, and so later we were one of the prime movers in proposing a convention on minerals to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

In supporting the minerals convention, we argued against those who wished to retain the right to mine unilaterally and insisted that there were strict environmental safeguards. That was the purpose of our being involved in proposing the convention.

Six years later as the hon. Gentleman said, the convention was adopted by consensus after hard negotiation. We considered it to be a breakthrough. The convention was signed by 19 countries, including the United Kingdom, and would have prohibited the exploration and development of mining in Antarctica, unless agreed by all parties. In effect, it would have been an indefinite ban on mining, since any member could have vetoed indefinitely any application to mine.

However, it is now recognised that we are in a different position and we wish to pursue consensus. By imposing a legal framework to deal with any application for mineral activity that might be approved, those 19 countries which had signed the convention believed that the door had been opened just enough to encourage countries that might consider mineral exploration at some time in the future to abide by the rules. The signatories believed that a simple no to any mineral activity permanently would be in danger of being ignored completely, leading to an unregulated free-for-all. However, we now accept that there will not be a consensus on the basis of that convention and, as we wish to seek consensus, we are prepared to consider other ideas. As the hon. Gentleman said, just one year later, a number of countries, following Australia and France, announced that they would not sign.

For that reason, we moved quickly to call a meeting to discuss comprehensive measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment. The first session of meetings on this subject was held initially in Chile last November. The second is the current meeting in Madrid.

At the meeting in Chile, we proposed an environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty, which was to form a broad framework on environmental protection, to be supplemented by annexes dealing with individual topics. This was to deal with the most immediate problems. Our environmental protocol approach was the one which found favour with the majority of the delegations. For it is of gravest concern to us and to them that significant progress should be made on the threats from marine pollution, tourism and waste disposal. The hon. Gentleman mentioned damage to that delicate environment caused by oil pollution, and I entirely endorse what he said.

The British Antarctic Survey is also involved in an extensive clean-up of British bases—no mean feat when wastes accumulated over many years, in the days when everyone was less environmentally aware. Little publicity is given to the efforts of the British Antarctic Survey in cleaning up Antarctica, but on this question also Britain's record is second to none. When compared with all those immediate threats of pollution to the Antarctic environment, the threat from mineral activity begins to take on a less immediate perspective.

The exploitation of minerals, if it is ever to take place, is for the far future, for no one knows whether there are any viable mineral deposits in Antarctica. No one knows whether they can mine, no one has the technology and no one has yet shown any inclination to do so. We always

recognised that the discovery of abundant minerals in Antarctica would have a profound effect on the operation of the Antarctic treaty. Those countries that now demand a permanent ban on mining, but one supported by no legal safety net in the event of its collapse, are threatening the Antarctic treaty system. It is this weakening of that system that we fear most.

In the Antarctic treaty debates, various proposals have been made. Our concern is to ensure that the Antarctic treaty system deals with the mineral question before minerals are discovered. The way to do that, it seems to us, is to reach agreement that minerals activity can be carried out only if that would be compatible with the preservation of the Antarctic environment. Once we reach agreement on that, we can relax. Until we do so, we should have a prohibition on mineral activity. Let there be no doubt about that. At the meeting in Madrid, our delegation is promoting our proposal for a renewable ban, as was outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) in his letter to all Members of Parliament on 25 March.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) mentioned the word "park", which was also mentioned in public recently by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). It is still an ill-defined concept. We do not know quite what is being proposed. No one at the Madrid conference has raised it. It is not a matter for discussion. If concrete proposals were ever put forward, we should examine them, but while they are vague, we must be sceptical. For example, would a marine park prevent our legitimate continuing scientific work in the Antarctic environment? Such a concept would be unacceptable, if it were to include that. We do not know. The hon. Gentleman nods, but, with great respect, we have not had the details.

Mr. Anderson: No one has a closely defined position, but what is clear is that it would prevent mining operations. Do not the Government accept that their position has been wholly undermined as, kicking and screaming, they move from compromise to compromise? The Government's position, as they approach Madrid, has now been undermined by the switch in Japanese policy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question because I must finish my remarks. However, he ought to look at the Japanese proposals most carefully before he draws complete and clear-sighted conclusions from them.

Our position does not, we believe, create expectations of the inevitability of mining in the future. Rather, it recognises that it may indeed be a possibility and that we should have a plan to cope with it. That is realism rather than fanciful idealism. Common sense tells us that this must be right.

Our objective is most certainly the protection of the Antarctic environment. In order to achieve it, we must ensure that the Antarctic treaty parties return to consensus as soon as possible. It is no use proceeding unilaterally. That is our objective. Our delegation at Madrid is working to achieve that precise consensus. I hope that the House will support it.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 15 April 1991

TRANSPORT

Executive Agencies

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has identified any further candidates within his Department for executive agency status under the "next steps" programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have decided that the Transport and Road Research Laboratory should become a candidate for executive agency status under the "next steps" initiative.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *219*, on the marine pollution control unit in the Gulf, if he will make a statement on the results of the MPCU's actions in co-ordination of commercial offers of counter-pollution personnel and equipment from British companies.

Mr. McLoughlin: The purpose of the marine pollution control unit's co-ordinating activities has been to alert prospective customers in the Gulf to what counter-pollution equipment and personnel are available from British companies. Thereafter, it is for customers to take up whatever offers, if any, they wish to pursue. To date, three contracts have been let to British companies as the result of the actions—one by the Department of the Environment and two by the International Maritime Organisation. These are:

a. *DOE*
DESMI Engineering Ltd, of Newcastle under Lyme. The supply of six Heavy Duty Oil Skimmers. These were presented to the Government of Bahrain by HMG as described in my answer of 21 March.

b. *IMO*
(1) Alba International Ltd, of Aberdeen. Clean-up feasibility study for Musallamiyah Bay. An area of ecological importance given high priority by the Saudi Arabian Government.
(2) Alba International Ltd., of Aberdeen. Clean-up of the coastline of Karan Island, off the Saudi Arabian coast. The most important breeding ground in the Gulf for Green Turtles.
Both IMO contracts are being funded from the IMO Gulf fund to which a number of countries have contributed, including the United Kingdom.

Cars (Fuel Efficiency)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's projections of the change in the average fuel efficiency of cars between 1991 and 1996.

Mr. Chope: Improvements in the fuel efficiency of vehicles that have occurred in past years are now increasingly reflected in the overall vehicle fleet. The Government do not make projections of fuel economy for vehicles. Such improvements will depend on motorists' demands for more fuel-efficient vehicles and on the ability of manufacturers to respond.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that an environmental assessment is carried out of the various route options for the channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

Mr. Freeman: Environmental considerations form part of the British Rail's assessment of the route options for the channel tunnel rail link.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assumptions about toll rate and its rate of increase underlay the oral statement by the Minister of State on 14 January, *Official Report*, column 644, that current forecasts indicated that tolling for concessionaires for the second Severn bridge would not be necessary for more than 21 or 22 years; and what were the underlying assumptions about future traffic growth;

(2) by what date at the rate currently envisaged for 1992 under the current assumptions indicated in the oral statement by the Minister of State, *Official Report*, 14 January, column 644, payment for the Severn bridge will be completed; and what the annual toll income would be in the final year at constant prices;

(3) on the basis of current assumptions about traffic growth on the second Severn bridge and toll levels for 1992 indicated in the oral statement by the Minister of State on 14 January, *Official Report*, column 644, what at constant prices is the forecast annual income from tolls for each year from 1992 until the bridge is paid for.

Mr. Chope: The forecast that the concessionaire's actual tolling period for the Severn bridges would be 21 or 22 years, within the 30 year maximum allowed, was based on the toll levels set out in the Severn Bridges Bill, indexed for inflation in accordance with the provisions of the Bill. The forecast was based on the concessionaire's assumptions about future traffic growth, which were approximately as follows:

	Per cent. Per annum
1992-1995	2·7
1996-2000	2·4
2001-2005	2·2
2006-2010	2·0
2011-2013	1·8

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how the costs of operating the Severn bridge, excluding costs arising from original design faults, have moved relative to the retail prices index since the bridge was opened;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of the costs, excluding those arising from original design faults, of operating the Severn bridge in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The total cost of operating the Severn bridge in 1967-68, the first full year, was £1·032 million or £7·071 million at 1988-89 prices. This compares with a

total cost of £12·753 million in 1988-89, the last full year for which figures are available. A breakdown of the figures is published in the Severn bridge accounts. The figures include the costs of toll collection, servicing debts, strengthening work to allow for vehicular loadings into the next century, and maintenance to make good general wear and tear normal for a structure of this size and age. The original design complied fully with the requirements of that time.

Trunk Roads

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the occasions in the last 10 years where one of the routes listed in the public consultation on a trunk road scheme went through or within 100 m of a site of special scientific interest but where the final route chosen did not;

(2) if he will list the trunk road schemes constructed through or within 100 m of a site of special scientific interest in the last 10 years;

(3) if he will list the occasions in the last 10 years where the draft line order of a trunk road scheme went through or within 100 m of a site of special scientific interest but where the confirmed line order did not.

Mr. Chope: This information could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. Every effort is made to keep trunk roads away from sites of special scientific interest. Where this is not possible we take particular care that the routes chosen do as little damage to the environment as practicable.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state *(a)* the average duration, in days, of a public inquiry into a trunk road scheme, *(b)* the average cost per day of holding a public inquiry into a trunk road scheme and *(c)* how many person days are spent by officers of his Department on public inquiries each year.

Mr. Chope: In the financial year 1990-91, the average duration was 16 days. More than half took less than 10 days, and a third less than five days.

Accurate costs to the Department of these inquiries, including consultants' fees and costs, are not identified separately from total scheme preparation cost. Inspectors' costs, which can be identified, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Similarly, the amount of staff time, where it could separately be identified, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Shipping Accidents

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the recommendations in the marine directorate's report, "The Human Element in Shipping Casualties" (i) have been implemented, (ii) it is intended to implement and to what timetable and (iii) will not be acted upon; and for what reasons.

Mr. McLoughlin: "The Human Element in Shipping Casualties" research project was designed primarily to aid the identification and recording of the human element in future accident investigations and to assess the feasibility of preventive measures. The marine accident investigation branch is generally in sympathy with the tenor of the recommendations covering investigation procedures and is adapting its methods accordingly. The report has been submitted to the International Maritime Organisation where it will be discussed by the maritime safety committee in May. The Department will consider its further actions in the light of those discussions.

Highway Cleaning

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he has made for ensuring that the cost provision of cleaning roads and embankments, currently the responsibility of highway authorities, is transferred to those authorities due to take over responsibility for road cleaning on 1 April under the Environmental Protection Act.

Mr. McLoughlin: The control totals for highway maintenance and all other services provided for 1991-92 in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) as amended by the Revenue Support Grant Distribution (Amendment) Report (England) take account of the clarification of responsibility for street-cleaning for non-highway purposes brought about by the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

National Road Traffic Forecasts

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the terms of reference of the commission given to the MVA Consultancy to review the 1989 national road traffic forecasts.

Mr. Chope: The MVA Consultancy has not been commissioned to review the 1989 national road traffic forecasts. Those forecasts remain the best available view. The MVA commission is for a technical review of methodology, which in this field, as in others, needs tc be reviewed from time to time to see whether further improvements can be made.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mammals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a code of practice to ensure that scientific procedures involving the dissection of mammals are not carried out within sight, sound or smell of other mammals.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Home Office "Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Animals Used in Scientific Procedures"—1989; HC107—specifies that

"major surgery and euthanasia should not be performed in rooms where animals are normally housed or where other conscious animals are undergoing procedures".

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases related to non-payment of the poll tax in Blyth valley have been dealt with by the magistrates court.

Mr. John Patten: In the period 1 April to 31 December 1990, Blyth valley magistrates court issued 15,478 summonses in community charge enforcement proceedings and made 12,451 liability orders.

Charity Commissioners

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the relevant biographical details of each of the charity commissioners which he took into account when making their appointments.

Mr. John Patten: In appointing the commissioners, my right hon. Friend took into account the range of their experience and the knowledge and skills which they could bring to the work of the commission.

Trespassers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has concluded his review of section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have completed our review of section 39 and we expect to announce our conclusions very soon.

Jet Skis

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) *Official Report*, 22 February, column *277*, on powers of local authorities in respect of control of the operation of waterborne jet ski machines, whether he proposes to increase such powers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans at present to introduce legislation to increase authorities' powers in this area. This is one of a number of safety related issues being considered by a working group on water sports safety which has been appointed by the Minister for Sport. I understand that it will report its conclusions this summer.

Poll Tax Rally

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the anti-poll tax march and rally in central London on 23 March with particular regard as to how many officers were deployed and at what cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The policing of demonstrations in the Metropolitan police area is an operational matter for the Commissioner. I understand from him that 4,950 officers were deployed to police the demonstration on 23 March against the community charge and that the additional cost of policing the event, including catering and transport costs, is estimated at around £205,000.

Prisons

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the White Paper on the Government's legislative proposals arising out of the Woolf report.

Mrs. Rumbold: The White Paper to chart the future direction of the prison service in England and Wales is being prepared for publication later this year.

Armley Prison

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will put in the Library a copy of the report of the governor of Durham prison on his inquiry into prisoners moved from Hull to Armley.

Mrs. Rumbold: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the report of an investigation into allegations made by certain prisoners transferred from Her Majesty's prison Full Sutton to Her Majesty's prison Leeds in 1988. This report was prepared for internal purposes only and we do not plan to make it more widely available.

Miscarriages of Justice

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, for each of the last four years, he will list the sums of money that have been paid by his Department as compensation for miscarriages of justice involving wrongful imprisonment; and for each sum if he will give the length of the term of imprisonment served.

Mr. John Patten: The following information relates to payment of compensation in respect of imprisonment as a result of wrongful conviction, and is based upon the date on which the final payment of compensation was made. A number of interim payments, pending final assessment of compensation, have also been made during the period. The amounts shown are inclusive of any previous interim award.

Year	*Amount of compensation paid in resolved cases £*	*Period of detention in custody*
1987	23,830	15½ months
	38,100	6¼ years
	20,850	2½ years
	34,350	3 years
	2,449	1½ months
	10,701	12 months
	1,342	1 month
	30,656	21 months
1988	25,357	2¾ years
	18,604	16 months
	12,000	13½ months
1989	5,805	2 months
	10,425	15 months
	30,709	6 months
	8,230	3 months
	6,345	4½ months
	6,344	3 months
	2,494	2 weeks
	7,125	7 months
1990	7,650	3 months
	33,750	17 months
	17,315	20 months
	6,156	3 months
	8,250	7 months

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he uses when considering whether to recommend the royal prerogative of mercy to grant a remission of sentence *(a)* on grounds affecting the original sentence and *(b)* on other grounds.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend considers recommending the exercise of the royal prerogative of

mercy in cases where *(a)* the sentencing court were unaware or misinformed about matters which may have affected the sentence, no avenue of appeal exists and it is not possible or appropriate to refer the matter to the Court of Appeal; and *(b)* where developments subsequent to the sentence and unconnected with the circumstances of the conviction suggest that special remission should be granted as an act of mercy, for example where a prisoner suffers from a terminal illness or gives valuable assistance to the authorities.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used in assessing the quantum of compensation payable for miscarriages of justice *(a)* under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and *(b)* on an ex-gratia basis where there has been misconduct or default by the police or some other agency of the criminal justice system.

Mr. John Patten: The amount of compensation to be paid under both the statutory and ex-gratia schemes is decided on the advice of an independent assessor experienced in the assessment of damages. In making his assessment the assessor applies principles analogous to those governing the assessment of damages for civil wrongs. The assessment takes account of both pecuniary and non-pecuniary losses arising from the conviction and/or loss of liberty. The assessor also has regard, where appropriate, to the extent to which the circumstances leading to the wrongful conviction or charge might have been attributable to any action, or failure to act, by the police or other public authority.

Prison Leave

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to complete his review of the criteria applying to prison leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend hopes that the review will be completed and revised instructions issued to governors in the autumn. I will write to the hon. Member when the instructions are issued.

Poll Tax Payment

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions where a custodial sentence has been imposed on someone for not paying the poll tax.

Mr. John Patten: Information about the number of committal warrants issued in community charge proceedings in the period 1 April to 31 December 1990 is available in the Library; comparable information for the period 1 January to 31 March 1991 will be placed in the Library within six weeks of the end of the quarter.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he arranged to ask the post in Islamabad to issue a visa to Mr. Niaz Mohammed, born on 1 January 1962 (Ref: IMM/81672), to enable him to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A letter authorising the issue of an entry clearance to Mr. Niaz Mohammed was sent to the entry clearance officer at the British high commission in Islamabad on 11 April.

THE ARTS

Visits (Scotland)

31. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if it is his intention to visit Glasgow during the Mayfest and Edinburgh at the time of the Edinburgh international festival in order to view exhibitions and attend certain concerts and theatrical productions.

Mr. Renton: At present I have no plans to visit Glasgow during the Mayfest, but I do hope to visit the Edinburgh international festival. I am also visiting the Shetlands arts festival and the east coast of Scotland in early May.

North West Arts Board

32. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chair of North West regional arts board to discuss the impact of the poll tax on arts and libraries in the region in 1991-92.

Mr. Renton: No. The new chair of Arts Board: North-West was appointed at the beginning of this month. I intend to meet him regularly to discuss arts matters, as I have done with his predecessor.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

33. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the level of public subsidy granted to the Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra.

Mr. Renton: I am pleased that it was possible for the Arts Council to increase its grant to the orchestra this year by 17 per cent., including an enhancement fund award of £100,000. I was delighted to attend the launch of the Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra's appeal in Liverpool on 18 January this year.

Yorkshire Arts Council

34. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what objectives he has set the new chairman of Yorkshire regional arts council.

Mr. Renton: I have determined the overall framework for the new arts funding structure. Detailed objectives within this framework are a matter for discussion and agreement between the Arts Council and individual boards.

Arts Funding (North-West)

35. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has visited the north-west region to discuss arts funding with local authority leaders.

Mr. Renton: I discussed arts funding during my visit to Liverpool in January this year. In addition, I regularly meet local authority representatives from the north-west who are involved in arts policy in the region.

Reserve Collections

37. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his estimate of the value of reserve collections in public museums and galleries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Information on reserve collections in public museums and galleries is not held centrally. Such collections are usually available to researchers, scholars and any interested party.

Arts Funding

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will introduce direct regional funding for the arts.

Mr. Renton: No, as the Arts Council makes allocations to the regions out of its total budget, taking account of the plans submitted by each region to do so.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table, consistent with table 6 of his answer to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) of 13 December, *Official Report*, columns *457-58*, providing an otherwise identical analysis of the planning total.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table. The figures reflect the estimates of the planning total available when the data reported in the *Official Report* on 13 December were prepared.

Table 6—Planning total analysed by territorial area and function 1989-90

£ million

	Identifiable expenditure												
	England	*Scotland (total)*	*Programme 15*[1]	*Scotland other*	*Wales (total)*	*Programme 16*[1]	*Wales other*	*Northern Ireland (total)*	*Programme 17*[1]	*Northern Ireland other*[2]	*Total*	*Non-identified*	*United Kingdom*
Defence	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20,680·7	20,680·7
Overseas services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,537·5	2,537·5
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	658·8	215·6	198·1	17·5	93·1	83·4	9·7	181·6	178·1	3·5	1,149·1	913·8	2,062·9
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,783·6	640·3	254·8	385·5	360·9	163·9	197·0	749·0	[3]749·0	—	5,533·7	1,259·2	6,792·9
Roads and Transport	2,357·0	201·2	200·2	1·1	170·4	170·3	0·1	367·9	367·9	—	3,096·4	1,181·5	4,277·9
Housing	2,892·0	316·6	316·6	—	109·8	109·8	—	30·8	30·8	—	3,349·3	17·3	3,366·6
Other environmental services	605·1	75·8	70·0	5·8	75·6	70·6	5·0	218·0	218·0	—	974·5	512·4	1,486·8
Local government	19,673·9	4,373·0	4,373·0	—	1,775·0	1,775·0	—	—	—	—	25,821·9	25,821·9	
Law, order and protective services	3,495·8	476·1	443·1	33·0	176·0	—	176·0	697·6	666·2	31·4	4,845·5	1,631·3	6,476·8
Education and science[4]	4,402·2	592·1	314·2	277·9	188·4	30·6	157·8	899·0	899·0	—	6,081·7	902·3	6,984·0
Arts and libraries[4]	258·2	25·4	25·4	—	20·5	20·5	—	—	—	—	304·1	188·5	492·6
Health and personal social services	19,992·2	2,753·0	2,753·0	—	1,331·2	1,331·2	—	961·6	961·6	—	25,038·1	40·2	25,078·3
Social security	43,414·5	5,177·2	—	5,177·2	2,935·9	—	2,935·9	1,708·0	1,695·4	12·6	53,235·6	637·9	53,873·5
Miscellaneous[5]	−1·7	126·3	126·3	—	49·7	48·0	1·7	59·0	59·0	—	233·3	6,909·7	7,143·0
Privatisation proceeds	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−4,202·0	−4,202·0
Total expenditure	101,531·8	14,972·5	9,074·6	5,897·9	7,286·3	3,803·2	3,483·1	5,872·5	5,825·0	47·5	129,663·2	33,210·3	162,873·5

[1] Programmes 15, 16 and 17 relate to expenditure programmes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland covered by the Departmental Reports for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Cm 1515-1517).

[2] Responsibility for most expenditure in Northern Ireland rests with the Northern Ireland Office and Departments; this column includes certain expenditure in support of the agriculture and fishing industries, the costs of the NI Court Service and War Pension payments.

[3] Includes £305 million for costs associated with the privatisation of Short Brothers plc.

[4] Expenditure on arts and libraries in Northern Ireland is included with education and science.

[5] Includes contributions to European Communities and expenditure associated with general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when it was determined that changing the timing of building societies' payments of income tax was intended to raise extra revenue;

(2) on how many occasions Ministers have stated that the building societies income tax changes announced in the 1985 Budget and in subsequent amendments were *(a)* not to yield extra income and *(b)* to yield extra income.

Mr. Maude: Ministers have always made it clear that the changes in the way building societies account for tax on interest and dividends paid would not involve the payment of extra tax.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the disputed tax awarded to the Woolwich Equitable building society was *(a)* extra tax or *(b)* the original expected tax.

Mr. Maude: The tax involved was that applicable to investors' interest and dividends paid in the period between 1 October 1985 and 5 April 1986. The House of Lords decided that the Inland Revenue had power to make regulations bringing these payments of interest and dividends into account but not to charge tax at rates in force for 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on how many occasions the courts have ruled against the Government to the effect that the Woolwich Equitable building society should not have to pay extra tax following the 1985 Budget speech;

(2) if he will arrange for the judgments in the various Woolwich Equitable building society tax cases to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Maude: There have been two judgments in favour of the Woolwich Equitable building society in litigation over the application of the transitional provisions in the 1986 Building Societies Regulations.

In July 1987 the High Court held that the Inland Revenue did not have power to make regulations that sought to bring into account payments made by societies in transitional periods before 6 April 1986. That decision was reversed by the Court of Appeal in April 1989. In October 1990 the House of Lords concluded that the Revenue had power to bring the payments in the transitional periods into account but not to charge tax at the rates in force for 1985-86.

Copies of the judgments are available in the Library.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the current financial year, his estimate of the number of cases in which relief will be given on mortgage interest payments tax relief, the average value of that relief per mortgagor, and the cost of that relief, for each of the following total income ranges *(a)* up to £4,000, *(b)* £4,001 to £5,000, *(c)* £5,001 to £6,000, *(d)* £6,001 to £7,000, *(e)* £7,001 to £8,000, *(f)* £8,001 to £9,000, *(g)* £9,001 to £10,000, *(h)* £10,001 to £12,000, *(i)* £12,001 to £15,000, *(j)* £15,001 to £20,000, *(k)* £20,001 to £25,000, *(l)* £25,001 to £30,000 and *(m)* over £30,000.

Mr. Maude: Available information is given in my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 13 March, *Official Report*, at column *552*.

Invisible Trade

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) by what methods monthly invisible trade figures are calculated by other Community member states; and whether monthly invisible trade data produced by other Community Governments are directly comparable with Central Statistical Office statistics produced for the United Kingdom;

(2) what sampling method is used by the Central Statistical Office to calculate the monthly trade figures for invisibles; what changes in Central Statistical Office methods of calculating invisible trade figures have been made in each of the last 12 months; and what proposals he has to change the statistical method of calculating invisible trade figures.

Mr. Maples: Other Community countries, except the Irish Republic, require their residents to report individual payments to or receipts from overseas, usually above a threshold, and these data are used by the central banks to compile estimates of invisible trade. Only Germany, Greece and Spain choose to publish monthly invisibles estimates. The United Kingdom does not compile monthly figures of invisibles; the monthly figures shown in the monthly balance of payments press notice are either simply one third of the relevant reported quarterly figure or, for the most recent months, a projection. The projection for the most recent months is mainly an extrapolation from earlier quarterly estimates but it takes account of recent trends and of movements in exchange and interest rates. It is subject to considerable uncertainty.

All Community countries seek to compile invisibles estimates according to the guidelines on concepts and definitions issued by the International Monetary Fund. Therefore, the United Kingdom's quarterly estimates, which underlie the monthly calculations, are comparable with those for other Community countries.

The Central Statistical Office does not use sampling methods to calculate the monthly estimates of invisibles and it has not made any change to its methods for calculating these estimates in the past 12 months. The Central Statistical Office has no plans at present to change the way that it calculates monthly figures of invisibles, however this will be re-examined in the light of the recommendations of the review of balance of payments statistics. This is currently being carried out as part of the Chancellor's initiative on economic statistics which, among other things, is seeking to improve the quarterly estimates of invisibles. Details can be found in *Economic Trends* for March 1991, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate at constant 1990 prices of the invisible balance in each year since 1979; and what is his estimate of the value of United Kingdom produced crude oil for these years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information relating to the volume of invisible trade is only calculated at 1985 prices and only for services. Estimates for exports and imports of services at 1985 prices for the years 1979 to 1989 can be found in table 4.1 of the Pink Book "United Kingdom Balance of Payments" which is available in the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office database which can be accessed through the Library. An estimate for 1990 will be included in the 1991 Pink Book, to be published in the summer.

The estimates of the value of United Kingdom produced crude oil, including natural gas liquids, for the years 1979 to 1990 are as follows:

	£ billion (current prices)
1979	5·7
1980	8·9
1981	12·3
1982	14·4
1983	17·0
1984	20·6
1985	19·9
1986	9·3
1987	9·9
1988	7·2
1989	7·3
1990	[1]8·6

[1] Provisional.

Earnings

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of real take-home pay for a married man with two children who is on half male average earnings since 1978-79 each year to the latest date available.

Mr. Maude: The figures are given in the table.

Growth in real take home pay for married man with two children on half male average earnings:

1978-79 to:	*Per cent.*
1979-80	2·8
1980-81	2·5
1981-82	−0·6
1982-83	0·6
1983-84	5·6
1984-85	9·8

1978-79 to:	Per cent.
1985-86	11·2
1986-87	15·2
1987-88	19·8
1988-89	23·1
1989-90	24·4
1990-91	24·5
1991-92	29·3

Notes to table:

(1) Real take home pay is taken to include child benefit to allow comparability with 1978-79 when support for families with children was given partly through child tax allowances.

(2) Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that no tax reliefs are received other than the standard allowances and that earnings are the only source of income. NI contributions are calculated at the class 1 contracted-in rate.

(3) Where determinants of take home pay such as NICs or child benefit have varied during the course of a year, the average value for the financial year has been used.

(4) Average male earnings are the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are assumed to be £307·90 a week in 1990-91 and £334·10 a week in 1991-92 using the Government Actuary Department's assumptions of 10 per cent. growth for 1990-91 over 1989-90 and 8½ per cent. for 1991-92 over 1990-91 as published in the 1990 autumn statement.

(5) Real changes are calculated using the average level of the Retail Prices Index in each financial year.

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, of 6 March, *Official Report*, columns *165-66*, taking account of the changes announced in the 1991 Budget and giving estimates up to 1991-92.

Mr. Maude: Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances, thresholds, and the restriction of mortgage interest relief to the basic rate are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1991-92 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1991-92. In practice, retention of the regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Average reduction in income tax per individual[1] in 1991-92 compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

Range of individual's income in 1991-92 (£)	Average reduction at 1991-92 income levels (£)
Under 5,000	130
5,000 to 10,000	350
10,000 to 15,000	640
15,000 to 20,000	910
20,000 to 25,000	1,240
25,000 to 30,000	1,600
30,000 to 40,000	2,190
40,000 to 50,000	3,470
50,000 to 60,000	5,740
60,000 to 70,000	9,050
Over 70,000	34,640
Total	970

[1] Individuals paying income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) of 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *559-62*, taking account of the changes announced in the 1991 Budget and giving estimates up to 1991-92.

Mr. Maude: Updated figures for 1990-91 and estimates for 1991-92 are given in the table.

Income Tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1990-91

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	1·81	22·69	43·57	85·34	127·10	218·00	333·91	467·55	734·83	1,135·75	2,472·15
NICS	7·75	15·27	22·79	37·82	51·88	62·92	62·92	62·92	62·92	62·92	62·92
VAT	—	14·23	19·66	30·51	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	24·01	28·13	36·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·56	76·20	114·15	190·04	178·98	280·92	396·83	530·47	797·75	1,198·67	2,535·07
Amounts, 1990-91 prices											
Income Tax	1·73	21·71	41·70	81·67	121·63	208·63	319·55	447·45	703·23	1,086·91	2,365·85
NICS	7·42	14·61	21·81	36·19	49·65	60·21	60·21	60·21	60·21	60·21	60·21
VAT	—	13·62	18·81	29·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	22·98	26·92	34·81	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·15	72·92	109·24	181·87	171·28	268·84	379·77	507·66	763·45	1,147·13	2,426·06
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	1·1	9·1	13·0	17·0	19·0	21·7	25·0	28·0	31·4	34·0	37·0
NICS	4·6	6·1	6·8	7·5	7·8	6·3	4·7	3·8	2·7	1·9	0·9
VAT	—	5·7	5·9	6·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·6	8·4	7·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	5·7	30·4	34·2	37·9	26·8	28·0	29·7	31·8	34·1	35·9	37·9
Married 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·52	22·40	43·28	85·05	144·21	177·85	411·49	545·13	812·41	1,213·33	2,549·73
NICS	11·39	18·91	26·43	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46
VAT	—	12·27	17·93	30·29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Other indirect	—	20·32	24·00	32·04	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	12·91	73·90	111·64	178·84	175·67	309·31	442·95	576·59	843·87	1,244·79	2,581·19
Amounts, 1990-91 prices											
Income Tax	1·45	21·44	41·42	81·39	138·01	265·90	393·80	521·69	777·48	1,161·16	2,440·09
NICS	10·90	18·10	25·29	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11
VAT	—	11·74	17·16	28·99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·45	22·97	30·66	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	12·35	70·72	106·84	171·15	168·12	296·01	423·90	551·80	807·58	1,191·26	2,470·20
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	0·9	8·9	13·0	17·0	21·6	27·7	30·8	32·6	34·7	36·3	38·2
NICS	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·9	5·4	6·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·1	7·2	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	77·7	29·5	33·4	35·7	26·3	30·9	33·1	34·5	36·1	37·3	38·6

Income Tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1991-92

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	25·92	46·80	67·68	109·45	173·57	307·21	440·85	574·49	841·77	1,242·69	2,579·09
NICS	11·39	18·91	26·43	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46
VAT	—	13·56	18·16	28·18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·79	23·39	33·43	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	37·31	98·06	135·66	202·52	205·03	338·67	472·31	605·95	873·23	1,274·15	2,610·55
Amounts, 1990-91 prices											
Income Tax	24·81	44·79	64·77	104·74	166·11	294·00	421·89	549·79	805·57	1,189·25	2,468·19
NICS	10·90	18·10	25·29	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11
VAT	—	12·98	17·38	26·97	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·98	22·38	31·99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	35·71	93·84	129·83	193·81	196·21	324·11	452·00	579·89	835·68	1,219·36	2,498·30
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	15·5	18·7	20·3	21·8	26·0	30·7	33·0	34·4	36·0	37·2	38·6
NICS	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	5·4	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·5	7·0	6·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	22·3	39·1	40·6	40·4	30·7	33·8	35·3	36·3	37·3	38·1	39·1
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	17·65	38·53	59·41	101·18	160·34	293·98	427·62	561·26	828·54	1,229·46	2,565·86
NICS	11·39	18·91	26·43	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46	31·46
VAT	—	12·47	17·47	28·38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·78	25·41	35·50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	29·04	90·69	128·72	196·52	191·80	325·44	459·08	592·72	860·00	1,260·92	2,597·32
Amounts, 1990-91 prices											
Income Tax	16·89	36·87	56·86	96·83	153·45	281·34	409·23	537·13	792·91	1,176·59	2,455·53
NICS	10·90	18·10	25·29	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11	30·11
VAT	—	11·93	16·72	27·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·89	24·32	33·97	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	27·79	86·79	123·19	188·07	183·55	311·45	439·34	567·23	823·02	1,206·70	2,485·64
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	10·6	15·4	17·8	20·2	24·0	29·3	32·0	33·6	35·4	36·8	38·4
NICS	6·8	7·5	7·9	6·3	4·7	3·1	2·4	1·9	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·2	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·6	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17·4	36·2	38·5	39·2	28·7	32·5	34·4	35·5	36·8	37·7	38·9

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1990-91

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	24·04	43·28	62·53	101·91	163·49	286·65	409·81	532·97	779·29	1,148·77	2,380·37
NICS	10·64	17·56	24·49	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	11·23	15·05	23·38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·08	21·27	30·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	34·68	89·15	123·34	183·99	191·77	314·93	438·09	561·25	807·57	1,177·05	2,408·65
—	—	—	—	—	—	—					
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	15·6	18·7	20·3	22·1	26·5	31·0	33·3	34·6	36·2	37·3	38·7
NICS	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	3·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·9	4·9	5·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·4	6·9	6·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	22·5	38·6	40·1	39·8	31·1	34·1	35·6	36·5	37·5	38·2	39·1
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	15·77	35·01	54·26	92·75	150·26	273·42	396·58	519·74	766·06	1,135·54	2,367·14
NICS	10·64	17·56	24·49	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	10·32	14·48	23·62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·98	23·19	32·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	26·41	81·87	116·42	177·10	178·54	301·70	424·86	548·02	794·34	1,163·82	2,395·42
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	10·2	15·2	17·6	20·1	24·4	29·6	32·2	33·8	35·5	36·9	38·4
NICS	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	3·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	4·7	5·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·2	7·5	7·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17·2	35·5	37·8	38·3	29·0	32·7	34·5	35·6	36·9	37·8	38·9
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·32	20·57	39·81	78·30	116·79	203·55	313·75	436·91	683·23	1,052·71	2,284·31
NICS	7·42	14·34	21·27	35·13	47·23	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56
VAT	—	11·74	16·25	25·27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	21·90	25·65	33·15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	8·74	68·55	102·98	171·85	164·02	260·11	370·31	493·47	739·79	1,109·27	2,340·87
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·9	8·9	12·9	17·0	19·0	22·0	25·5	28·4	31·7	34·2	37·1
NICS	4·8	6·2	6·9	7·6	7·7	6·1	4·6	3·7	2·6	1·8	0·9
VAT	—	5·1	5·3	5·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·5	8·3	7·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	5·7	29·7	33·4	37·2	26·6	28·2	30·1	32·1	34·3	36·0	38·0
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·27	20·51	39·76	78·25	135·76	258·92	382·08	505·24	751·56	1,121·04	2,352·64
NICS	10·64	17·56	24·49	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	10·06	14·77	25·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·45	21·79	29·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	11·91	66·58	100·81	160·79	164·04	287·20	410·36	533·52	779·84	1,149·32	2,380·92
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·8	8·9	12·9	16·9	22·0	28·0	31·0	32·8	34·9	36·4	38·2
NICS	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	3·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·4	4·8	5·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·0	7·1	6·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·7	28·8	32·7	34·8	26·6	31·1	33·3	34·7	36·2	37·3	38·7

Notes to Tables

(1) Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 national insurance contributions at the contracted-in rate.

(2) Since 1990-91, husbands and wives have been taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years, the table therefore shows income tax and national insurance contributions paid by a married couple as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60:40.

(3) In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowances, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children. (For 1991-92, the child benefit figure is a financial year average.)

(4) Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are estimated to be £307·90 per week in 1990-91 and £334·10 per week in 1991-92, using the Government Actuary Department's assumptions of 10 per cent. growth over 1989-90 and 8·5 per cent. growth over 1990-91, as published in the 1990 autumn statement.

(5) The estimates of indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. They are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range, the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report*, an analysis for the years 1984-85 to 1993-94, following the format of table 12.1 of Cm. 1515, of central Government support to local authorities outside the Secretary of State's responsibility.

Mr. David Mellor: The information requested, consistent with that given in the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement"—Cm. 1520—is given in the table.

Central Government support for local authority expenditure in Scotland provided by departments other than the Scottish Office

£ million

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93	[1]1993-94
Voted in Estimates									
Current grants within AEF[2]									
Industry, energy, trade and employment	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	—	—
Social security	9	9	10	10	12	11	12	10	10
Total	9	9	10	10	12	14	15	20	20
Current grants outside AEF[2]									
Agriculture, fisheries and food	3	4	4	3	3	8	1	—	—
Industry, energy, trade and employment	3	4	4	5	12	13	—	—	—
Social security	450	498	579	550	617	683	747	810	860
Total	456	506	586	558	632	704	749	810	860
Total current grants	465	515	596	568	644	718	764	820	880
Non-voted									
Net capital allocations									
Industry, energy, trade and employment	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roads and transport	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	—	—
Total	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	—	—
Total	467	517	599	570	645	719	766	820	880

[1] Figures for these years are rounded to the nearest £10 million.
[2] Aggregate External Finance.

Output Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of *(a)* the overall output and *(b)* the output per person engaged in each of the following industries, for the years 1979, 1980, 1985 and 1990, (i) agriculture, (ii) the steel industry, (iii) coal mining, (iv) the car industry, (v) the electrical goods industry, (vi) local government and (vii)the national health service.

Mr. Mellor: Estimates are not compiled on precisely the basis requested, but index numbers of output and of output per head are available for the following industry groups, on a 1985 = 100 basis, as shown in the table:

	Output				Output per head			
	1979	1980	1985	1990	1979	1980	1985	1990
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	74·8	83·0	100·0	104·6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Metals	118·5	90·0	100·0	121·2	68·1	57·9	100·0	135·3
Coal and coke	136·6	139·9	100·0	97·2	96·8	99·7	100·0	225·2
Motor vehicles and parts	131·1	113·3	100·0	120·9	78·8	73·2	100·0	132·3
Electrical and instrument engineering	79·5	77·8	100·0	125·6	65·1	65·4	100·0	132·8
Medical, health and veterinary services	n/a	n/a	100·0	102.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Figures for local government are not available.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the impact of performance-related pay.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Performance-related pay in the form of additional increments depending on assessment in annual reports now covers the vast majority of civil servants. Managers in departments have generally welcomed the introduction of performance-related pay as a means to attract and retain quality people and to motivate them to produce high sustained performance.

There are other ways in which pay is related to performance in the civil service. There is a special bonus scheme which departments can use to reward individuals or groups for particular achievements. In addition a number of agencies have introduced group bonus schemes which pay bonuses if staff beat targets for efficiency savings. Also the majority of industrial civil servants are covered by bonus schemes. All these schemes are designed to encourage efficiency and motivate staff.

Civil Servants (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants were employed in Greater London in 1980, 1985 and 1990; what is the projected number for 1995; and what is each figure as a percentage of the civil service as a whole.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Available information for the Greater London area covers civil servants employed in the London pay area, an area within an 18 mile radius of Charing Cross. The information for the years 1980, 1985 and 1990, is shown in the table.

Number of staff employed in the London Pay Area[1]

	Number in London	*Total Civil Service*	*Percentage of Civil Service as a whole*
1980	152,000	707,800	21·5
1985	126,600	619,600	20·4
1990	116,600	562,400	20·7

Source: "Civil Service Statistics".

[1] Non-industrial and industrial civil servants, full time equivalent (part-time staff count as half units).

No central forecasts have been produced for civil service staff numbers in 1995, to obtain the relevant data would involve a servicewide exercise at disproportionate cost.

Bloodstock (VAT)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of value added tax is charged upon bloodstock in the Republic of Ireland, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The VAT rates for bloodstock in Ireland, France, Germany and the United Kingdom are respectively 2·3, 5·5, 7 and 17·5 per cent.

Theatre Tickets (VAT)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now remove theatre tickets from liability to value added tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to alter the arrangements for taxation of theatre tickets.

Public Sector Pensions

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his policy in respect of the appropriateness of a contributory element in public sector index-linked pension schemes;

(2) what would have been the effect on the Exchequer, in the last financial year where figures are available, of a contribution by civil servants to their pensions at rates of 5 per cent, 7 and 9 per cent. of their salary;

(3) what representations he has received regarding the benefits in respect of expenditure and on other counts of introducing a contributory pension scheme for civil servants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government are satisfied that the contribution arrangements in the public service pension schemes which they control are appropriate. The value of pension benefits, including index-linking, continues to be a relevant factor in public service pay determination. Our policy is to provide a remuneration package, including pay, pension and other conditions of service, which is sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate staff of adequate quality. Public servants therefore bear their share of pension costs in two ways: by contributions from pay, and through pay set at levels which take proper account of the value of pension benefits.

Civil servants make an overt contribution towards the cost of family benefits but in the main meet their share of pension costs through pay being set at levels lower than would otherwise be appropriate. If civil servants were to meet the whole of their share of the pension costs by overt contributions, the consequence for the Exchequer would be broadly neutral. This is because pay would need to be adjusted in order to offer a similar remuneration package to employees.

Representations are made from time to time about the civil service pension scheme. The Government have no plans to alter the way in which civil servants bear their share of pension costs in the foreseeable future.

Supply Estimates

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list indicating the distribution of the 1991-92 supply estimates votes by size from the number under £1 million to the number over £5 billion, by £100 million steps.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested can be derived from table A.1 of the Summary and Guide to the 1991-92 Supply Estimates—Cm. 1454.

OECD

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development since December 1990.

Mr. Maples: The costs of the development assistance committee and its working groups are met from the contributions of member states to the overall OECD budget. The United Kingdom share of the costs of the DAC in 1990-91 was approximately £160,000.

Mortgage Annuity Schemes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals in the Finance Bill to increase the tax relief limit on mortgage annuity schemes for older people.

Mr. Maude: No.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many older people are currently benefiting from tax relief on mortgage annuity schemes.

Mr. Maude: Information on the number of outstanding home annuity loans qualifying for tax relief is not available and a reliable estimate could be provided only at disproportionate cost. About 2,000 new home annuity loans qualifying for tax relief were taken out in 1990-91.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the £30,000 limit on mortgage interest tax relief for loans used by older people to purchase annuity schemes.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of representations.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to encourage older people to raise money against their homes.

Mr. Maude: There are various schemes on the market for those wishing to release equity in their homes. They include interest-only mortgages, home income plans, home reversion schemes, investment bond schemes and roll-up loans.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has estimated the cost of raising the tax relief limit for mortgage annuity schemes for older people, from £30,000 to £60,000.

Mr. Maude: A reliable estimate is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make it his policy to place advertisements for the posts of trustee for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts in the appropriate national journals or newspapers; what method and timescale he proposes to adopt for making appointments to the foundation; and if he will place in the Library a list of trustees to the foundation, together with the date on which they were appointed;

(2) what measures are included in the draft articles of association for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts; if he will place a copy of the draft articles of association in the Library, and a copy of the final articles of association once these have been agreed; if he will list in full the bodies he proposes to consult before agreeing the articles of association; and if he will make it his policy to include in the articles of association details of the ratio of allocation of the foundation's resources between sport and the arts.

Mr. Mellor: The proposal from one of the pools promoters was for a foundation set up as a trust by all three member companies of the Pools Promoters Association. In the first instance, it will be for the association to consider the detailed terms of the trust deed although, as the Chancellor made clear in his Budget statement on 19 March, *Official Report*, column 175, we will wish to establish that these are satisfactory before we could agree to a cut in pool betting duty. The procedures for appointing trustees will similarly be for the members of the association, acting within the terms of the trust deed. I will discuss with the pools promoters how best to ensure that hon. Members can be informed of the details of the trust and of the names of the trustees.

Heliports (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the reasons why Her Majesty's Customs and Excise now require a heliport on Sea Container house.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise neither require nor are seeking a heliport.

Seafarers (Tax Incentives)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to extend to seafarers who work in the offshore supply and standby industries and serve equal periods at sea the concession announced in the Budget on tax incentives to citizens overseas in the merchant navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend's Budget proposal to extend the existing special tax relief for seafarers applies to United Kingdom resident seafarers working on ships overseas. The Government have no plans to extend the relief to seafarers on ships operating on the United Kingdom continental shelf, which is regarded as part of the United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland Customs Service

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the progress that has been made to date on proposals to decentralise work within the Northern Ireland Customs service.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have decided to relocate certain administrative VAT work to a new unit, which will employ around 100 staff, at Newry in Northern Ireland. Operations are expected to commence in late 1992.

Economic Growth (Statistics)

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table, for each year from 1979 to the present time, showing *(a)* the official Treasury forecast for economic growth in that year made at the time of the Budget, together with *(b)* the contemporaneous consensus of outside forecasts and *(c)* the eventual recorded outcome.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 March 1991]:*

Annual growth in real GDP (per cent.)

	Treasury Budget forecasts	*Consensus of outside forecasts*[1]	*Outturn*
1979	0·3	n/a	2·8
1980	−2·5	n/a	−2·0
1981	−2·0	n/a	−1·2

	Treasury Budget forecasts	Consensus of outside forecasts[1]	Outturn
1982	1·4	0·4	1·7
1983	2·0	[2]1·7	3·8
1984	3·1	2·5	1·8
1985	3·3	2·9	3·8
1986	3·1	2·4	3·6
1987	3·0	2·8	4·4
1988	3·2	2·7	4·2
1989	2·3	2·8	1·7
1990	1·0	1·4	0·5

[1] Average of outside forecasts prior to Budget forecast. Coverage and number of forecasts has changed from year to year.
[2] In January 1983.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of local income tax would be needed to yield the same sum as that required from the community charge in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The rate of local income tax needed would vary between local authorities depending on the budgeted yield of the community charge in particular areas, local income levels and the precise way in which the system operated.

Accounting Practices

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of applying the proposal to extend the period for which a company can carry back a trading loss from one year to three years to losses in accounting periods ending *(a)* on or after 1 April 1990 and *(b)* on or after 1 October 1990; and what are the reasons why the necessary legislation will be introduced only at the Committee stage of the Finance Bill.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The cost of applying the proposal to extend the period for which a company can carry back a trading loss from one year to three years is estimated at *(a)* £250 million in 1991-92 for accounting periods ending on or after 1st April 1990, and *(b)* £200 million in 1991-92 for accounting periods ending on or after 1st October 1990. The proposed legislation will be introduced at the Committee stage because it will not be possible to complete it in time for inclusion in the Finance Bill as published.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much income to the Treasury it is anticipated that the increase of 2·5 per cent. in value added tax for 1991-92 will raise.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is published in table 1.1 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1991-92.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was raised in 1989-90 from value added tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A total of £29,483 million. Further information is available in the 1989-90 report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the balance of the cost of holiday accommodation for which deposits have been received by hotels and guest houses as part of an advanced booking contract, will be subject to the increased VAT rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The increased rate of VAT will apply to any balance outstanding from the date of the rate change—1 April—on holidays booked in advance. This is because the normal tax point for the supply of a holiday is when the services are performed by the hotel or guest house. While an earlier tax point is created by the receipt of a deposit—advance payment—it applies only in respect of the amount of money paid over. Guidance in VAT publications make this clear, as well as covering the position when there is a VAT rate change.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the tourism industry on the effect of the increase in VAT on advance holiday bookings; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have received a number of representations. These have primarily concerned the need for a concession to be introduced whereby the old VAT rate of 15 per cent. would apply to any outstanding balances on holidays pre-booked before the date of the rate change, because otherwise the industry might have to absorb the increase. I am unable to accede to this request because of the existing tax point rules—which reflect EC law. The normal tax point for the supply of a holiday is when the services are performed by the hotel or guest house. While an earlier tax point is created by the receipt of a deposit—advance payment—this applies only to the amount of money paid over that time.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Association of British Travel Agents

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department has recently had with the Association of British Travel Agents about financial protection for British holidaymakers booking holidays through the Association of British Travel Agents agents.

Mr. Leigh: ABTA has requested financial assistance from Government to help meet its liabilities arising from the collapse of Sun Living Ltd. I have made it clear that I do not consider it would be appropriate for public funds to be used for this purpose.

Taurus

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition by the international stock exchange relating to Taurus to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has received such an application and I am pleased to say that approval has been given for an exhibition relating to Taurus from 1 to 5 July.

Coats Viyella plc

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he will make it his policy to take into account the level of gearing by Coats Viyella plc in mounting its bid for Tootal Group plc before reaching a decision on whether to allow this bid to proceed;

(2) what assessment he has made of the relative level of gearing of a merged company consisting of Coats Viyella plc and Tootal Group plc if the current bid for Tootal Group is successful as against that which would have obtained if the two companies had merged by agreement in 1989; and what weight he will give to this in deciding whether to allow the bid to proceed.

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the prospective gearing of the combined company if the acquisition of Tootal Group plc by Coats Viyella plc is successful and on how Coats Viyella plc intends to fund the consequential rationalisation costs of such a merger.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration he is giving to the respective EC market shares for named brand textile products for Coats Viyella plc and Tootal Group plc in his consideration of the proposed takeover; if he will make it his policy to take into consideration the extent of which Coats Viyella plc has acted in accordance with the required accounting procedures in declaring its annual results for the last financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: In reaching his decision on whether to refer the proposed acquisition by Coats Viyella of Tootal Group to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take into account all relevant aspects of the proposal, in the light of the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Carr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the figures supplied to his Department for the loss of profit made by *(a)* Coats Viyella and *(b)* Tootal Group plc from their respective United Kingdom manufacturing operations.

Mr. Redwood: No. In reaching his decision on whether or not to refer the proposed acquisition by Coats Viyella of Tootal Group to the MMC, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be taking into account the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. The director general's advice on merger references may contain commercially sensitive information, including financial information on the companies concerned, and is not made public.

Immingham Coal Port

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer the involvement of national Power and PowerGen in the financing and operation of the coal port development at Immingham to the Office of Fair Trading for consideration of the competition issues arising.

Mr. Redwood: Any agreement between the organisations concerned, if it is a registrable agreement under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976, is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. Any concerns in this respect should be put to the director general.

Parent Companies

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government policy is on safeguarding the trading positions of companies whose parent company has collapsed.

Mr. Redwood: Subsidiary companies are separate legal entities and do not necessarily encounter the same difficulties as their parent company. However, there are provisions within insolvency law that enable companies in difficulty to formulate plans for a return to solvency. These provisions are available to all types of companies, including subisidiaries.

East Timor

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he is prepared to publish in respect of the refusal of applications to export defence equipment to East Timor on grounds of their potential use against the civilian population in terms of numbers of such refusals, the proportion of applications or other illustrative figures.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the past 12 months, my Department has received no applications for export licences for goods consigned for East Timor.

Consumer Debt

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what figures he has regarding trends in defaults on credit cards and other consumer debt.

Mr. Leigh: There are no national periodic statistics of defaults on credit cards. The Central Statistical Office collects statistics on amounts written off by finance houses

and other specialist credit grantors under agreements with consumers. The amounts written off in each of the last five years were:

	£ million
1986	243
1987	259
1988	276
1989	328
1990	460

Consumer Councils

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the current members of the National Consumer Council, the Welsh Consumer Council and the Scottish Consumer Council, giving the relevant experience of each member; how many of the Councils are females; and what percentage of the total membership they comprise.

Mr. Leigh: The current members of the National Consumer Council (NCC), the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC), and the Welsh Consumer Council (WCC) are:

NCC:
Lady Wilcox (Chairman)
Ann Scully (Vice Chairman)
Rhiannon Bevan
Professor Kumar Bhattacharyya
Shiela Black, OBE
Anthony Burton, OBE
Professor Paul Fairest
John Hughes
Deirdre Hutton
Mary McAnally
Lady Anne McCollum
John Mitchell
Jill Moore, OBE
John Nelson-Jones
Josephine Turnbull
Alan White
Martin Wolf

SCC:
Deirdre Hutton (Chairman)
Winifred Sherry, JP (Vice Chairman)
Joan Aitken
Patricia Bolton
Patricia Cooper
Kim Donald
Peter Edmondson, OBE
Cowan Ervine
Bernard Forteath
Kenneth Gilbert
Christopher Harley
Mary Kidd
Gordon Smith
Mark Steiner

WCC:
Rhiannon Bevan (Chairman)
Nerys Biddulph (Vice Chairman)
Ian Edge
Dr. Arwel Edwards
Jane Lloyd Hughes
Irene John
Gareth Morgan
Ruth Parry
Lydia Stephens
Kenneth Thomas
Ian Thompson
Roderick Thurman
Charlotte Watkins

Information concerning the relevant experience of each member can be found in the annual reports of the councils. Copies of the latest reports for the NCC and WCC are held in the Library of the House and I have arranged for that of the SCC to be placed there. Details of new members will be available from the Library in the annual reports due to be published in July.

As at 15 April 1991, the figures for the number of females in each council, and the percentage of the total membership they comprise, were:

Council	*Number of women*	*Percentage of women on council*
NCC	9	53
SCC	7	50
WCC	7	54

Debt Defaults

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the percentage of consumer debt defaults directly attributable to financial difficulties caused by redundancy, long-term sickness and unemployment.

Mr. Leigh: This information is not available.

Iraq

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the United States Treasury's announcement on 1 April concerning companies and individuals in the United Kingdom and elsewhere said to be connected with Iraq.

Mr. Lilley: On 1 April 1991 the United States Department of the Treasury published a list of 52 companies and 37 individuals worldwide whom the Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control had determined to be owned or controlled by or to be acting or purporting to act directly or indirectly on behalf of the Government of Iraq. Sanctions under United States domestic law were applied the same day to these companies and people. The effect was to make all those listed "specially designated nationals", to freeze their assets in the United States or in the hands of United States nationals or corporations outside the United States, and to make any unlicensed transaction with them a criminal offence under United States law. Thirty-three of the companies and 13 of the individuals were said to be based in the United Kingdom.

The Government had become aware early in February that the United States Treasury was preparing for eventual publication a list of companies controlled by Iraqis, including companies based in the United Kingdom. Although my Department obtained a copy of a draft list, through our embassy in Washington, the United States Treasury published the list on its own authority. I am aware that some companies have already said that their inclusion was a mistake. If any company or individual based in the United Kingdom believes that it or he has been wrongly included, my Department should be informed. It has already taken up certain cases and any company which wishes to discuss its inclusion on the list with my Department should contact my officials without delay.

The Government fully share the determination of the United States administration to enforce United Nations

sanctions against Iraq, and in particular to prevent the export of arms to Iraq. We have taken the following key measures.

First, we are continuing to prevent the supply of goods to persons in Iraq, including companies controlled by Iraqi residents or Iraqi incorporated companies, or imports from Iraq in compliance with Security Council resolution 661. The legislation giving effect to the resolution applies to all persons and companies in the United Kingdom and to United Kingdom nationals and companies abroad. Compliance is carefully monitored. Very few breaches of this embargo have come to light, and these few cases are being pursued vigorously. The United States authorities have not alleged that the firms on this list have broken sanctions.

Secondly, we are continuing to maintain controls which have the effect of freezing the assets in the United Kingdom of persons and companies normally resident in Iraq on or after 4 August 1990, also in compliance with Security Council resolution 661. This embargo, too, is rigorously enforced.

Thirdly, for many years before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait exports of lethal military equipment to Iraq were prohibited by the Export of Goods (Control) Order. These controls, which apply to all persons and companies in the United Kingdom, remain in place, though they are in practice overtaken for the time being by the wider trade embargo introduced last August.

Export Representative Services

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the rate of usage by businesses of the export representative service in the case of *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* Canada and *(c)* West Germany for each month from March 1990 to date.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The information is given in the table.

Usage by businesses of the export representative service has been:

	United States of America	*Canada*	*West Germany*[1]
March 1990	7	2	7
April 1990	4	1	11
May 1990	5	2	12
June 1990	9	3	13
July 1990	4	1	14
August 1990	5	0	8
September 1990	6	2	5
October 1990	6	1	7
November 1990	5	4	11
December 1990	3	0	5
January 1991	3	1	12
February 1991	4	1	7
March 1991	3	2	10

[1] Unified Germany from October 1990.

Film Industry

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to make available the findings of the working party on the structure of the film industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The film industry working party has not yet completed its work. We shall consider when to make the working party's findings available after the report has been received.

Pharmaceutical Patents

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to publish his response to the European Commission's proposals for supplementary certificates for pharmaceutical patents.

Mr. Leigh: I am pleased to be able to make a statement indicating the Government's attitude to the Commission proposals for a regulation concerning the creation of a supplementary protection certificate for medicinal products.

The Commission proposes that medicinal products—pharmaceuticals—which have taken over four years to bring to the market following patent application should be eligible for a period of supplementary protection, equal to the amount of patent life lost minus four years, subject to a maximum extension of 10 years. The broad result is that most medicinal products would be assured of 16 years effective protection.

We fully recognise the importance of patent protection for pharmaceuticals. Medicines are costly to develop and often easy to copy. An innovative industry must have a proper opportunity to secure a fair return. The United States and Japan already provide for the extension of patent term for pharmaceutical products and we wish to see broadly similar arrangements in the Community to avoid any distortion of competition which might occur.

The Commission's proposal needs to be considered in the context of the pharmaceutical industry as a whole. The market exclusivity which would go with supplementary period of protection would delay the entry of competitors into the market. This could result in the cost of pharmaceuticals being higher than it otherwise would be. We need to strike the right balance between a proper reward for the innovator and the encouragement of a competitive market. We must also take into account the considerable cost of pharmaceuticals for the national health service.

In judging the right period of supplementary protection we need to look at the historical evidence. The average period of protection for new chemical entities in the 1960s was around 13 years. More recent evidence on the products that matter in terms of company profits shows a similar overall position, and the level of research and development remains high. We do accept however that there is evidence of further decline in effective protection for all products in the last decade.

Taking all factors into account, we have concluded that in the United Kingdom, at least, restoration of protection would be achieved by a supplementary certificate of the sort proposed by the Commission but having the effect that industry would be able to count on 13 years protected life subject to a maximum extension of five years. These figures would be more in line with United States and Japanese provisions and would prevent further erosion of the present effective patent term.

Finally we think there may be a case for reducing the period of supplementary protection if the proprietor has not been diligent in obtaining marketing approval. United States law contains such a provision.

Food Advisory Committee

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list the current members of the Food Advisory Committee and give the relevant

experience of each member; how many of the Committee are females; and what percentage of the total membership they comprise.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The members of the Food Advisory Committee are:

Dr. Ewan S. Page (Chairman) MA PhD BSc CBIM FBCS C eng FASA
Vice Chancellor Reading University.

Dr. Margret Ashwell Bsc (Hons) PhD FIFST FRSH
Science Director British Nutrition Foundation.

Mr. Dennis Cumming
Director of Quality Assurance, Safeway PLC.

Professor Douglas Georgala CBE PhD FIFST
Director of Food Research, AFRC and Director of the Institute of Food Research.

Dr. Tom Gorsuch OBE BSc PhD FIFST
Former Director of Research and Quality Control, Colmans of Norwich (Retired).

Professor Marian Hicks BSC PhD DSc FRCPath
Science Director United Biscuits (UK) Ltd. Group Research and Development Centre.

Mr. Roger Manley FITSA
Director of Trading Standards, Cheshire County Council.

Miss Patricia Mann FCAM, FIPA CBIM FRSA
Head of External Affairs, J. Walter Thompson Group.

Miss Jill Moore OBE
Member of National Consumer Council and Vice President of National Federation of Consumer Groups.

Dr. Bryan Nichols MSc PhD FIFST
Legislation and Health Policy Manager, Van den Berghs and Jurgens Ltd.

Mr. Ronald Nicolson M Chem A FIFST FIWEM CChem FRSC
Regional Chemist, Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst for the Regional Council of Strathclyde, and Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst for the Western Isles Island Council.

Mrs. Barbara Saunders BA (Hons)
Freelance Consultant on Consumer Policy, Member of the European Commission's Consumer Consultative Committee.

Mr. Tony Skrimshire CChem FRSC FIFST
Director, Purchasing and Quality Assurance, H. J. Heinz Company Ltd.

Professor Paul Turner MD BSc FRCP Hon FIBiol FFPM
Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Dr. Roger G. Whitehead BSc MA PhD FIBiol C Biol Hon MRCP
Director of the Medical Research Council's Dunn Nutrition Unit, Cambridge, UK and the Gambia, West Africa.

Five members are women, one third of the membership.

This information is published approximately every six weeks with the agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the committee.

WALES

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost of implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is estimated that the cost of implementation would be less than £2 million. It has been decided, as in the rest of Great Britain, not to implement these sections, but the situation will be reviewed carefully when the impact can be assessed of the wider reforms set out in the White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond"—Cm. 849.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the impact in Wales of the £140 reduction in community charge on the eligibility to claim housing benefit.

Mr. David Hunt: Community charge payers throughout Wales will benefit directly from the £62 million we have made available under the community charge reduction scheme and from the additional £300 million we have secured for the general reduction scheme which was announced on 19 March. The overall effect of these schemes, taken together with the realistic local government finance settlement we have made for 1991-92, is that the average charge payable in Wales will be no more than £95 before taking into account eligibility for community charge benefit. Eligibility to claim housing benefit is not affected by these arrangements.

Community Charge

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the community charge payments that will be demanded in every ward in Newport, West and East, incorporating recent changes including transitional relief and community council rates.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the table:

Community Charge Payments in Newport East and West: 1991-92

District	*Community*	*(1) Charge exc. Community Council Charge*	*(2) General Community Charge Reduction*	*(1)-(2)*	*Community Charge Reduction Scheme for Communities*	*Net Community Charge exc. Comm. Council Charge (a)*	*Average Community Council Charge (a)*	*Average Community Charge*
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Newport	*Average*	275	140	135	11	124	1	125
Newport	Allt-yr-yn	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Alway	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Beechwood	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Bettws	275	140	135	7	128	—	—
Newport	Bishton	275	140	135	27	108	—	—
Newport	Caerleon	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Coedkernew	275	140	135	15	120	—	—
Newport	Gaer	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Goldcliffe	275	140	135	28	107	—	—
Newport	Graig	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Langstone	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Liswerry	275	140	135	27	108	—	—
Newport	Llanvaches	275	140	135	0	135	—	—

District	Community	(1) Charge exc. Community Council Charge	(2) General Community Charge Reduction	(1)-(2)	Community Charge Reduction Scheme for Communities	Net Community Charge exc. Comm. Council Charge (a)	Average Community Council Charge (a)	Average Community Charge
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Newport	Llanwern	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Malpas	275	140	135	15	120	—	—
Newport	Marshfield	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Michaelstone-y-Fedw	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Nash	275	140	135	49	86	—	—
Newport	Penhow	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Pillgwenlly	275	140	135	34	101	—	—
Newport	Redwick	275	140	135	38	97	—	—
Newport	Ringland	275	140	135	3	132	—	—
Newport	Rogerstone	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	St. Julians	275	140	135	15	120	—	—
Newport	Shaftesbury	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Stowe Hill	275	140	135	35	100	—	—
Newport	Tredegar Park	275	140	135	0	135	—	—
Newport	Victoria	275	140	135	53	82	—	—
Newport	Wentlooge	275	140	135	46	89	—	—
Monmouth	*Average*	244	140	104	1	103	5	108
Monmouth	Caldicot	244	140	104	0	104	—	—
Monmouth	Magor with Undy	244	140	104	0	104	—	—
Monmouth	Rogiet	244	140	104	19	85	—	—

Note (a): Information on individual Community Council charges is not collected centrally.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total relief provided by the provisions of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill to those charge payers paying the standard charge in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Out of the total relief of about £300 million, standard charge payers will receive around £9 million.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answer of 7 March, *Official Report*, column *236*, on cancelled operations, when he will write to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I sent dated 12 April, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Press Releases

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many press releases have been issued by his Department each year for the past five years ended December 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department issued press releases for the Welsh Office and on behalf of other Government Departments as follows:

	Welsh Office	Other departments
1986	814	470
1987	779	564
1988	960	558
1989	815	511
1990	881	397

Local Authority Child Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales were received into local authority care where the specific cause was family homelessness, in every year since 1979 until the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The number of children received into care in Wales for the years ending 31 March 1979 to 31 March 1990, where the specific cause was that their family was homeless, is given in the following table:

During year ending 31 March	Due to Homelessness
1979	50
1980	47
1981	34
1982	35
1983	16
1984	15
1985	25
1986	10
1987	20
1988	14
1989	5
1990	18

Research and Development

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was his Department's expenditure to encourage research and development for each year from 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 27 March 1991]:* Expenditure on research and development by the Welsh Office since 1981-82, the earliest years for which figures are available, are given in the table.

Year	£ million
1981-82	1·6
1982-83	1·5
1983-84	1·3
1984-85	1·6
1985-86	2·6
1986-87	3·5
1987-88	1·9
1988-89	1·9
1989-90	2·4
1990-91	[1]2·7

[1] Estimated outturn.

I shall continue to attach importance to the encouragement of research and development in Wales.

Community Councils

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy in respect of the minimum number of years for which a community council in Wales should have been established before he is prepared to grant permission for its dissolution.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* I shall consider any request for permission for the making of a community application for the dissolution of a community council in the light of all relevant circumstances.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the names of community councils in Wales of which he has been notified regarding their dissolution.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* I have received copies of orders dissolving Vaynor and Rhoose community councils.

CIVIL SERVICE

"Next Steps" Agencies

38. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the progress so far achieved by "next steps" agencies.

Mr. Renton: This month the number of "next steps" agencies reaches 50 with over 200,000 staff working on "next steps" lines. The following table sets out the agencies and announced candidates. Demanding financial and quality of service targets are being set and delivered. They show that the initiative is succeeding.

Next steps—Executive agencies established as of 15 April 1991

	Number
Building Research Establishment	690
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	220
Central Office of Information[1]	730
Central Veterinary Laboratory	580
Chemical Biological Defence Establishment[2]	580
Civil Service College	210
Companies House	1,150
Defence Research Agency	11,700
Directorate General of Defence Accounts[2]	2,100
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	5,450
Driving Standards Agency	2,050
Employment Service	35,600
Forensic Science Service	580
Historic Royal Palaces	300
Historic Scotland	580
HMSO[1]	3,300
Hydrographic Office[2]	880
Information Technology Services Agency	3,350
Insolvency Service	1,450
Intervention Board	910
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	320
Land Registry	10,400
Meteorological Office	2,250
Military Survey[2]	850
National Engineering Laboratory	430
National Physical Laboratory	820
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	50
Natural Resources Institute	390
NHS Estates	120
Occupational Health Service	100
Ordnance Survey	2,500
Patent Office	1,150
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	70
Radiocommunications Agency	500
RAF Maintenance[2]	5,700
Rate Collection Agency (Northern Ireland)	280
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	320
Registers of Scotland	1,100
Resettlement Agency	510
Royal Mint[1]	1,050
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	230
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[2]	2,300
Social Security Benefits Agency	68,000
Social Security Contributions Agency	6,600
Training & Employment Agency (Northern Ireland)	1,700
United Kingdom Passport Agency	1,200
Vehicle Certification Agency	70
Vehicle Inspectorate[1]	1,650
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	70
Warren Spring Laboratory	320
50 in number	183,460
Customs & Excise[3] (30 Executive Units)	26,800
	210,260

[1] Trading Funds.
[2] Defence Support Agency. Figure does not include service personnel.
[3] Moving towards full operation on Next Steps lines following publication of Framework Documents.

Next steps—activities announced by Departments as under consideration as of 15 April 1991

	Number
ADAS Agency	2,500
Central Science Laboratory	340
Central Statistical Office	1,050
Chessington Computer Centre	440
Child Support Agency[1]	not yet known
Fuel Suppliers Branch	30
Planning Inspectorate	570
Pollution Inspectorate	230
Property Holdings	1,650
Public Record Office	430
RAF Training[2]	2,500
Royal Parks	600
Teachers' Pensions Branch	300
The Buying Agency[3]	120
Valuation Office	5,250
Youth Treatment Service	210
Ordnance Survey (Northern Ireland)	200
Social Security Operations (Northern Ireland)	5,000
18 in number	21,420
Inland Revenue[4] (excluding Valuation Office)	59,800
Total	81,220

[1] From April 1993 the Agency is estimated to require 4,500 staff, 1,500 of which will come from the Social Security Benefits Agency.

[2]Defence Support Agency. Figure does not include service personnel.
[3]Trading Fund.
[4]Moving towards full operation on "next steps" lines in accordance with the action plan of February 1991: 33 Executive Offices by April 1992, each with a framework document, sharper accountabilities and wider managerial freedom.
Staffing figures are based on staff in post 1 October 1990. Many other areas are under consideration.

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list in the *Official Report*, when each of the "next steps" agencies so far established will produce a report showing its results compared with the performance criteria laid down in its framework document.

Mr. Renton: Agencies will publish their annual reports and accounts as soon as possible after the end of the financial year. Those reports will include information on achievement of key performance targets.

Pay and Conditions

43. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met civil service trade union representatives about pay and conditions of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I meet civil service trade union representatives from time to time to discuss a variety of issues.

Agencies

44. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what consideration he has given to putting out agencies to private management.

Mr. Renton: Ministers continue to keep under review the basis on which Government services are provided. The feasibility of immediate privatisation has been considered and rejected in the case of all agencies created so far. It cannot be ruled out, however, that after a period of years agencies, like other Government activities, may be suitable for privatisation.

EC Nationals

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he plans to make changes to the legislation which governs the employment in the civil service of nationals of other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Renton *[pursuant to his reply, 20 December 1990, c. 295]:* I have today laid before Parliament, a draft Order in Council which, subject to approval by a resolution of each House of Parliament, will allow nationals of other member states of the European Community and certain members of their families to be employed in the civil service, in posts other than those posts which are part of the public service within the meaning of article 48(4) of the EEC treaty. The Order in Council makes similar provision in relation to the Northern Ireland civil service, thus ensuring that the same position is achieved in the whole of the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from international doctors about disease in Iraq.

The Prime Minister: We have received a number of reports about conditions in Iraq, notably that of United Nations Under Secretary-General Ahtisaari. We have announced a pledge of £20 million to be spent partly bilaterally and multilaterally to alleviate the human tragedy provoked by Saddam Hussein. We are also funding daily airlifts to the refugees at a cost of £1 million per week. These contributions are in addition to earlier substantial pledges to the International Committee of the Red Cross and United Nation agencies' appeals.

Chile

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister if, during the official visit of the President of Chile, the Government will offer improved terms of trade for Chilean exports, and increased transfer of technology and financial support for his programmes.

The Prime Minister: Chile will benefit from any market access concessions negotiated with the European Community during the GATT round. We increased our bilateral technical co-operation funds for Chile following the accession of President Aylwin's Government and are presently discussing a number of projects.

President Aylwin's visit will lead to closer links between Britain and Chile. I was able to pay tribute to the President's achievement in restoring and consolidating democracy.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister whether he is prepared to use nuclear weapons first in response to a conventional attack.

The Prime Minister: The 1990 NATO London declaration made clear that, while NATO will never in any circumstances be the first to use force, nuclear weapons will continue to fulfil an essential role in the overall strategy of the alliance to prevent war by ensuring that there are no circumstances in which nuclear retaliation in response to military action might be discounted.

Migrant Workers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards ratification of the new international convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and their families.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom does not intend to ratify the convention on the protection of migrant workers and their families.

Vehicle Theft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set up a joint working party of the Home Office and Department of Transport to investigate the possibility of designing cars to be more resistant to theft.

The Prime Minister: The Home Office and Department of Transport have investigated ways in which the security of cars could be improved and discussions are in progress between these Departments, and with the motor manufacturers, on how best their findings and recommendations may be implemented. Home Office crime prevention publicity, particularly during crime prevention

week this week, aims to increase awareness of the need for effective car security measures. My right Friend the Home Secretary published today a car theft index which allows owners to see which models are particularly subject to theft.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Imported Vegetables

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list those vegetables of temperate country origin whose importers represent more than 25 per cent. of United Kingdom consumption, together with values and percentages of importers as a proportion of domestic production;

(2) if he will list the value of lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, spring onions and radishes *(a)* imported into and *(b)* produced in the United Kingdom in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what is (a) as a percentage of (b).

Mr. Curry: The requested information is as follows:

	Imports		*Output*		*Imports (tonnage) as a percentage of*	
	'000 tonnes	*Value*	*'000 tonnes*	*Value*	*Home consumption*	*Output*
Vegetable		*(£ million)*		*(£ million)*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Asparagus	1·9	4·3	1·1	3·1	62	162
Beans	135·5	68·1	61·9	21·5	74	219
Celery	30·2	10·5	74·6	32·4	29	41
Cucumbers	62·5	41·0	87·4	37·8	42	71
Peas	28·1	12·6	222·5	50·4	27	13
Lettuce	77·8	46·3	193·8	67·8	29	40
Salad Onions	12·4	2·9	27·4	23·8	33	45
Sweet Peppers	41·5	39·2	2·5	2·3	95	1,633
Tomatoes	272·5	154·6	141·0	68·7	67	193

Notes:

i. Separate data are not available for radishes.

ii. The Channel Islands are treated as part of the United Kingdom for the purposes of overseas trade statistics but are not covered within the output figures.

iii. Estimates of output (production less on-farm waste) have been quoted as being the more comparable with imports.

iv. Peas and beans include dried peas and beans for human consumption.

Farm and Conservation Grants

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers he expects to benefit from his plan to drop the requirement that farmers applying for grants under the farm and conservation grants scheme must receive acknowledgment of their prior notification form before incurring costs on farm waste and traditional buildings projects.

Mr. Curry: All applicants for these grants would benefit from the simplified application procedures. A number of farmers who had previously been turned down for grant would also be in a position to re-apply when the rules are changed, but exact figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy that his working group reviewing the environmental impact of hill livestock compensatory allowances should meet in public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We are still considering whether existing environmental benefits afforded by HLCAs should be made more specific. We propose to consult all interested parties in due course.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will write to all local authorities requesting them to increase monitoring for BSE in slaughterhouses and livestock markets.

Mr. Gummer: No. The Government already have a fully effective system in place.

Milk

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of milk output in the EC and the level of consumption of milk and dairy products within the EC.

Mr. Curry: Dairy cows' milk production in the EC in 1990 was 109,102,800 tonnes—provisional figure. Consumption of milk and the major dairy products was as follows:

'000 tonnes	*1989*	*1990*	*[1]1991*
Liquid milk and fresh products	—	31,051·0	31,237·5
Butter	—	1,468·5	1,420·5
Cheese	—	4,621·9	4,719·9
Skimmed milk powder and buttermilk powder (including for animal feed)	1,130	—	—

[1] Forecast

Source: EC Quarterly Questionnaire and MMB (Dairy Facts and Figures)

Sugar

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of sugar consumption and sugar production within the EC.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission's latest preliminary forecast for the year ending 30 September 1991 put production from sugar grown within the Community at 15·9 million tonnes. Additionally, the Community is

forecast to import some 1·5 million tonnes from African, Caribbean and Pacific and other countries, most of which is raw sugar for refining. EC consumption of sugar from all sources is estimated at 11·8 million tonnes.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Service (Statistics)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will supply for each local education authority information on *(a)* the total revenue expenditure of the relevant council on all services, *(b)* the total revenue expenditure on all education services, *(c)* the total revenue expenditure on further education and sixth form colleges, *(d)* the percentage of item *(a)* represented by items *(b)* and *(c)*, *(e)* the total capital expenditure of the relevant council on all services, *(f)* the total capital expenditure on all education services, *(g)* the total capital expenditure on further education and sixth form colleges, *(h)* the percentage of item *(e)* represented by items *(f)* and *(g)*, *(i)* the total number of, whole-time equivalent, employees of the relevant councils, *(j)* the total number of whole-time employees engaged in providing the education services and *(k)* the total number of equivalent employees working in further education and sixth form colleges, and *(l)* the percentage of item *(i)* represented by items *(j)* and *(k)*.

Mr. Fallon: The readily available information is shown in the tables. The financial information is taken from authorities' spending returns and is for 1988-89, the latest year for which data are available. The information on numbers of employees is as collected by the joint staffing watch, and is for March 1990.

Information on further education and sixth form colleges is not collected on a comparable basis. Authorities' spending returns do not separate expenditure on sixth form colleges from that on other secondary schools. Information returned on further education colleges does not separately identify those institutions which subsequently transferred to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

Table 1
Revenue expenditure, 1988-89

LEA	Net current expenditure on all services	Net current expenditure on education	Education as percentage of all services
	£ million	£ million	Percentage
Barking	83·2	45·7	54·9
Barnet	143·7	79·1	55·0
Bexley	99·8	62·7	62·8
Brent	185·9	104·2	56·1
Bromley	130·4	73·3	56·2
Croydon	162·9	97·0	59·5
Ealing	189·8	99·8	52·6
Enfield	132·8	79·4	59·8
Haringey	147·8	79·6	53·8
Harrow	103·5	63·6	61·4
Havering	116·1	70·6	60·8
Hillingdon	128·2	69·2	54·0
Hounslow	123·5	69·6	56·3
Kingston-upon-Thames	68·8	36·5	53·1
Merton	86·6	45·4	52·4
Newham	163·6	85·1	52·0
Redbridge	113·2	62·8	55·5
Richmond-upon-Thames	75·4	37·7	50·0
Sutton	81·5	45·8	56·2
Waltham Forest	142·2	76·9	54·0
ILEA	1,001·7	950·5	94·9
Birmingham	547·5	312·1	57·0
Coventry	158·5	100·7	63·6
Dudley	136·2	88·0	64·6
Sandwell	163·5	102·9	62·9
Solihull	90·4	59·1	65·4
Walsall	133·4	93·1	69·8
Wolverhampton	141·3	88·6	62·7
Knowsley	96·3	61·8	64·2
Liverpool	290·4	171·1	58·9
St. Helens	96·6	61·7	63·9
Sefton	136·4	84·1	61·7
Wirral	173·6	108·5	62·5
Bolton	130·5	80·4	61·6
Bury	85·1	56·0	65·8
Manchester	281·9	164·3	58·3
Oldham	116·6	71·7	61·5
Rochdale	119·9	72·0	60·1
Salford	126·2	73·5	58·3
Stockport	132·3	83·7	63·2
Tameside	114·8	66·7	58·1
Trafford	101·4	62·8	61·9
Wigan	150·7	101·5	67·4
Barnsley	104·9	64·1	61·1
Doncaster	147·6	95·6	64·8
Rotherham	127·7	81·2	63·6
Sheffield	261·9	160·4	61·2
Bradford	277·0	170·9	61·7
Calderdale	105·7	62·6	59·2
Kirklees	196·8	125·3	63·7
Leeds	331·0	212·0	64·0
Wakefield	156·3	94·2	60·3
Gateshead	104·1	60·3	57·9
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	157·7	87·4	55·4
North Tyneside	108·0	64·1	59·3
South Tyneside	86·8	52·6	60·6
Sunderland	151·5	87·8	57·9
Isles of Scilly	1·4	0·9	63·4
Avon	449·7	258·9	57·6
Bedfordshire	257·1	163·9	63·8
Berkshire	321·9	195·9	60·9
Buckinghamshire	298·5	189·1	63·4
Cambridgeshire	288·9	183·0	63·3
Cheshire	461·5	286·1	62·0
Cleveland	329·6	196·2	59·5
Cornwall	202·5	120·8	59·6
Cumbria	253·0	149·0	58·9
Derbyshire	486·2	297·6	61·2
Devon	435·9	249·6	57·3
Dorset	263·4	151·0	57·3
Durham	295·5	178·2	60·3
East Sussex	282·2	153·1	54·3
Essex	698·9	431·9	61·8
Gloucestershire	240·1	146·3	60·9
Hampshire	671·9	412·5	61·4
Hereford and Worcester	284·8	174·0	61·1
Hertfordshire	476·1	297·1	62·4
Humberside	461·3	277·2	60·1
Isle of Wight	56·1	34·1	60·7
Kent	661·8	385·2	58·2
Lancashire	697·9	421·6	60·4
Leicestershire	438·6	273·7	62·4
Lincolnshire	260·0	154·9	59·6
Norfolk	312·4	185·7	59·5
North Yorkshire	311·8	193·8	62·1
Northamptonshire	276·4	171·5	62·0
Northumberland	136·1	92·5	68·0
Nottinghamshire	513·9	308·4	60·0
Oxfordshire	236·1	144·6	61·3
Shropshire	190·5	123·0	64·6
Somerset	208·2	128·7	61·8
Staffordshire	464·3	296·9	63·9

LEA	Net current expenditure on all services £ million	Net current expenditure on education £ million	Education as percentage of all services Percentage
Suffolk	266·4	163·5	61·4
Surrey	418·7	253·4	60·5
Warwickshire	230·3	142·4	61·8
West Sussex	276·8	157·7	57·0
Wiltshire	249·5	152·4	61·1

Table 2 Capital Expenditure, 1988-89

LEA	Total Capital Expenditure on all services £ million	Total Capital Expenditure on Education £ million	Education as percentage of all services
Barking	25·2	2·3	9·1
Barnet	39·7	5·1	12·8
Bexley	20·4	3·5	17·2
Brent	52·8	6·3	11·9
Bromley	46·7	6·9	14·8
Croydon	58·7	6·8	11·6
Ealing	N/A	N/A	N/A
Enfield	56·1	5·3	9·4
Haringey	N/A	N/A	N/A
Harrow	26·5	5·4	20·4
Havering	28·8	3·8	13·2
Hillingdon	43·4	8·5	19·5
Hounslow	38·6	6·0	15·5
Kingston-upon-Thames	28·0	9·0	232·1
Merton	28·5	3·3	11·6
Newham	58·6	7·3	12·5
Redbridge	N/A	N/A	N/A
Richmond-upon-Thames	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sutton	31·4	3·4	10·8
Waltham Forest	N/A	N/A	N/A
Birmingham	179·0	5·5	3·1
ILEA	30·5	30·3	99·3
Coventry	56·7	12·9	22·8
Dudley	32·3	4·2	13·0
Sandwell	65·2	2·2	3·4
Solihull	20·1	2·7	13·4
Walsall	41·6	3·2	7·7
Wolverhampton	37·2	3·9	10·5
Knowsley	31·0	1·6	5·2
Liverpool	84·0	10·8	12·9
St. Helens	15·5	2·4	15·5
Sefton	18·0	1·9	10·6
Wirral	40·1	5·3	13·2
Bolton	35·0	3·4	9·7
Bury	12·3	1·1	8·9
Manchester	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oldham	31·6	2·6	8·2
Rochdale	35·3	2·8	7·9
Salford	53·0	4·4	8·3
Stockport	24·3	3·3	13·6
Tameside	18·8	2·7	14·4
Trafford	18·0	1·6	8·9
Wigan	30·3	4·0	13·2
Barnsley	35·2	1·9	5·4
Doncaster	40·8	1·3	3·2
Rotherham	24·4	3·1	12·7
Sheffield	123·4	21·8	17·7
Bradford	54·4	12·1	22·2
Calderdale	17·3	3·3	19·1
Kirklees	35·3	5·9	16·7
Leeds	94·5	19·5	20·6
Wakefield	38·9	5·9	15·2
Gateshead	39·8	4·2	10·6
Newcastle	54·5	8·1	14·9
North Tyneside	34·0	3·2	9·4
South Tyneside	32·5	3·8	11·7
Sunderland	39·4	7·6	19·3
Isles of Scilly	·2	·1	50·0
Avon	28·6	9·7	33·9
Bedfordshire	23·6	5·5	23·3
Berkshire	56·5	26·1	46·2
Buckinghamshire	19·5	8·6	44·1
Cambridgeshire	48·4	17·1	35·3
Cheshire	70·9	28·5	40·2
Cleveland	25·3	6·9	27·3
Cornwall	21·3	7·4	34·7
Cumbria	20·2	5·9	29·2
Derbyshire	39·1	15·3	39·1
Devon	43·8	13·3	30·4
Dorset	30·4	6·5	21·4
Durham	17·4	4·8	27·6
East Sussex	31·8	14·0	44·0
Essex	70·7	24·0	33·9
Gloucestershire	27·9	9·2	33·0
Hampshire	78·1	34·2	43·8
Hereford and Worcester	17·5	7·3	41·7
Hertfordshire	41·3	21·1	51·1
Humberside	43·8	12·4	28·3
Isle of Wight	9·0	2·4	26·7
Kent	68·9	16·1	23·4
Lancashire	55·4	17·4	31·4
Leicester	41·6	14·9	35·8
Lincolnshire	22·5	7·9	35·1
Norfolk	24·9	8·2	32·9
North Yorkshire	38·7	9·6	24·8
Northamptonshire	23·9	5·2	21·8
Northumberland	12·1	2·4	19·8
Nottinghamshire	37·4	7·4	19·8
Oxfordshire	28·9	11·0	38·1
Shropshire	16·5	5·3	32·1
Somerset	27·4	5·1	18·6
Staffordshire	38·3	9·5	24·8
Suffolk	35·2	11·7	33·2
Surrey	64·5	25·0	38·8
Warwickshire	22·0	3·9	17·7
West Sussex	27·8	9·8	35·3
Wiltshire	12·8	4·8	37·5

Table 3

Employee numbers—March 1990

	All services		Education	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Barking	4,716	2,940	2,096	1,992
Barnet	6,858	4,524	3,317	3,576
Bexley	4,735	4,026	2,334	2,708
Brent	7,777	2,565	3,380	1,730
Bromley	5,546	3,485	2,803	2,371
Croydon	7,898	5,204	3,623	4,382
Ealing	8,150	4,267	3,456	3,160
Enfield	6,199	4,121	3,004	3,185
Haringey	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Harrow	4,792	4,009	2,351	3,002
Havering	5,649	4,614	2,734	3,212
Hillingdon	6,050	4,573	2,514	2,744

	All services		Education	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Hounslow	6,446	3,739	2,860	2,614
Kingston-upon-Thames	3,580	2,572	1,740	1,873
Merton	3,300	1,525	1,641	849
Newham	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Redbridge	5,042	3,571	2,235	2,399
Richmond-upon-Thames	3,745	2,255	1,527	1,602
Sutton	3,587	2,469	1,784	1,886
Waltham Forest	6,765	5,021	3,116	2,844
ILEA	37,899	38,283	37,899	38,283
Birmingham	29,826	20,890	12,944	14,300
Coventry	9,902	7,881	4,626	5,174
Dudley	7,982	6,117	4,092	3,945
Sandwell	11,302	7,456	4,948	5,130
Solihull	4,352	4,268	2,543	3,070
Walsall	8,940	6,088	4,858	4,481
Wolverhampton	9,084	5,831	4,118	3,846
Knowsley	5,488	3,211	2,481	2,264
Liverpool	19,066	10,094	7,439	7,019
St. Helens	5,791	3,356	2,880	2,187
Sefton	7,554	4,848	3,816	3,485
Wirral	8,982	7,791	4,395	5,326
Bolton	7,565	5,475	3,727	3,448
Bury	4,431	3,281	2,421	2,026
Manchester	23,159	11,869	8,330	8,459
Oldham	86,971	4,014	3,653	2,792
Rochdale	6,907	4,136	3,390	2,348
Salford	7,937	5,248	3,731	3,332
Stockport	6,901	5,867	3,532	3,824
Tameside	6,849	2,992	4,649	1,894
Trafford	4,780	3,985	2,422	2,189
Wigan	8,373	5,605	4,613	3,622
Barnsley	6,724	5,360	2,817	3,033
Doncaster	8,492	6,999	4,221	4,634
Rotherham	7,643	6,064	3,714	3,580
Sheffield	18,871	10,948	6,380	7,270
Bradford	14,516	13,626	7,947	9,765
Calderdale	5,248	4,769	2,649	3,057
Kirklees	10,760	9,375	5,393	6,269
Leeds	19,533	15,676	9,878	9,413
Wakefield	9,906	6,936	4,136	4,197
Gateshead	7,576	4,131	2,895	1,991
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	11,122	7,582	4,385	4,935
North Tyneside	6,521	4,848	2,745	3,100
South Tyneside	6,071	3,016	2,615	1,941
Sunderland	10,778	6,282	4,470	3,838
Avon	17,248	17,969	11,435	13,234
Bedfordshire	9,173	11,181	6,252	8,527
Berkshire	12,026	11,804	8,045	9,302
Buckinghamshire	10,086	12,265	6,871	9,590
Cambridgeshire	11,527	11,450	7,908	8,867
Cheshire	18,010	18,679	12,105	13,774
Cleveland	13,542	12,963	9,229	9,647
Cornwall	8,231	7,566	5,109	5,494
Cumbria	10,203	9,071	6,080	7,015
Derbyshire	19,800	23,551	13,180	16,748
Devon	16,672	17,315	10,148	12,835
Dorset	9,916	9,997	6,394	7,167
Durham	14,155	10,616	8,788	7,959
East Sussex	10,659	11,934	6,396	8,392
Essex	23,789	29,242	16,137	22,444
Gloucestershire	9,865	8,618	6,580	6,512
Hampshire	23,090	28,370	16,603	22,423
Hereford and Worcester	11,146	9,174	7,304	6,910
Hertfordshire	16,589	20,749	12,160	16,149
Humberside	17,756	18,770	11,671	13,152
Isle of Wight	2,397	1,746	1,443	1,215
Kent	24,012	20,022	16,495	14,659
Lancashire	27,846	25,388	17,652	18,380
Leicestershire	16,764	17,691	11,170	13,439
Lincolnshire	9,391	8,138	6,202	5,442
Norfolk	11,651	12,864	8,103	9,377
North Yorkshire	11,860	12,971	7,780	9,559
Northamptonshire	9,686	12,076	6,865	9,139
Northumberland	6,732	5,304	4,149	3,749
Nottinghamshire	20,357	19,053	13,462	14,336
Oxfordshire	8,338	9,096	5,454	6,813
Shropshire	7,427	7,909	5,101	6,245

	All services		Education	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Somerset	8,510	9,819	5,443	7,386
Staffordshire	19,001	22,272	12,913	17,453
Suffolk	9,740	12,434	6,853	9,344
Surrey	13,657	12,763	9,377	10,106
Warwickshire	8,217	10,596	5,795	8,227
West Sussex	9,675	12,507	6,284	9,510
Wiltshire	9,401	12,075	6,214	9,452

Note:
No full-time equivalents of the part-time numbers are available, and the total part-time staff figures provide a general indication only of the actual amount of part-time employment. Since the full-time equivalents of part-time employees cannot be calculated, neither can meaningful percentages of totals accounted for by the education sector.

Erasmus Programme

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many United Kingdom students have received awards under the Erasmus programme; and if he will list in rank order the number of students from each United Kingdom institution of higher education whose period of study in another EC country has been funded under the Erasmus programme.

Mr. Alan Howarth: We expect, by the end of the 1990-91 academic year, some 10,500 United Kingdom students to have received student mobility support under the Erasmus programme. The listing of individual institutions has been placed in the Library.

Expenditure (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost of educating *(a)* a primary school pupil and *(b)* a secondary school pupil in the local education authorities within South Yorkshire.

Mr. Fallon: In 1988-89, the latest year for which information is available, the school-based expenditure per nursery and primary pupil and per secondary pupil derived from information returned by the authorities was as shown in the table. Figures for nursery schools and for primary schools are not collected separately.

	Nursery and Primary schools £	Secondary schools £
Barnsley	1,065	1,645
Doncaster	1,175	1,655
Rotherham	1,125	1,635
Sheffield	1,230	1,810

University Salaries

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals; and whether he is willing to agree to their request for additional funds for university pay.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on 4 February 1991. It is for the employers and the Association of University Teachers to draw up a pay settlement within the resources available.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the total pay bill in 1990 prices for university *(a)* support staff and *(b)* teachers in each year from 1985 to 1990, and express the overall pay bill as a percentage of the total universities' general recurrent expenditure in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is available only to 1988-89 and is given in the table.

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
			£ million (1990-91 prices)	
Academic-academic related staff	1,170·3	1,218·9	1,255·0	1,262·1
Other staff	530·3	532·0	522·6	521·6
Total as a percentage of United Kingdom universities' total recurrent expenditure from general funds	66·8	67·9	67·3	66·2

Note:
1990-91 prices are derived using GDP deflator assumptions based on the university academic year.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will fund a survey to compare the pay of university technicians with people in similar jobs in the private and public sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. This is a matter for the employers to consider and fund if it is deemed necessary.

Geography

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the differences between the programmes of study for geography in the documents referred to in his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column 277, and the recommendations of the National Curriculum Council's consultative report; what priority he gives to work on issue-based topics and inquiry-based learning in geography; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The differences are clear from a comparison of the documents. There is no prescription as to the teaching methods to be used in geography, so that issues-based approaches may, if teachers so decide, be used to deliver the statutory requirements. An inquiry approach is required to form an important part of children's work in geography.

European Space Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom contribution to the European Space Agency's Hipparcos project.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The United Kingdom contributes to the ESA Hipparcos project through its subscription to the mandatory science programme of the European Space Agency. As a member of an international consortium, the United Kingdom also supports the analysis of data received from the satellite.

Truancy

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he proposes to take to reduce truancy rates in schools.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have today issued for consultation a draft circular on school attendance together with draft regulations about pupil registration and the publication of information about rates of attendance.

Truancy needs to be tackled vigorously to ensure that the national curriculum and other educational reforms benefit all pupils. Governors, parents and prospective parents need to have the facts on school attendance. My right hon. Friends therefore propose that schools should be required to publish annually the rates of unauthorised absence for each year group, for each term of the preceding school year.

We expect schools to give the highest priority to maximising rates of attendance, and to work with parents, local education authorities and others to achieve that objective.

Local education authorities and other appropriate educational bodies have been invited to comment on the proposals with a view to regulations being made in the summer.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

South Africa

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government have taken to secure the release of South African political prisoners since August 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: We have repeatedly called on the South African Government to free all political prisoners. We welcome the fact that over 300 political prisoners have been released since February 1990.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the action taken by Her Majesty's Government to secure the implementation of the United Nations declaration on South Africa adopted at the 16th special session of the General Assembly.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to encourage all sides in South Africa to maintain progress towards the broad aims set out in the United Nations declaration.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made to the South African Government concerning the immunity from prosecution of political exiles returning to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have urged the South African Government to reach agreement with the parties concerned on sensible arrangements for the return of political exiles to South Africa.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs what representations the Government have made to the South African Government concerning the implementation of section B, clause 8c, of the United Nations declaration on South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain regular contacts with all sides in South Africa. We have expressed to them the hope that full constitutional negotiations towards a non-racial, democratic society may begin as soon as possible. It is for the parties to those negotiations to decide how the new constitution should be drawn up and adopted.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made to the South African Government on the Internal Security Act.

Mrs. Chalker: We have often stressed to the South African Government the need to repeal those legislative provisions, such as detention without trial, which are contrary to international norms of human rights. The South African Government are currently conducting a review of all such legislation, including the Internal Security Act.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of funds available to the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Mrs. Chalker: Some $567 million has been pledged by OECD, OPEC and developing countries to the third replenishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Negotiations on the replenishment were completed in mid-1989, but it became effective only last December. Together with estimated income from loan repayments, investments and other sources. IFAD should have resources totalling in excess of $1,200 million for commitment over the next three years.

IFAD's special programme for Africa, which attained the $300 million target set in 1986 with voluntary contributions from OECD countries, will be fully committed early this year. IFAD's governing council in May will be invited to consider proposals for extending the programme for a further, and final, phase.

Sudan

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on Britain's humanitarian assistance to Sudan.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to provide substantial humanitarian assistance to Sudan. On 2 April I approved a new package of food and other emergency assistance worth £5·5 million. I am today announcing provision of a further 5,000 tonnes of food aid at an estimated cost of £1·7 million. This brings the total of our response to the present emergency to £17·4 million, which includes 55,550 tonnes of food aid, and to nearly £39 million since the beginning of 1989. I expect to provide more aid as the year goes on.

ENERGY

Immingham Port

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will request the Director General of OFFER to undertake a review of the involvement of National Power and PowerGen in the financing and operation of the port development at Immingham, with respect to the policy of securing economic supply of electricity by means of competition between generators.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. These are commercial matters for the companies concerned.

British Gas

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to British Gas and the environment to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 22 to 26 July.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Charge

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he estimates will be the yield of the community charge in England in 1991-92 allowing for the effect of the community charge reduction schemes.

Mr. Portillo: The community charge is expected to yield about £7·4 billion in England in 1991-92. About £1 billion of this will be met by community charge benefit.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that the £140 reduction of community charge announced on 19 March does not lead to any reduction in the benefits previously provided for those people entitled to rebates.

Mr. Key: All headline community charges for 1991-92 will be reduced by £140 as a result of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill. The amount of community charge benefit received by charge payers will be lower as a result, but all charge payers, including those on benefit, should have reduced bills.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would have been the community charge in the London boroughs of *(a)* Wandsworth and *(b)* Westminster had they received in 1990-91 Government grants per head of relevant population of £448.

Mr. Key: Since 1 April 1990, in contrast to previous arrangements, revenue support grant has been paid to the receiving authority for each area in support jointly of its own expenditure and that of the precepting authorities in the area. For this reason it is inappropriate to attempt to estimate the community charge that Wandsworth and Westminster would have set had they received in 1990-91 Government grants per head of relevant population of £448.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the proposed spending of £4·3 billion on the poll tax is additional to transitional relief grant and rebate subsidy.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The figure of £4·3 billion represents broadly the switch from local to central taxation. It is estimated that the gross cost of community charge grant will be some £5·6 billion in Great Britain. Because many people are already getting extensive help with paying their charges at the levels set by authorities the general reduction will result in savings of some £1·3 billion on reduction scheme grant and benefit subsidy.

Jet Skis

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the powers the exercise of which is monitored by his Department which are currently available to local authorities and others to control nuisances caused by operators of waterborne jet ski machines.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities can make byelaws under section 76 of the Public Health Act 1961 requiring engines of all seaside pleasure boats, including water ski vessels and ski-mobiles, to be fitted with silencers. Local authorities can also serve an abatement notice on a person responsible for a statutory nuisance, including noise, under section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. An individual aggrieved by noise can apply direct to a magistrates court to make an abatement order where a statutory nuisance occurs or is likely to recur, under section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The Department keeps no statistics about the control of nuisance caused by operators of waterborne jet ski machines.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those Acts passed by Parliament since 1979 concerning *(a)* local government finance and *(b)* local authority duties, powers and responsibilities for authorities in England.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the then Minister for Local Government and the Inner Cities gave a list on 4 May 1990 of 124 public general Acts of Parliament, passed between June 1970 and November 1989, which affected

local authorities in England, distinguishing those which concern, at least in part, local government finance, *Official Report*, Vol. 171, column *676*. Since November 1989, public general Acts which affect local government in England include:

Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990
Broadcasting Act 1990
Education (Student Loans) Act 1990
Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act 1990
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Food Safety Act 1990
National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1990
Planning (Consequential Provisions) Act 1990[1]
Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990[1]
Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990[1]
Representation of the People Act 1990
Rights of Way Act 1990
Town and Country Planning Act 1990[1]
Caravans (Standard Community Charge and Rating) Act 1991[2]
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991[2]
Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Act 1991[2]

[1] Consolidation Act.
[2] Concerns local government finance.

Not all these Acts resulted from Government Bills.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allow local authorities to spend all their capital receipts.

Mr. Key: Local authorities are able to spend the usable part of their capital receipts on new capital expenditure or on the repayment of their debt. They also retain use of the reserved part of their receipts to repay debt or to finance capital expenditure covered by a credit approval; meanwhile, the funds may be invested in approved investments.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of Government grant per head of the population for 1990-91 and 1991-92 in the London boroughs of *(a)* Haringey, *(b)* Barnet and *(c)* Enfield.

Mr. Key: The available information is as follows:

Government grants in 1990-91, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, per head of relevant population are £762 in Haringey, £366 in Barnet and £475 in Enfield.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following the fixing of the community charge in all Leicestershire district councils, he will now update the two answers given by the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *47-48*.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 26 March 1991]:* Following the statement on 19 March 1991 by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, *Official Report*, vol. 188, column 180-81, £140 will be cut from the current headline community charges for 1991-92. The calculation of community charge reductions and benefits will be made after this general reduction. In addition, my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities announced on 25 March that under the community charge reduction scheme the threshold amount which charge payers are expected to meet from their own resources will be lowered from £104 to £52. The revised figures in the table show the reductions payable to couples in Charnwood, Melton and Rutland who, on 31 March 1991, are living in properties of *(a)* three quarters average rateable value and *(b)* half average rateable value for the area.

Reductions for couples under 1991-92 Community Charge Reduction Scheme

	Set Charge (taking account of £140 reduction)	*Reductions from the set charges payable by a couple*	
		(a)	*(b)*
	£	£	£
Charnwood Borough	257	85	210
Melton Borough	250	95	212
Rutland District	254	52	187

Vacant Land

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he has established the level of vacant land areas within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo: The Department has commissioned a national sample survey of the stock of vacant land in urban areas in England. Final estimates from the survey are not yet available. The broad figure of up to 150,000 acres of vacant land given in the consultation paper, "Encouraging the use of vacant public sector land", relates to urban areas in England alone and was based on preliminary work carried out in preparation for the national survey.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact the disposal of vacant land areas will have on the green belt.

Mr. Yeo: There is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the green belts. The Government's policy for them is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2. Development of suitable vacant land within urban areas can help to reduce the pressure for development of green field sites.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he intends to take to ensure full public consultation takes place when land areas, currently of recreational value to local people, are indentified as unused or underused and available for disposal;

(2) what is his policy on retaining open spaces in urban areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Land used as public open space or for recreation is not at present entered on registers and is therefore not subject to my right hon. Friend's power to

direct disposal. My Department's consultation paper, "Encouraging the use of vacant public sector land", noted that we envisage further public consultation on the criteria for entry on registers under any new statutory arrangement covering all public sector owners.

The issue of retaining open spaces in urban areas has been addressed in my Department's draft planning policy guidance note on sport and recreation which was issued for public consultation in October last year. In the light of the many responses received, my right hon. Friend will be considering carefully what advice should be included in the final guidance.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to enter into a partnership with local government in order to develop vacant land areas in both the public and private sector, for the benefit of and in full consultation with local people.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have already taken various steps to encourage the bringing into use of vacant land, for example, through grant arrangements which apply to land in public or private ownership and through land registers which record public sector land. I am considering what further action is necessary.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards he is considering in order to avoid vacant land areas being disposed of at a time when land prices are very low.

Mr. Yeo: The timing of disposal is normally a matter for the owner. A public sector owner should get a proper price for his land and my right hon. Friend would for that reason be hesitant about directing disposal when the general level of the market was depressed in the short term.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how a system of incentives for franchisees of vacant land areas will be financed; and what level of incentives budget is envisaged in the first year of operation;

(2) how defined areas of vacant public land will be established; and how large such areas are expected to be;

(3) what progress has been made with the selection of two experimental areas for the proposals outlined in the consultation paper "Encouraging the use of vacant public sector land"; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how he intends to define the terms "underused" and "unused" when identifying vacant land areas;

(5) how vacant land areas, which ought to be on new underused/unused land registers, will be identified.

Mr. Yeo: We are considering in the light of responses to the consultation paper what further action might be taken to encourage the bringing into use of vacant sector land. Our conclusions will be announced in due course. Meanwhile no decisions have been taken on whether to proceed with the proposals for experimental franchises or for giving all public sector owners a statutory obligation to maintain and publicise registers. The consultation paper noted that the criteria for entry on such registers and for eligibility for directions to dispose would be the subject of further consultation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce proposals to identify and dispose of vacant land areas in the ownership of central Government Departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 19 February, *Official Report*, columns *114-15*. Individual Departments have been asked to maintain and publicise registers of their vacant land holdings and proposals to make this a statutory obligation were included in the Department's consultation paper.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce proposals to identify and dispose of vacant land areas in private sector ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: In the light of responses made to the Department's consultation paper our review will include the question of whether any measures are appropriate to encourage the bringing into use of vacant land in private sector ownership or whether, as implied in the consultation paper, its subjection to the normal incentives and disciplines of the market is sufficient.

Public Sector Land

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions when existing powers have been exercised to direct disposal of public sector land.

Mr. Yeo: The following list shows the sites in respect of which directions under section 98 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 have been issued together with the owners concerned:

Sites which have been the subject of directions under section 98 of the Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980

Site address	*Owner at time of direction*
1984	
Barmpton Lane West, Darlington	Darlington BC
Barton Lane, Clifton, Nottingham	Nottingham City Council
Doxford Park Way, Sunderland	Sunderland MBC
Oozewood Road, Royton	Oldham MBC
1985	
Alfred Street/Oak Bank, Harpurhey	Manchester City Council
Boothroyden "A" site, Blackley	Manchester City Council
Maple Road West, Brooklands	Manchester City Council
Old Market Street/Grant Street, Blackley	Manchester City Council
Old Market Street/Lion Street/Lawson Street/Dommett Street, Blackley	Manchester City Council
South Street/Parkhouse Street, Openshaw	Manchester City Council
Colton Common, Colton, Leeds	Leeds City Council
Denison Street/Silver Lane, Yeadon	Leeds City Council

Site address	Owner at time of direction
Freely Lane, Bramham	Leeds City Council
Keswick Lane, Bardsey	Leeds City Council
Kirkfield Lane, Thorner	Leeds City Council
Lyndon Road, Bramham	Leeds City Council
Old Farm Close, Leeds	Leeds City Council
Primrose Lane, Boston Spa	Leeds City Council
Richmond Road/Dawsons Corner, Pudsey	Leeds City Council
Whiteley Croft, Otley	Leeds City Council
Willow Avenue, Clifford	Leeds City Council
261-281 Regents Park Road, N3	Barnet LBC
Rocwood Lane, Macclesfield	Macclesfield BC
Stocks Park Drive, Horwich	Bolton MBC
The Grange, Southgate Circus	Enfield LBC
1986	
Eltham Road, Greenwich	Greenwich LBC
Hornpark Close/Eltham Road, Greenwich	Greenwich LBC
Ling Close, Coltishall	Broadland BC
London Road, SE1	Southwark LBC
South Park Drive, Blackpool	Blackpool BC
Hall Farm Road, Doxford Park, Sunderland	Sunderland MBC
The Hollins, off Plodder Lane	Bolton MBC
Bamfield/Briery Leaze Road, Cheltenham	Bristol City Council
Fiddlers Green Lane, Cheltenham	Cheltenham BC
Russells Hall, Dudley (H7)	Dudley MBC
Russells Hall, Dudley (H8)	Dudley MBC
Duddon Close, Ireleth	Barrow-in-Furness BC
Hardy Avenue, Brierfield	Pendle BC
Houghton Lane, Houghton (South Ribble BC)	Lancashire CC
1987	
Surbiton Lagoon, Surbiton	Kingston-upon-Thames LBC
Netherleigh, off Biggar Bank Road, Walney Island	Barrow-in-Furness BC
Beck Lane/Lanark Walk, Upton Priory, Macclesfield, (Macclesfield BC)	Cheshire CC
Congleton Road, Macclesfield	Macclesfield BC
Land at County Road North, Hull (Ref. 23)	Kingston-upon-Hull CC
Land at County Road North, Hull (Ref. 24)	Kingston-upon-Hull CC
Land at County Road North, Hull (Ref. 25)	Kingston-upon-Hull CC
Land at Spring Street, Hull	Kingston-upon-Hull CC
Longcroft/Benomley Road, Huddersfield	Kirklees MBC
Royd House, Reinwood Road, Huddersfield	Kirklees MBC
Goodison Boulevard, Cantley (Ref. 15)	Doncaster MBC
Broadway, Dunscroft, Doncaster	Doncaster MBC
Crescent East/Flanderwell Lane, Sunnyside, Rotherham	Rotherham MBC
Thompson Hill, High Green, Sheffield	Sheffield MBC
Land at Pigeon Cote Farm, Ryedale	York City Council
Land at the rear of Bur Dike Avenue, York	York City Council
Land fronting Cheam Road and Robin Hood Lane, Sutton	Sutton LBC
Land fronting Camden Road and Robin Hood Lane, Sutton	Sutton LBC
Galleywall Road/Anchor Street/Lynton Road, SE16	Southwark LBC
Thames Road North Allotment Site, Barking	Barking and Dagenham LBC
Land between Nos. 2 and 4 Meadow Way, Offley	North Hertfordshire DC
Pleckgate Road Blackburn	Blackburn BC
Land adjacent to Loughborough Technical College, Loughborough (Charnwood BC)	Leicestershire CC
Land to the south of Hillingdon Road, Lanehead, Burnley	Burnley BC
Land east of Portland Street, Mansfield Woodhouse	Mansfield DC
1988	
Staveley Road School, Chiswick	Hounslow LBC
Vauxhall Walk/Randall Road, London SE11	Lambeth LBC
Land fronting Longshaw Street, Opposite Longport Flats, Longport, Stoke-on-Trent	Stoke-on-Trent DC
Dere Park, Brandon	Durham City Council
Castle Road, Unsworth, Bury	Manchester City Council
Land North of Wythenshawe Road, Manchester	Manchester City Council
Douglas Street, Atherton	Wigan MBC
Land east of Leeds Road, Methley	Leeds City Council
Land bounded by Dewberry Street/St Leonard's Road & Brunswick Road, E14	Tower Hamlets LBC
Land between 102 and 108 Gordon Avenue, Stanmore, Middlesex	Harrow LBC
Site 2, Marton Grove South, Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough BC
Land to the rear of Burleigh College, Loughborough (Charnwood BC)	Leicestershire CC
Greenhill Lane, Riddings (Amber Valley BC)	Derbyshire CC
1989	
South Street/Nantwich Road, Crewe	Crewe & Nantwich BC
Land at Water Lane, Droylesden, Manchester	Tameside MBC
Alexandra Avenue, Meol Brace, Shrewsbury	Shropshire CC
Helston Drive, Strelley Estate, Nottingham	Nottinghamshire CC

Site address	Owner at time of direction
1990	
Quarry Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight	Medina Borough Council
Longden Road, Shrewsbury	Shropshire CC

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has available concerning the impact of proposals for the disposal of public sector land on land areas identified by local authorities for future housing purposes.

Mr. Yeo: The use of any land which my right hon. Friend decided to make the subject of a direction to dispose would be decided through the planning system in the normal way. Where a direction to dispose is proposed the landowner has the right to make representations about its actual or intended use. My right hon. Friend takes these into account when deciding whether to make the direction.

Environmental Assessments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to make the 1985 European Community directive on environmental assessment applicable to development proposals for which consent is sought by means of private parliamentary Bills.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on 26 February, column *422*. As the consultation paper issued by my Department and the Welsh Office on that date stated, it is proposed that the amendments to procedures to require environmental assessment, where appropriate, for private Bills for the construction of works should apply to Bills deposited in and after the 1991-92 Session. A proposed amendment to Standing Orders was tabled on 6 March.

Urban Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will break down the number of projects not approved for the 1991-92 financial year *(a)* numerically and *(b)* by cash value for the urban programme in (i) Barnsley, (ii) Blackburn, (iii) Bolton, (iv) Bradford, (v) Brent and (vi) Bristol; and if he will indicate the percentage of projects not approved for the financial year 1991-92 relating to (1) ethnic minority projects, (2) projects relating to disability, (3) economic developments and (4) the environment.

Mr. Portillo: The information is provided in the table.

Project rejections in 1991-92 Urban Programmes for selected local authorities

Local authority	*Number of projects rejected*	*Cash value of projects rejected (£k)*	*Ethnic minority projects rejected*	*Per cent. of all projects rejected*	*Disability projects rejected*	*Per cent. of all projects rejected*	*Economic projects rejected*	*Per cent. of all projects rejected*	*Environmental projects rejected*	*Per cent. of all projects rejected*
Barnsley	8	381	0	0	1	13	2	25	1	13
Blackburn	4	18	0	0	1	25	0	0	0	0
Bolton	9	639	0	0	1	11	2	22	1	11
Bradford	30	2,808	3	10	2	7	6	20	3	10
Bristol	8	193	1	13	1	13	3	38	0	0

Information for the Brent 1991-92 urban programme is not currently available.

London City Airport

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make his decision on the future of the City of London airport in the light of his inspector's report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: When I have received and considered the inspector's report.

Housing, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes have been improved in Liverpool with the aid of Government grants, over each of the past 11 years; how many new homes have been built by the local authority and by housing associations in each of the past 11 years; and how many homes in the public and private sector are currently vacant in Liverpool.

Mr. Yeo: The numbers of grants paid to private owners and tenants and the numbers of housing association and local authority dwellings improved with the aid of grant or subsidy reported quarterly by Liverpool city council are published in "Local Housing Statistics".

The numbers of new homes built, based on monthly returns, appear in the publication "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas 1980 to 1989" (tables 1.1 to 1.10). Figures for the first nine months of 1990 are in "Local Housing Statistics" (issue 96, table 1).

The tables indicate where the information is incomplete because all returns for the year have not been received.

The latest available information on vacant dwellings relates to 1 April 1990 and was provided by Liverpool city council in its April 1990 housing investment programme return (HIP1).

Copies of all these documents are in the Library.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against the uniform business rate have been lodged in the areas covering the parliamentary constituencies of *(a)* Hornsey and Wood Green and *(b)* Tottenham.

Mr. Key: By 5 April 1991, the valuation office had received 1,368 proposals to alter the 1990 rating list in respect of the parliamentary constituency area of Hornsey and Wood Green and 1,062 in respect of that for Tottenham.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the staffing of

the North Yorkshire valuation and community charge tribunal, in order that appeals concerning the uniform business rate may be heard within six months of their submission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Ratepayers had six months from 1 April 1990 in which to make proposals to alter their 1990 rating assessments and valuation officers then had a further six months to settle the proposal before the matter became an appeal. Most proposals have only recently become appeals to the tribunals. The North Yorkshire valuation and community charge tribunal has 9,800 appeals outstanding. Staffing and other administrative arrangements of tribunals have been improved to enable the caseload to be dealt with, and staffing levels are being further reviewed. Tribunals will generally give priority to hardship cases and to the more significant appeals, with a view to establishing quickly benchmarks which should allow settlements pag p 31between valuation officers and ratepayers without the need in all cases for a tribunal hearing. Complex cases may take longer and it would not necessarily be in the ratepayers' best interests for these to be rushed.

Public Buildings (Safety)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will change the standards relating to the physical structures of public buildings to make them safer in the event of attacks by terrorists.

Mr. Yeo: Various measures are being taken to improve the safety of public buildings in view of recent terrorist attacks. It would not be appropriate to give details of these measures.

Prestwich Hospital

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to come to a decision on the planning applications from Salford health authority relating to part of the Prestwich hospital, Salford site.

Mr. Yeo: The appeal will be determined as quickly as possible after the inspector has reported on the public inquiry to be held on 26 September.

Local Authority Swap Contracts

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to deal with the problem arising from local authority swap contracts.

Mr. Key: The Government are considering the implications of the House of Lords judgment on this complex matter and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Heliports (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the inspector's report on the City of London heliport planning application; and what the inspector recommends.

Mr. Yeo: The inspector's report has not yet been received.

Lambeth (Housing)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of bids for housing association development in Lambeth for 1991-92; and what bids will be met for new housing and rehabilitation of existing housing.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct.

Bees

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to prevent damage to domestic bees as a consequence of the importation of the varroa mite.

Mr. Curry: Our aim is to keep this country free from varroasis. The Importation of Bees Order 1980 prohibits imports of honey bees except under licence from countries of high bee health status which are free from varroasis.

Parking Offences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parking tickets were received and paid by his Department in each year since 1988 in respect of official vehicles.

Mr. Hesseltine *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The numbers of parking tickets received and paid by the Department of the Environment in respect of the Government car service, the interdepartmental despatch service and DOE (Central) Vehicles, for each of the years requested, are:

1988-89	*1989-90*	[1] *1990*
181	133	68

[1] To date.

These numbers exclude PSA and TCS vehicles for which records are not held centrally and where the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Tameside

92. **Mr Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to increase infrastructure investment in Tameside.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 22 February 1991]:* Responsibility for monitoring and developing infrastructure in Tameside lies primarily with the borough council. My Department has this year awarded Tameside rolling programme status for derelict land reclamation grant together with supplementary credit approvals for environmental and other regenerative schemes in the Hyde renewal area.

Tameside is also eligible for grant aid from the European regional development fund under phase II of the Mersey basin programme, which is administered by the Government for the EC in partnership with local authorities and other eligible bodies. Tameside have submitted 25 grant applications for a range of infrastructure projects; and so far the first three of these have been approved, to a total of £110,657 grant aid. Others are expected to follow.

Grimsargh Hall Farm

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of the proposed development by J. Turner and Son at Grimsargh Hall farm, Preston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* Two letters of objection were received by my right hon. Friend and Preston borough council copied to him a further 11 and one in support.

My right hon. Friend considered that the issues raised did not justify calling in the application and he has authorised the council to determine it as it thinks fit.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had relating to its assessments of the ecological resources of the Gulf states from the world conservation monitoring centre in Cambridge.

Mr. Baldry: In addition to the hon. Member's question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 22 March, *Official Report*, Volume 188, column *246*, I have also received a letter from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre which draws attention to the work carried out by the centre on the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what protection has been given to sea grasses in the Gulf.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 22 March 1991, *Official Report*, Vol. 188, column *245*.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *245*, in what ways he has made the work of the Plymouth marine laboratory of NERC known to the Gulf states.

Mr. Baldry: The report on the likely biological effects of the Gulf oil slick carried out by the Natural Environment Research Council was sent to relevant agencies in Saudi Arabia via the British embassy in Riyadh in early February, and to British embassies in other Gulf states.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the information learned from the work of the Meteorological Office research aircraft in the Gulf;

(2) what information he has had from members of the Meteorological Office, in relation to sulphur dioxide and other deleterious substances, as a result of their research flight over Kuwait; and what further monitoring action he proposes to take.

Mr. Baldry: I am arranging to place in the Library copies of an assessment by Departments concerned of the potential impact of the burning oil wells in Kuwait on the environment and human health; and of a report by the Meteorological Office on the recent activities of the meteorological research flight in the region. Following analysis of the data gathered by the aircraft, the Meteorological Office will publish a preliminary report of the findings in a few weeks' time. No further monitoring action is currently planned.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what satellite images of the effect of the pollution over Kuwait have been made available by other countries to his Department.

Mr. Baldry: Meteorological satellite images provide information on the location and extent of the smoke plume in the Gulf rather than on its effects. Images from European meteorological satellites are available to all nations through normal receiving channels.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department is providing to the Kuwait Government to help them to cope with the effect of summer ventilation systems in Kuwait inhaling air with abnormal sulphur dioxide and nitrogen content.

Mr. Baldry: None at present. My Department continues to be in contact with the Gulf states about whether there is further scope for the application of United Kingdom expertise in the evaluation of the environmental effects of the war and possible remedial action.

Estuaries (Effluent)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a study of the effluent from waste production and waste disposal in relation to the ecosystems of estuaries.

Mr. Baldry: It is already normal practice to set discharge consents for effluents to rivers and estuaries on the basis of quality objectives set for downstream waters. The quality objectives used for estuaries are to maintain the ecosystems if the quality is high, and to restore the quality if it is not. With the introduction of integrated pollution control discharges from prescribed processes will also be required to apply best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent pollution.

Hazardous Waste (US Bases)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between the Government and United States Government about disposal of hazardous waste from United States bases in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world; and what was the outcome of the discussions.

Mr. Baldry: Discussions have been held since November 1989 with the United States Government about the importation into the United Kingdom of hazardous waste from United States bases overseas. Pending the outcome of these discussions imports of hazardous waste into United States bases have been suspended. The United States Government have now agreed that their forces will not in the future import hazardous waste directly into their bases in the United Kingdom. Discussions are continuing with the United States Government with a view to stopping the importation of all waste.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state the total number of persons engaged in *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* steel industry, *(c)* coal

mining, *(d)* the car industry, *(e)* the electrical goods industry, *(f)* local government and *(g)* the national health service in 1979, 1989 and 1990, showing the percentage increase or decrease in each case.

Mr. Jackson: The Department's estimates of employment are categorised according to the 1980 standard industrial classification (SIC80). This classification does not specifically identify the national health service, which is included along with other employers in medical and other health services (SIC 80 groups 951, 952, 953 and 954). The available information is given in the table.

Employees in Employment—Great Britain

Industries (SIC 80)	*Thousands (Unadjusted for seasonal variation)* *June 1979*	*June 1989*	*June 1990*	*Percentage change* *1979-89*	*1979-90*	*1989-90*
Agriculture and horticulture (Class 01)	339	263	260	−23	−23	−1
Iron and steel industry (Group 221)[1]	191	45	53	−76	−72	16
Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels (Group 111)	299	103	91	−66	−70	−12
Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts (Class 35)	464	262	245	−44	−47	−6
Electrical and electronic engineering (Class 34)	752	553	556	−26	−26	1
Local government service not elsewhere specified (Activity 9112)	662	539	557	−18	−16	3
Medical and other health services (Group 951, 952, 953 and 954)	1,170	1,377	1,380	18	18	0

[1]These estimates are based on small samples and are unreliable.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the unemployment rate in each European Community country.

Mr. Jackson: Following is a table which gives the latest available internationally comparable unemployment rates for the 12 member states of the European Community.

Comparisons of Unemployment between EC countries

	Standardised unemployment rates[1] seasonally adjusted *Per cent rate*	*Latest month*
Spain	15·8	November
Ireland	14·7	February
Italy	9·8	October
France	9·1	January
Belgium	8·4	February
United Kingdom	8·1	February
Denmark	[1](7·9)	February
Greece	[2](7·4)	April 1987
Netherlands	7·3	December
Portugal	4·5	November
Luxembourg	[3](1·6)	February

[1] Note for those EC countries for which no OECD standardised rates are available, similar harmonised rates compiled by the Statistical Office of European Communities (EUROSTAT) are shown in brackets.

[2] Recent comparable figures are currently not available for Greece the latest relating to April 1987.

[3] There are no reliable figures available as yet for a unified Germany, the rate for the former West Germany is 4·5 per cent. for January.

Source: OECD "Main Economic Indicators", Labour Attache reports and Eurostat "Unemployment" Bulletins.

Employment Offices (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what employment offices he plans to close in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Factory Inspection

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the oral answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South of 26 March, *Official Report*, column 752-53, if he will list the pilot projects and the areas they are established within, to identify unregistered premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Between 1 July and 31 December the Health and Safety Executive plans to carry out a pilot exercise to assess the feasibility of employing visiting officers to identify establishments for inspection. The exercise will take place in the following HSE areas:

Marches
South West
East Anglia
London North
Greater Manchester
West & North Yorkshire
Scotland West

One of the objectives of the exercise is to seek out and identify establishments not registered with HSE. The exercise is in addition to and complements normal inspection arrangements to seek out and inspect unregistered premises.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the current members of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and give the relevant experience of each member; how many of the council are female; and what percentage of the total membership they comprise.

Mr. Jackson: A list of the 13 current members of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and their experience is given below.

CHAIRMAN

Sir Bryan Nicholson: Chairman of the Post Office; the Council for National Academic Awards; the Industrial Society; the CBI Task Force on Vocatonal Education and Training. Formerly Chairman of Rank Xerox and of the Manpower Services Commission.

MEMBERS

Gerald Brinsdon: Chairman of the West Midlands Engineering Careers Co-ordinating Organisation, an

adviser to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities Education Committee and a member of the Engineering Careers Information Service steering committee. Until recently Chief Education Officer for Sandwell.

Ken Graham CBE: Formerly Deputy General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, 1985-87. He has been a member of the board of Remploy Ltd. since 1987 and was formerly a Commissioner of the MSC 1974-87.

Peter Reay CBE: Has held a wide range of personnel and management positions within Cadbury Schweppes PLC becoming Group Personnel Director in 1981 from which he retired recently.

Ron Shepherd: OBE Recently retired as Manager, Education Training and Personnel Services at the Ford Motor Company.

Barry Barker MBE: Recently retired as Secretary and Chief Executive, Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (formerly Chartered Institute of Secretaries) following a career in industry and management.

Dr. John Capey: Worked in industry as a production manager before moving into education. Has a Doctorate in education. Is currently Principal of Exeter College. He is a mentor of the Business Technician Education Council and of the CPVE Joint Board.

Hywel Davies: Personnel Manager of South Wales Electricity Board.

Barney Gibbens OBE: Co-founder of Computer Analysts Programmes Ltd (the CAP Group) in May 1962. This company merged in July 1988 with a large French systems house and changed its name to SEMA Group Plc—of which company he is Chairman.

Gill Lewis: Has a degree in Chemistry from Oxford. She is a "former business woman of the year" and is currently the Director of Human Resources at Courtaulds plc.

John Spence OBE: Chairman of the Northern Ireland Training Authority 1984-89. Chairman of the Training and Employment Agency for Northern Ireland since 1989. Chairman of Richardsons Fertilisers Ltd.

John Barnes: Lecturer in Political Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has been Chairman of the Kent Education Committee, and is currently a member of the Council for National Academic Awards.

George Wycherley: Director and General Manager of Motherwell Bridge Fabricators Ltd. He was Chairman of the Manpower Services Commission's Area Manpower Board for Lanarkshire.

There is currently one vacancy on the council. Of the 13 current members one is female, representing 7·7 per cent. of the total membership.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show for full-time workers the percentage earning less than £170 and £180, giving the information for (a) women and (b) men for (1) manual, (2) non-manual and (3) all workers, excluding overtime pay for (i) Scotland, (ii) the regions of Scotland and (iii) Great Britain.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the new earnings survey is given in the following tables.

Full time employees on adult rates whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence
Percentage with weekly earnings less than £180 (ex overtime)

	Women			Men		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Scotland	89·7	55·1	62·9	50·1	16·3	34·3
Borders	..	..	84·1	62·3	..	..
Central	96·8	65·5	74·9	41·9	13·3	29·5
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	72·9	48·2	..	40·0
Fife	89·9	57·4	67·7	46·9	19·3	35·1
Grampian	..	52·4	60·8	49·3	7·9	30·8
Highland	..	64·5	69·6	54·2	..	39·2
Lothian	86·0	52·8	58·1	54·7	18·0	34·7
Strathclyde	86·5	53·4	60·8	47·3	16·4	32·9
Tayside	95·8	57·8	67·8	62·3	19·8	43·2
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	35·1
Highland and islands	..	58·5	65·0	53·4	16·5	38·2
Great Britain	85·2	46·3	54·4	43·5	13·5	28·6

Source: NES 1990.
NB ".." denotes sampling errors too large or numbers to small for reliable information.

Full time employees on adult rates whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence
Percentage with weekly earnings less than £170 (ex overtime) April 1990

	Women			Men		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Scotland	84·7	49·1	57·2	42·0	13·8	28·9
Borders	..	..	80·5	54·1	..	..
Central	88·9	59·5	68·2	32·7	10·2	23·0
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	65·6	42·6	..	35·2
Fife	87·3	54·4	64·9	40·2	16·0	29·9
Grampian	..	46·9	55·3	41·9	6·6	26·2
Highland	..	60·3	66·2	47·9	..	34·7
Lothian	81·4	45·2	50·9	45·6	15·4	29·1
Strathclyde	81·2	47·5	55·1	39·1	14·3	27·5
Tayside	89·5	52·2	62·0	53·2	16·2	36·6
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	31·2
Highland and islands	..	55·1	62·3	47·1	15·0	33·9
Great Britain	80·7	40·8	49·1	36·4	11·1	23·8

Source:
NES 1990.
NB ".." denotes sampling errors too large or numbers too small for reliable information.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide details of the number of male employees in part-time employment for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Great Britain; and if he will provide a regional breakdown for each.

Mr. Jackson: There were an estimated 953,600 male employees in part-time employment in Great Britain in September 1990, the latest date for which information is available. Estimates for the regions are available only from the census of employment. The latest available are for September 1989 and are given in the table.

Male employees in part-time employment: September 1989

Great Britain and regions	*Numbers (000s)*
Great Britain	920·8
South East	342·9
East Anglia	33·8
South West	85·2
West Midlands	78·6
East Midlands	64·2
Yorks & Humberside	72·3
North West	90·6
North	40·0
Wales	37·2
Scotland	76·1
Regions of Scotland	
Borders	1·6
Central	3·5
Dumfries & Galloway	1·8
Fife	3·8
Grampian	9·4
Highland	3·8
Lothian	11·1
Strathclyde	33·2
Tayside	6·6
Orkney	0·5
Shetland	0·5
Western Isles	0·4

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show for part-time women workers *(a)* average gross weekly earnings, *(b)* average weekly hours, total and overtime and *(c)* average gross hourly earnings for (i) manual, (ii) non-manual and (iii) all part-time women workers in (1) Great Britain, (2) Scotland and (3) the regions of Scotland.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the new earnings survey is given in the following table.

Part-time females on adult rates

	Average Gross Weekly Earnings (£)			*Average Weekly Hours*						*Average Gross Hourly Earnings (pence)*		
					Total			*Overtime*				
	Manual	*Non-man*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-man*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-man*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-man*	*All*
Scotland	59·1	94·8	79·0	19·2	20·4	19·9	0·6	0·8	0·7	308·2	462·6	396·3
Borders	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Central	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	291·0	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Fife	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	290·9	..	..
Grampian	54·1	..	77·9	18·3	..	18·8	1·2	..	1·1	301·3	451·9	386·2
Highland	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Lothian	56·4	96·6	79·8	18·2	20·7	19·7	0·6	0·9	0·8	312·4	467·2	406·2
Strathclyde	62·1	94·2	80·1	20·3	20·4	20·4	0·7	0·6	0·6	312·3	466·1	397·2
Tayside	..	..	76·7	..	..	19·5	..	..	0·5	311·2	..	399·1
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Highland and islands	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	292·2	..	..
Great Britain	58·9	89·2	76·3	18·5	20·1	19·4	0·8	0·9	0·8	321·4	446·6	395·1

Notes:
1. ".." denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimates.
2. The Survey excludes significant numbers of part-time employees with low weekly earnings.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide in a table the percentage of women in part-time employment who earn less than £2 per hour, less than £3 per hour, £3·40 per hour, £3·50 per hour, £4·50 per hour and £5 per hour for the categories *(a)* manual employment, *(b)* non-manual employment and *(c)* all women in (i) Scotland, (ii) the regions of Scotland and (iii) Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the new earnings survey is given in the following tables.

Part-time females on adult rates percentage with hourly earnings less than £2·00

	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*
Scotland	3·9	1·5	2·6
Borders	..	..	..
Central	5·0	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..
Fife	2·0	..	..
Grampian	4·2	0·9	2·4
Highland	..	..	..
Lothian	3·4	1·5	2·3
Strathclyde	4·2	1·6	2·7
Tayside	5·3	..	3·6
Islands	..	..	..
Highlands and Islands	2·5	..	..
Great Britain	2·6	1·7	2·1

Part-time females on adult rates percentage with hourly earnings less than £3·00

	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*
Scotland	52·4	25·8	37·8
Borders	..	..	..
Central	0·80	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..
Fife	71·4	..	..
Grampian	57·9	29·9	42·5
Highland	..	..	..
Lothian	50·3	21·1	33·5
Strathclyde	46·7	25·6	35·1

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Tayside	0·48	..	36·5
Islands	..	..	..
Highlands and Islands	0·60	..	..
Great Britain	52·1	23·5	35·9

Note: ".." denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimates.

Part-time females on adult rates. Percentage with hourly earnings less than £3·40

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Scotland	75·1	36·8	53·8
Borders	..	..	..
Central	87·5	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..
Fife	85·7	..	..
Grampian	70·5	39·3	53·3
Highland	..	..	..
Lothian	78·2	34·2	52·9
Strathclyde	70·6	33·3	50·1
Tayside	84·0	..	58·1
Islands	..	..	..
Highland and Islands	77·5	..	..
Great Britain	71·8	37·2	52·2

Part-time females on adult rates. Percentage with hourly earnings less than £3·60

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Scotland	83·5	43·2	61·1
Borders	..	..	..
Central	87·5	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..
Fife	89·8	..	..
Grampian	86·3	41·9	61·8
Highland	..	..	..
Lothian	83·7	41·7	59·5
Strathclyde	81·1	41·7	59·4
Tayside	90·7	..	63·5
Islands	..	..	..
Highland and Islands	82·5	..	..
Great Britain	79·2	43·8	59·1

Note: ".." denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimates.

Part-time females on adult rates. Percentage with hourly earnings less than £4·50

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Scotland	95·9	64·6	78·5
Borders	..	..	..
Central	95·0	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..
Fife	98·0	..	..
Grampian	96·8	63·2	78·3
Highland	..	..	..
Lothian	92·5	63·8	76·0
Strathclyde	96·4	63·5	78·3
Tayside	96·0	..	79·0
Islands	..	..	..
Highland and Islands	97·5	..	..
Great Britain	93·1	66·3	77·9

Part-time females on adult rates. Percentage with hourly earnings less than £5·00

	Manual	Non-manual	All
Scotland	98·3	70·8	83·0
Borders	..	..	..
Central	97·5	..	..
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	..
Fife	98·0	..	..
Grampian	100·0	68·4	82·5
Highland	..	..	..
Lothian	97·3	70·4	81·8
Strathclyde	98·6	70·5	83·1
Tayside	97·3	..	82·6
Islands	..	..	..
Highland and Islands	100·0	..	..
Great Britain	96·3	73·5	83·3

Note: ".." denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimates.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show for full-time workers the percentage earning less than £120 and £130 per week, giving the information for *(a)* women and *(b)* men for (1) manual, (2) non-manual and (3) all workers, including overtime pay and excluding overtime pay in (i) Scotland, (ii) the regions of Scotland and (iii) Great Britain.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the new earnings survey is given in the following tables.

Full time employees on adult rates: percentage with weekly earnings including overtime less than £120

	Women			Men		
	Manual	Non-manual	All	Manual	Non-manual	All
Scotland	39·2	14·7	20·3	5·6	3·1	4·4
Borders	..	..	48·8	6·6	..	..
Central	41·3	16·2	23·7	3·2	2·4	2·9
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	31·2	5·7	..	5·2
Fife	40·5	16·0	23·8	5·4	5·0	5·2
Grampian	..	15·4	23·2	4·6	1·7	3·3
Highland	..	18·2	27·0	5·6	..	4·5
Lothian	34·9	9·5	13·5	5·1	3·1	4·0
Strathclyde	34·3	14·7	19·1	5·9	2·8	4·4
Tayside	36·8	17·2	22·3	9·0	4·7	7·1
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	5·2
Highland and islands	..	17·0	24·6	5·3	3·8	4·7
Great Britain	33·0	10·3	15·0	4·6	2·1	3·4

NB ".." denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimate.

Full time employees on adult rates: percentage with weekly earnings including overtime less than £130

	Women			Men		
	Manual	Non-manual	All	Manual	Non-manual	All
Scotland	47·2	20·3	26·4	8·6	4·3	6·6
Borders	..	..	57·3	13·1	..	..
Central	49·2	24·3	31·8	6·5	3·0	5·0
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	39·6	7·8	..	8·6

	Women			Men		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Fife	48·1	21·3	29·8	8·3	5·5	7·1
Grampian	..	21·6	28·6	5·6	2·7	4·3
Highland	..	20·7	29·1	10·6	..	7·8
Lothian	43·4	15·5	19·9	7·4	4·6	5·9
Strathclyde	42·3	19·6	24·7	9·2	4·1	6·8
Tayside	50·5	23·5	30·6	13·2	5·1	9·6
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	7·8
Highland and islands	..	20·4	27·3	10·1	4·5	7·8
Great Britain	42·9	15·2	21·0	7·2	3·1	5·2

NB ".." denotes sampling error too large or numbers to small for reliable estimate.

Full time employees on adult rates: percentage with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £120

	Women			Men		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Scotland	44·9	15·7	22·3	8·2	3·7	6·1
Borders	..	..	51·2	8·2	..	..
Central	44·4	17·6	25·6	5·1	3·0	4·2
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	32·3	6·4	..	6·2
Fife	43·0	18·9	26·6	6·6	7·2	6·9
Grampian	..	16·4	25·6	7·0	2·0	4·7
Highland	..	18·2	27·7	6·3	..	4·9
Lothian	42·6	10·5	15·6	9·0	3·8	6·1
Strathclyde	39·6	15·5	20·9	8·7	3·4	6·2
Tayside	45·3	17·9	25·1	10·6	5·1	8·2
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	7·8
Highland and islands	..	17·0	25·7	6·9	3·8	5·6
Great Britain	37·1	11·1	16·5	6·8	2·5	4·6

Full time employees on adult rates: percentage with weekly earnings excluding overtime less than £130.

	Women			Men		
	Manual	*Non-manual*	*All*	*Manual*	*Non-manual*	*All*
Scotland	53·6	21·3	28·6	13·5	5·4	9·7
Borders	..	..	59·8	18·0	..	..
Central	57·1	25·7	35·1	10·1	4·2	7·6
Dumfries and Galloway	..	..	40·6	11·3	..	11·4
Fife	50·6	23·7	32·3	10·8	7·2	9·2
Grampian	..	22·6	31·3	11·9	2·9	7·9
Highland	..	24·0	32·4	15·5	..	11·0
Lothian	51·2	15·9	21·5	13·3	5·7	9·2
Strathclyde	49·0	20·6	27·0	13·9	5·1	9·8
Tayside	54·7	24·6	32·5	17·7	6·7	12·8
Islands	..	..	..	..	..	11·7
Highlands and Islands	..	23·1	31·7	15·3	5·3	11·2
Great Britain	48·5	16·3	23·0	11·6	3·7	7·6

N.B. " .. " denotes sampling error too large or numbers too small for reliable estimates.

Training Courses (London)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those providers of employment training courses, in the London area, who have had their funding cut in the current financial year.

Mr. Jackson: The contracts for employment training are negotiated between training providers and training and enterprise councils, where operational, or otherwise with area offices of the Employment Department. In either case the financial details of these contracts are commercial in confidence.

Local Authority Staff (Strikes)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which local authorities employees have taken strike action during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 27 March 1991]:* Confidentiality constraints preclude the publication of information which directly or indirectly identifies individual employers or people involved in strike action, even when such information may already be available in the public domain, for example, from media reports.

HEALTH

Children

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that there are no more cases of children being removed from their homes by social workers in unjustifiable circumstances.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Children Act, which will be implemented on 14 October, recasts the law on protecting children at risk to ensure that, when necessary, effective protective action can be taken within a framework of proper safeguards and reasonable opportunities for parents and others connected with the child to challenge such actions before a court.

The emergency protection order replaces the criticised place of safety order. Before granting such an order the court has to be satisfied the child is likely to suffer significant harm or cannot be seen in circumstances where the child might be suffering significant harm. The order has a maximum duration of eight days with a possible single extension of seven days. Where parents or certain other persons were not present when the emergency protection order was made they will have a right after 72 hours to apply to have the order discharged.

The Children Act introduces a new order, the child assessment order. Its purpose is to enable an assessment of a child to be made where significant harm is suspected but the child is not thought to be at immediate risk, where the local authority or other authorised person considers an assessment is required and where the parents are unwilling to co-operate. The order is intended to allow the local authority, or authorised person, to ascertain enough about the child's health or development or the way in which he has been treated to decide what further action, if any, is required.

These new orders will enable a balance to be struck between the rights of parents to bring up their children as they see fit and the duty of the state to intervene when necessary to safeguard the welfare of a child.

The Act also makes important changes to the use by local authorities of wardship and the High Court's inherent jurisdiction. If a local authority wishes to apply to a court for exercise of the High Court's inherent jurisdiction, it will first have to obtain leave of court to do so. Leave will be granted only if no statutory procedure is available under the Act which would achieve the desired result, and if there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant harm if inherent jurisdiction is not exercised.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many speech therapists are currently employed by local health authorities;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the number of speech therapists and *(b)* the ratio of speech therapists per 100,000 of population in the regional health authorities' planning proposals for each year from 1989 to 1994.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There were 2,810 speech therapists employed by the national health service in England at 30 September 1989. Details of the ratio of speech therapists per 100,000 of population in the regional health authorities' planning proposals for each year from 1990 to 1994 are not available centrally. The ratio as at 30 September 1989, by English region is shown in the table.

NHS qualified speech therapists in post and ratio of speech therapists per 100,000 population by regional health authorities at 30 September 1989

Whole-time equivalent[1]

Region	*Speech therapist*	*Ratio*
Northern	180	5·7
Yorkshire	180	4·9
Trent	260	5·6
East Anglia	110	5·5
North West Thames	250	7·2
North East Thames	250	6·7
South East Thames	260	7·0
South West Thames	180	6·0
Wessex	120	4·2
Oxford	150	5·9
South Western	220	6·7
West Midlands	270	5·2
Mersey	130	5·5
North Western	220	5·6
England[2]	2,810	5·9

Source: Department of Health (SMI3) Annual Census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Notes:

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents. Unrounded figures have been used to calculate the ratios.

[2] Includes figures (30 WTE) for London Post-Graduate Special Health Authorities.

Abortions

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of national health service abortions under 13 weeks since last menstrual period, and the corresponding number of day care operations, performed on women resident in each regional health authority, and in each district health authority, in England and Wales in the latest available year.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

General Practitioners, Haringey

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those general practitioner practices in the Haringey health authority area intending to hold their own budget as from April in the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Tim Chessells, chairman of the North East Thames regional health authority, for details.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to place the Audit Commission's annual financial audit of each district health authority in the public domain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Audit Commission's certificate on each district health authority's accounts is published with the accounts and will include any qualifications which the commission has found it necessary to make. In addition, the commission will make public reports "in the public interest" where particularly significant issues arise. Beyond this, its reports are properly directed to the authority itself.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the current waiting list for each specialty in the Haringey health authority and the number of people who have waited *(a)* for over one year and *(b)* for over two years, in each specialty.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest available information, at September 1990, is given in the table. It is the time individual patients wait that matters, not total numbers on the list. In the 18 months to September 1990 the number of patients waiting over one year for treatment in Haringey district health authority fell by 51 per cent.

Waiting list including those waiting over 1 year and over 2 years September 1990

Specialty	*Gross less self-deferred*	*Waiting over one year**	*Waiting over two years*
General surgery	661	174	30
Urology	230	51	16
Trauma and Orthopaedics	421	170	66
ENT	0	0	0
Ophthalmology	234	17	0
Oral Surgery	89	0	0
Plastic Surgery	0	0	0
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	173	1	0
Return Totals	1,811	413	112

Source: SM12: returns KH06, KH07 and KH07A
*includes numbers waiting over 2 years.

Clinical Regrading

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in relation to the time scale of the clinical regrading appeals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of letters on this subject have been received. Appeals against clinical grading decisions are heard under a complicated and time-consuming procedure agreed by the general Whitley council. We know that some nurses are unhappy about the time taken to hear their appeals under this agreement. When the clinical grading structure was negotiated, we offered to discuss a streamlined procedure specifically for clinical grading appeals. The nursing trade unions chose not to pursue this possibility and insisted on retaining the existing complex procedures.

Pharmaceutical Pricing

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish his response to the European Community Commission's recent questionnaire on pharmaceutical pricing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am arranging for copies of our response to the Commission of the European Communities questionnaire and of the questionnaire itself to be placed in the Library.

The response affirms the Government's wish to promote an open competitive market, and to take a positive part in future Community discussions on cost controls. The Government support discussions and exchanges of information between member states on matters of common interest in pharmaceuticals, including comparisons of prices and qualities of products to encourage rational prescribing, classification and identification systems, pack sizes, and availability of generics. There are considerable differences between member states' health care systems and their arrangements for controlling pharmaceutical expenditure. The Government consider, however, that a prescriptive central approach to price and profit controls should be avoided. Matters to do with the organisation and financing of health care are for member states.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he is considering any changes to the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We continue to operate the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme under the 1986 agreement with the pharmaceutical industry. The scheme will continue to operate unless either side gives six months' notice of termination not earlier than April 1992. In considering future arrangements, as well as the working of the scheme, we will take account of the effects of any relevant European Community developments on price and profit controls and of the indicative prescribing scheme.

Local Authority Child Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in England were received into local authority care where the specific cause was family homelessness, in every year since 1979 until the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest available figures are the provisional statistics for the year ending 31 March 1989. The number of children received into voluntary care under section 2 of the Child Care Act in England for the years ending 31 March 1979 to 31 March 1989 where the specific cause was that their family was homeless is given in the table.

Children admitted to Care due to Homelessness England, 1979-89[1]

During year ending 31 March	*Due to Homelessness*
1979	421
1980	529
1981	471
1982	378
1983	317
1984	244
1985	215
1986	207
1987	209
1988	179
[1]1989	223

[1]1989 Figures are provisional.

Prestwich Hospital

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the patients of Pinfold, Troy and Tottington wards at Prestwich hospital, Salford, will be evacuated, as recommended by the Health Advisory Service/Social Services Inspectorate in its report dated October 1900, No. (90) MI/E e.12.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that Clifton House at Prestwich hospital, Salford, will close by August 1991. Troy ward will close in May, Pinfold in June and Tottington in July.

Sterilisation

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district health authorities provide sterilisation within the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information collected centrally is not a form which enables accurate identification of all the district health authorities providing sterilisations.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has conducted any research into links between the availability of sterilisation and incidents of unplanned and regretted pregnancies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No research on this specific topic has been commissioned by the Department.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the relative costs of *(a)* sterilisation for social reasons and *(b)* continued use of contraception within the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Hospital Beds (Trent Region)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the numbers of beds available to national health service patients within the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the number of average daily available beds by district health authority for the Trent region in 1989-90, and the corresponding number of inpatients treated. The latest available information is as follows:

	Number of Beds 1989-90	*Number of Patients treated 1989-90*
Regional Total	24,554	698,776
North Derbyshire	1,574	37,345
South Derbyshire	2,700	61,608
Leicestershire	4,436	110,970
North Lincolnshire	1,413	36,600
South Lincolnshire	1,481	39,124
Bassetlaw	409	15,110
Central Nottinghamshire	1,484	43,221
Nottingham	3,334	117,018
Barnsley	1,111	32,908
Doncaster	1,657	47,926
Rotherham	1,129	38,380
Sheffield	3,828	118,566

Hormone Drugs

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on his Department's survey into the use and misuse of hormone drugs.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 19 February at column *87*. I will write to the hon. Member when further details are available.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) of 22 March, *Official Report*, column 254, if he will break down the estimated cost of £28 million for implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; if any sums were included in respect of payments to authorised representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

	£m
Costs of running a system of authorised representatives under Sections 1 and 2	15
Additional costs incurred during assessment process under Section 3 through use of authorised representatives	3
Costs of responding to increased pressures on service provision as a result of Sections 1-3	10

The cost estimates were based on detailed preparatory work undertaken independently by one metropolitan borough and one shire county. The metropolitan borough assumed that authorised representatives would not receive payments. The shire county assumed that 50 per cent. would be appointed by local authorities and receive fees and expenses, while the other 50 per cent. would be appointed by disabled people themselves and would receive expenses only.

GP Lists (Barnsley)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects 1990 figures to be available on the average general practitioner list size for the Barnsley family health services authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The 1990 figure for the average general practitioner list size for the Barnsley family health services authority should be available by the middle of May.

AIDS

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown by recipient organisation of funds made available during the current financial year to organisations specifically concerned with AIDS education; and if he will indicate in each case the purpose for which those funds are intended.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of Health makes funds available to a range of organisations in both the statutory and voluntary sectors for services connected with AIDS education, care and support.

In 1990-91 £8·5 million was allocated to the Health Education Authority for the development of the national AIDS public education campaign and a further £1·5 million was allocated to fund the running costs of the national AIDS helpline.

In addition, health authorities have been asked to ensure that a substantial part of the earmarked AIDS allocation which totalled £129·5 million in 1990-91, is devoted to the development of local HIV prevention work.

So far as the voluntary sector is concerned, in 1990-91 £1·8 million was provided to AIDS services organisations as follows:

	£
AIDS Ahead	40,000
AIDS Care Education and Training (ACET)	140,000
Aled Richards Trust	45,000
Barnardo's	15,000
Black HIV/AIDS Network	40,000
Body Positive	40,000
British Association for Counselling	69,470
Care and Resources for People with AIDS (CARA)	15,000
Frontliners	50,000
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	38,000
Landmark	60,000
Local Authority Associations' Officer Working Group on AIDS	19,000
London Lighthouse	300,000
Mainliners	40,000

	£
Mildmay Mission Hospital	130,000
National AIDS Trust	211,000
Positively Women	40,000
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse	41,000
Streetwise Youth	10,000
Terrence Higgins Trust	450,000

These sums are intended as a contribution to the core administrative costs of the organisations concerned but not for specific initiatives or specific areas of their work.

Health Authority Members

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he has made for the declaration of interests which may be thought to be associated with the discharge of their duties by his appointed members of regional and district health authorities; in what way any such interests are made public; and what criteria or code he has published as a guide to the compilation of any such registers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Provisions relating to declaration of interests are set out in the Regional and District Health Authorities (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990—11 (6), 13 and 20—and are covered in guidance issued on 12 July 1990. No specific guidance has been issued on the compilation of registers of interest.

Mental Health Grant

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the local authorities which have indicated that they are not taking up the full amount of the new mental health specific grant.

Mr. Dorrell *[pursuant to his reply, 11 March 1991 c. 351-54]:* I regret that the table published contained errors. The local authorities which have indicated that they are not taking up the full amount of the new mental illness specific grant should read as follows:

	Indicative Allocation £	*Bid* £	*Amount of allocation not taken up* £	*Per cent. of grant allocation not taken up*
Salford	110,000	Nil	110,000	100·0
Bromley	130,000	76,160	53,840	70·1
Bolton	120,000	98,200	21,800	22·2
Havering	90,000	75,000	15,000	20·0
Redbridge	110,000	100,000	10,000	10·0
Tameside	90,000	84,000	6,000	7·1
Essex	560,000	531,610	28,390	5·3
Bury	70,000	67,900	2,100	3·1
Oxfordshire	200,000	198,940	1,060	0·5
Sefton	110,000	109,685	315	0·3
Avon	370,000	369,437	563	0·2
Stockport	110,000	109,807	193	0·2
Hereford	220,000	219,649	351	0·1
Nottinghamshire	400,000	399,700	300	<0·1
Warwickshire	170,000	169,995	5	<0·1
Hammersmith	150,000	149,940	60	<0·1

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total financial allocation to each of the education boards in 1985 and 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Financial allocations to Education and Library Boards

1985-86 (Financial Year)	*Belfast £000s*	*North-Eastern £000s*	*South-Eastern £000s*	*Southern £000s*	*Western £000s*	*Total £000s*
Recurrent	42,647	44,886	37,805	42,193	38,955	206,486
Capital	2,824	4,476	2,834	3,841	4,020	17,995
1990-91 (Financial Year)						
Recurrent	61,424	72,276	61,644	70,033	62,870	328,247
Capital	7,944	9,847	10,097	13,269	9,064	50,221

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students transferring from primary school to second level education in 1990 were not placed in a school by *(a)* August, *(b)* September, *(c)* October and *(d)* later than October.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information supplied by the education and library boards indicates that the number of pupils transferring from primary school to secondary level education in 1990 who were not placed in a school by the end of August was 31. All of these pupils were placed in a school by the end of September.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names and addresses of the new members of the area health and social services boards.

Mr. Hanley: The names of the chairmen and non-executive members of each health and social services board are as follows.

Eastern Board
Mr. N. G. D. Ferguson (Chairman)
Mr. D. J. McGuinness
Mr. P. McLachlan
Mrs. B. McLaughlin
Mr. J. C. Morton
Professor R. G. Shanks
Mrs. J. R. Smyth

Northern Board
Mr. R. J. Hanna (Chairman)
Lady J. Brett
Mr. D. J. Clement
Professor M. E. H. Connolly
Mr. J. D. McMullan
Mr. M. A. O'Connor
Mrs. A. V. Smyth

Southern Board
Mr. J. D. Thompson (Chairman)
Mrs. S. Fisher
Mr. W. F. Gillespie
Mr. B. J. McShane
Mrs. J. Power
Mr. C. A. J. Quinn
Mr. D. J. Ryan

Western Board
Mr. R. G. Toland (Chairman)
Mrs. M. R. Cooper
Mr. W. S. Donaghey
Mr. A. Jackson
Mr. P. J. Kelley
Mrs. C. R. Lavery
Mrs A. F. Mark

Irish Republican Army

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply of 11 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *365*, whether there is any relationship between the official Irish Republican Army and any political party in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am not able either to confirm or deny any such relationship.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the cost of implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of implementing sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 has not yet been estimated.

Government support was given to the introduction of the Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act on the basis that it would be brought into effect in stages as resources permitted. Sections 9, 10, part of 11 and 12 came into operation on 7 December 1989.

On 1 April 1991, sections 5 and 6 of the Act, and parts of sections 4, 8 and 11, were brought into force. These provisions require health and social services boards to assess the needs of disabled people for certain social welfare services, and the ability of their carers to provide appropriate care. Boards are also required, in association with education and library boards, to ensure that young disabled people have a smooth transition from full-time education to adult life. Substantial resources have been made available to boards to enable them to implement these provisions.

With the implementation of these sections of the 1989 Act, Northern Ireland is now fully in line with Great Britain as far as the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986 is concerned. The intention is to maintain this position of parity.

Of the provisions of the 1989 Act still to be brought into effect, sections 1 and 2 provide for the appointment of an authorised representative either by the disabled person concerned or by the relevant health and social services board. Section 3 requires the relevant board to give a disabled person or his authorised representative the right to make representations about his need for services, to provide on request a written statement on the assessed need for services and to respond to representations about any such statement.

The implementation of these sections has been overtaken by wider developments in the community care field. The policy paper "People First" which was published last year, sets out the way forward for community care in Northern Ireland in the 1990s. Its wide-ranging proposals reflect and indeed amplify the spirit of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the 1989 Act.

For example, from 1 April 1991 health and social services boards have been required to put in place new complaints procedures which will ensure the formal investigation of all complaints or representations about community care services made by individuals or by anyone on their behalf. From 1 April 1993, comprehensive assessment arrangements will be introduced covering the community care needs of all people who are vulnerable through aging, chronic mental illness, mental handicap or physical disability. A written statement of the result of assessments and the services to be provided under agreed care plans will be provided on request. The Department of Health and Social Services is currently assessing the resources needed to bring these developments fully into effect, and will ensure that boards prepare for their introduction over the intervening two years.

In the light of these initiatives the implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 would be largely unnecessary, as their impact in the main will be achieved through the wider community care reforms. To press ahead with them now would be to run the risk of imposing upon boards complex administrative arrangements which they would have to fund at the expense of services. As in Great Britain, it has therefore been decided not to implement these sections, but the situation will be carefully reviewed when the impact of the wider community care reforms can be assessed.

Value Added Tax

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how he intends to allocate the additional revenue in Northern Ireland from value added tax consequent upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: As indicated by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement, this change arises from a substantial switch from local to

central taxation in the United Kingdom as a whole and will result in reduced domestic rates bills in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to limit the impact of the rise in value added tax upon citizens in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: In view of the long-standing principle of parity in taxation throughout the United Kingdom, no such measures are necessary or appropriate.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional funds he is allocating to local government bodies and area boards following the increase in value added tax.

Dr. Mawhinney: VAT paid by local government bodies and area boards is recoverable and the increase will not therefore affect expenditure.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the reduction in rates by each council in Northern Ireland as a result of the increase in value added tax.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total domestic rate poundage in each district council area will be reduced by an additional 82p. The district rate element remains unchanged but the reduction in the total domestic rate poundage—the domestic regional rate plus the district rate—will be 36 per cent. on average.

11-plus

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students went through the 11-plus transfer procedure in 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 25,783 pupils were in the age group to transfer from primary to secondary education in September 1990. A total of 18,126 sat the transfer procedure tests.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students transferring from primary school to second level education in 1990, with an 11-plus examination grade of (i) one, (ii) two, (iii) three and (iv) other, did not get placed in the school of their *(a)* first choice and *(b)* first or second choice.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	Grades			
	1	*2*	*3*	*Other*
i. pupils who did not obtain a place in the school of first choice	20	693	869	596
ii. pupils who did not obtain a place in the school of first or second choice	2	418	320	233

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students were subject to the appeal tribunal procedure of the 11-plus transfer system in 1990; and in how many cases were appeals *(a)* allowed and *(b)* disallowed.

Dr. Mawhinney: The appeal tribunals set up by the education and library boards considered 467 appeals; 249 appeals were successful and 218 were not upheld.

Customs Service

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given to creating employment for employees of the Northern Ireland Customs Service who will be surplus to customs requirements after 1992.

Mr. Needham: The Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland is leading an initiative aimed at attracting Government work from the south-east of England to Northern Ireland and is achieving success. The recent and very welcome decision by HM Customs and Excise to transfer 100 VAT administration jobs from London to Newry will go a long way to providing work for Customs and Excise staff who will become surplus to requirements in 1992. The IDB is continuing its efforts to attract more work from both the public and private sectors in Great Britain.

Roads

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions he has had representations from the Government of the Irish Republic about the closure of border roads.

Dr. Mawhinney: The closure of border roads has been discussed regularly at Anglo-Irish Conferences, and through the Anglo-Irish secretariat.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

14. **Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many low-income pensioners have gained from the extra increases in income support that took effect earlier this month.

Miss Widdecombe: Some 400,000 claimants have gained directly from the extra increase in the basic pensioner premium in income support; well over 1·5 million have gained through housing benefit or community charge benefit. This means that since the beginning of October 1989 there has been a real increase in every one of the pensioner premiums applying to around 6 million people at a total cost of around £300 million.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving income support in the areas covered by the Blyth Valley Department of Social Security office.

Miss Widdecombe: On 28 February 1991 there were 8,326 income support claims at the Department's office in Blyth.

Notes: Data derived from 100 per cent. count of cases in action, which include a number where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners claim income support in Blyth Valley; and what this is as a percentage of all pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: On 28 February 1991 there were 2,559 income support claims from pensioners at the

Department's office in Blyth. Data are not available on the total pensioner population in Blyth on the date and for the precise geographical area to which the above information relates.

Note: Data derived from 100 per cent. count of cases in action, which include a number where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many adults in Scotland over the age of 18 years are dependent on income support for their livelihood at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) how many people are in receipt of income support in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: In May 1989, the latest date for which information is available, some 565,000 people in Scotland over the age of 18 were wholly or in part dependent on income support. This total comprises 483,000 claimants, 81,000 partners, and fewer than 500 dependants aged 18 or over. This information is drawn from the May 1989 "Annual Statistical Enquiry", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Disabled People

15. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the impact of recent technological developments upon the disabled.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson).

Departmental Staff

16. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he intends to take to increase the availability of staff at DSS offices in response to the increase in applications for benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The staff resource allocation to DSS offices is based on a system which takes account of workload forecasts. The benefit agency monitors these forecasts and the staffing allocation and determines what action is necessary in respect of any changes. Account is taken of both increases and decreases in benefit workloads as some changes can be partly or wholly offset against others.

Sick and Disabled People

17. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the figure for the average annual increase in spending on long-term sick and disabled people *(a)* since 1979 and *(b)* for the period 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Scott: We are currently spending £10·1 billion per year on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people. This represents an annual increase of £470 million per year at 1990-91 prices since 1979, compared with £310 million per year between 1974 and 1979.

19. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the most recent figure for the average annual increase in spending on long-term sick and disabled people since 1979; and what were the comparable figures for the period 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Scott: I refer my right hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson).

Pensioners (Incomes)

18. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much pensioners' total incomes would have increased since 1979 if the rate of increase between 1974 and 1979 had continued; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The average net pensioner income increased by only 3 per cent., in real terms, between 1974 and 1979. My hon. Friend will be interested to learn that, had this rate of growth continued, the increase in pensioners' net incomes, in 1987 prices, between 1979 and 1987 would have been a mere £3·80 per week when in fact they rose by £24 during this period.

21. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received regarding the income and related matters of pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and Secretary of State recently met delegates from the Pensioners Convention. Ministers have also, in recent months, met representatives of four national pensioner organisations.

Invalid Care Allowance

20. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the earnings disregard in invalid care allowance; and what its value was two years ago.

Mr. Scott: On 8 April the earnings limit for invalid care allowance increased from £20 to £30 a week. In April 1989 the limit was £12.

Claimants

22. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is implementing to improve service to social security claimants.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester).

Family Credit

23. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent on advertising family credit since September 1989; and by how many the number of recipients has increased.

Mr. Jack: There were 319,000 family credit awards in payment for September 1989. The number then fell every month until the end of the year, when it stood at 298,000. Further advertising from mid-November and subsequently cost a total of £6·1 million. The caseload then rose each month from January 1990 until July when it reached 326,000 and then averaged well over 320,000 throughout the second half of 1990. This is a considerable achievement when viewed against the background of a constantly changing eligible population.

24. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of new claims for family credit was unsuccessful in the last month for which information is available.

Mr. Jack: Some 48·4 per cent. of new family credit claims cleared during March 1991 were unsuccessful. This includes claims which were withdrawn or invalid, as well as those where it was decided that the family was not entitled to benefit.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what level of family credit award is necessary *(a)* to activate entitlement to other benefits for which entitlement to or receipt of family credit is a condition and *(b)* prevents the claimant from making a new claim for family credit if her circumstances change during the currency of the award.

Mr. Jack: Entitlement to other benefits, such as the remission of NHS charges and certain payments from the social fund, exists only for families who are in receipt of family credit. Where the amount of family credit entitlement is less than 50p a week it is not payable and therefore in that situation there would be no automatic entitlement to the other benefits.

Family credit is payable for 26 weeks and the rate at which it is payable is not affected by any change of circumstances during that period. Thus, whenever family credit entitlement is 50p a week or more, and therefore payable, no account can be taken of a change of circumstances during the currency of an award.

Low-Income Workers

25. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures the Government have implemented since 1983 to assist working people on low incomes.

Mr. Jack: Tax and national insurance contribution changes have ensured that working people keep more of their own pay. The reformed benefit system has resulted in a huge reduction in the number of working people who would be better off on benefit, and people no longer find themselves worse off as a result of increasing their earnings.

Occupational Pensions

27. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the retired population has an occupational pension; and what is the percentage for the most recently retired.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that, in 1987, 52 per cent. of all pensioners and 73 per cent. of recently retired pensioners received income from occupational pensions.

Pensioners (Benefits)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further help he will give to people past retirement age who rely on state benefits as their sole source of income.

Miss Widdecombe: As a proportion of all pensioners, the number of people past state pension age living solely on state benefits, including those for disability, fell from 23 per cent. in 1979 to 16 per cent. in 1987. All pensioners' benefits are regularly uprated. In addition, income support and other income-related benefits for elderly people have recently been increased by more than the normal uprating index.

Tax Benefit Withdrawals

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people earn less than the respective point at which the tax benefit withdrawal level falls to 34 per cent.

Mr. Jack: Reliable estimates are not available on the basis requested. Estimates of the number of full-time workers receiving income-related benefits and facing combined income tax and benefit withdrawal rates in excess of 40 per cent. were given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 8 March at column *314-15*. It is very unlikely that there are any full-time workers facing marginal deduction rates between 34 per cent. and 40 per cent.

One-parent Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the weekly benefit entitlement when not working of a single parent with two children aged eight and 12 years and *(b)* the weekly income of a single parent with two children, also aged eight and 12 years, with earnings of £10, £15, £20, £30, £40 and £50.

Mr. Jack: The information is set out in the table. All assumptions are as set out in the published tax/benefit model tables. The family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to its size and to pay estimated average rent and community charge. Average rents are provisional 1991-92 figures and community charge has been assessed at £250 per annum. Any relevant changes announced in the Budget, including the increase in child benefit which will take effect in October, have also been incorporated. It has been assumed that the earnings of £10 to £30 a week are in respect of part-time work with the family remaining in receipt of income support. This means that the net income will remain static once the earnings disregard of £15·00 a week has been reached.

It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical rents, so do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay.

Single person with two children aged 8 and 12
Total net income on Income Support: £121·55
Net income after rent and Community Charge on Income Support: £91·14

Gross earnings (£pw)	*Total net income* (£pw)	*Net income after rent and community charge* (£pw)
10·00	131·55	101·14
15·00	136·55	106·14
20·00	136·55	106·14
30·00	136·55	106·14
40·00	148·34	117·93
50·00	150·08	119·67

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the numbers and percentages of *(a)* women and *(b)* men in receipt of one-parent benefit (i) in 1979, (ii) in 1989 and (iii) in 1990.

Mr. Jack: The information is set out in the table.

One parent benefit: Male and Female claimants

	Number	*Women per cent.*	*Number*	*Men per cent.*	*Total*
1979	334,000	87	50,000	13	384,000
1989	637,000	91	60,000	9	698,000
1990	681,000	92	63,000	8	744,000

Notes:
1. The figures are for 31 December of each year and are rounded.
2. Before 1981 One Parent Benefit was known as Child Benefit Increase.
3. *Source* Departmental records.

Claimants

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received each of the main social security benefits in each year from 1979 to the latest date available; and what was the percentage increase from 1979 in each case.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of the numbers of claimants receiving each of the main benefits for the years 1978-79 to 1990-91 and the percentage increases since 1979 are shown in the tables.

Estimated average numbers receiving benefits at any one time[1]

thousands

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Retirement pension	8,530	8,680	8,880	9,015	9,115	9,210	9,350
Widows' benefits	495	490	475	460	445	440	425
Unemployment benefit	570	550	960	1,220	1,090	1,020	1,020
Sickness benefit[2]	560	490	435	445	395	170	180
Statutory sick pay[2]	—	—	—	—	—	240	240
Invalidity benefit	600	620	620	660	700	760	825
Industrial disablement benefit[3]	270	270	265	260	265	265	260
Industrial death benefit	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Maternity allowance	100	115	120	125	125	110	120
Statutory maternity pay	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Non-contributory retirement pension	65	55	50	50	45	40	35
War pension	385	370	360	345	330	315	305
Attendance allowance	265	285	315	350	390	445	490
Invalid care allowance	5	5	5	5	10	10	10
Severe disability allowance	150	165	175	180	195	210	245
Mobility allowance	95	140	185	210	265	315	390
Income support/Supplementary benefit[4]	3,020	2,920	3,110	3,725	4,165	4,435	4,665
Child benefit—numbers of children[5]	13,480	13,330	13,160	13,145	12,890	12,660	12,430
One parent benefit	290	370	430	470	510	540	565
Family credit/Family income supplement	85	80	95	125	165	200	205
Housing benefit[6,7]							
rent rebate	1,210	1,205	1,330	1,590	3,050	3,735	3,745
rent allowance	225	220	240	250	260	1,015	1,080
rate rebate	3,055	3,065	3,350	3,700	5,320	7,020	7,230
Community charge rebates/benefit[8]—caseload	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Estimated average numbers receiving benefits at any one time[1]

thousands

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*Percentage increase 1978-79 to 1990-91*
Retirement pension	9,400	9,575	9,685	9,710	9,795	9,905	16·1
Widows' benefits	410	400	385	370	375	365	−26·3
Unemployment benefit	955	1,005	815	600	375	385	−32·5
Sickness benefit[2]	160	100	105	105	105	105	−81·3
Statutory sick pay[2]	245	320	345	365	360	360	n/a
Invalidity benefit	865	935	1,010	1,100	1,190	1,270	111·7
Industrial disablement benefit[3]	265	285	290	295	295	305	13·0
Industrial death benefit	30	30	25	30	30	25	−16·7
Maternity allowance	115	110	[10]30	15	20	20	−80·0
Statutory maternity pay			80	80	90	95	n/a
Non-contributory retirement pension	35	40	35	35	35	35	−46·2
War pension	295	280	270	265	265	265	−31·2
Attendance allowance	555	605	670	730	795	890	235·8
Invalid care allowance	10	[9]25	80	100	115	125	2,400·0
Severe disablement allowance	245	265	265	270	280	295	96·7
Mobility allowance	420	460	515	560	585	630	563·2
Income support/Supplementary benefit[4]	4,765	5,059	5,020	4,310	4,155	4,165	37·9
Child benefit—numbers of children[5]	12,375	12,175	12,040	12,010	12,000	12,165	−9·8
One parent benefit	590	615	660	705	735	760	162·1
Family credit/Family income supplement	205	215	220	280	305	315	270·6
Housing benefit[6,7]							
rent rebate	3,710	3,720	3,665	3,125	2,950	3,030	150·4

	thousands						Percentage increase
	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1978-79 to 1990-91
rent allowance	1,150	1,180	1,195	965	955	975	333·3
rate rebate	7,020	7,050	6,875	5,150	4,320		
Community charge rebates/benefit[8] —caseload					865	7,795	[11]135·2

[1] For contributory and non income-related benefits the number of individuals receiving benefit are shown. For retirement pension women receiving their own pension, based on their own or their husbands' contributions, are counted separately. For income support/supplementary benefit and family credit/family income supplement the numbers are individuals or couples where living together. For housing benefit the number of households receiving benefit are shown. Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one benefit at any time.
[2] Reflects the introduction of statutory sick pay in April 1983 and its extension to 28 weeks from April 1986.
[3] Recipients of Disablement Pension and/or Reduced Earnings Allowance.
[4] Figures to 1987-88 include those receiving housing benefit supplement (some 440,000 in 1987-88) who are also included in the figures for housing benefit recipients.
[5] Numbers of children in families receiving child benefit, including those also receiving one parent benefit.
[6] There is significant overlap: most households getting assistance with rent will also be in receipt of rate rebate/community charge benefit.
[7] Figures to 1981-82 relate only to the rebate and allowance scheme for those not receiving supplementary benefit. Thereafter the figures reflect the partial introduction of the housing benefit scheme from November 1982, and full start from November 1983.
[8] Community Charge rebates payable in Scotland only in 1989-90.
[9] Reflects the decision announced in June 1986 to extend eligibility to invalid care to married women.
[10] Reflects the introduction of statutory maternity pay from 6 April 1987.
[11] Compares community charge benefit recipients in 1990-91 with rate rebate recipients in 1978-79.
[12] Source: Public Expenditure White Papers 1984-1990 and 1991 Departmental Report.

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the benefit and allowances to which a married man with eight children under 11 years is entitled if his gross weekly earnings are *(a)* £90, *(b)* £120 and *(c)* £180 and he is paying average rent and rates (i) if he is working and (ii) if he is unemployed and showing the total net weekly spending power in each case.

Mr. Jack: The information is set out in the table. All assumptions are as set out in the published tax benefit model tables. Each family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to its size and to pay estimated average rent and community charge. Average rents are provisional 1991-92 figures and community charge has been assessed at £250 per annum. Any relevant changes announced in the Budget, including the increase in child benefit which will take effect in October, have also been incorporated.

It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical rents so they do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay.

Married couple with 8 children aged under 11

Total net income on Income Support: £232·85
Total net income after Rent and Community charge on Income Support: £197·63

Gross earnings	Family credit	Child benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and community charge
£	£	£	£	£
90·00	99·89	61·75	246·76	211·54
120·00	85·88	61·75	252·77	217·55
180·00	58·16	61·75	264·65	229·43

Note: No rent rebate or Community Charge benefit is payable at these earnings levels. This is due to the high rate of Family Credit.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the total number of supplementary benefit, income support and family support recipients and the total cost for each year since 1979 to the latest date available.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Supplementary Benefit/Income Support[1] and Family Income Supplement/Family Credit[1]: Recipients and expenditure

	Recipients (000's)		Expenditure (£ million)	
	IS/ Supplementary Benefit[1]	FC/FIS	IS/ Supplementary Benefit	FC/FIS
1978-79	3,020	85	2,256	24
1979-80	2,920	80	2,436	27
1980-81	3,110	95	3,172	42
1981-82	3,725	125	4,840	66
1982-83	4,165	165	6,261	94
1983-84	4,435	200	5,591	123
1984-85	4,665	205	6,444	126
1985-86	4,765	205	7,377	130
1986-87	5,095	215	7,962	161
1987-88	5,020	220	7,952	180
1988-89	4,310	280	7,575	394
1989-90	4,155	305	7,675	425
1990-91	4,165	315	8,545	484

Source: Public Expenditure White Papers and Departmental Report 1991.
[1] In April 1988 Supplementary Benefit was replaced by Income Support, and Family Income Supplement was replaced by Family Credit.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the central Government expenditure on rent rebates, rent allowances, rate rebates and family credit in 1979 and 1990; and what was the income level at which these benefits cease and the number of persons in receipt of such benefits in each year.

Miss Widdecombe: The information available is in the table. In 1979-80 help with housing costs was provided through the supplementary benefit scheme administered by the Department of Health and Social Security, and the

rent and rate rebate and rent allowance schemes which were the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. The costs and numbers getting help with housing costs through supplementary benefit are not readily available. The figures for 1979-80 therefore represent Department of the Environment schemes only.

The expenditure data shown for 1979-80 reflect total local authority spending. This was subsidised at the rate of 90 per cent. The 1990-91 figures are the amount of the central Government grant paid to local authorities through housing benefit subsidy. Direct comparison of the two sets of figures would be misleading because of the limited nature of the information for 1979-80.

The income level at which eligibility to family income supplement/credit and housing/community charge benefit ceases depends on the size of the household. Additionally in the latter two benefits the level of eligible costs affects entitlement. There is therefore no single income level at which entitlement would cease.

	Expenditure £ million	*Caseload (Thousands)*[1]
1979-80		
Rent rebate	238	1,205
Rent allowance	40	220
Rate rebate[2]	201	3,065
Family income supplement[3]	27	80
1990-91		
Rent rebate	[4]510	3,030
Rent allowance	1,549	975
Community charge benefit[2]	2,192	7,795
Family credit[3]	484	315

Notes:

[1] Estimated average numbers receiving benefits at any one time. For family income supplement/family credit and community charge benefit couples are counted as one. For rent and rate rebates and rent allowances the number of households receiving benefit is shown. Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one benefit at any time.

[2] Rate rebate in 1979-80, community charge benefit in 1990-91.

[3] Family income supplement in 1979-80, family credit in 1990-91.

[4] From 1990-91, most central Government support for rent rebates appears in the Department of the Environment and Welsh Office programmes, as rent rebate subsidy in England and Wales will be paid from local authorities housing revenue accounts. The amounts for 1990-91 are:

Rent Rebates (England) £2,297 million
Rent Rebates (Wales) £158 million.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of people claiming sickness and invalidity benefit at the latest date available; and what was the number of people claiming sickness and invalidity benefit in March 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Scott: The total number of people claiming sickness or invalidity benefit at 28 February 1991, the latest date available, is 1,690,000[1]. This total is provisional and subject to amendment.

The total number of people claiming sickness or invalidity benefit on 31 March 1979 was 1,289,000[2]; and on 1 April 1989 was 1,392,000[2].

[1] Source—local office caseload count.

[2] Source—Social Security Statistics.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will state the total number of supplementary benefit recipients, including dependents, as defined for community charge purposes for each year since 1979;

(2) what was the total number of persons dependent on both social security and housing rebates in *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1985-86, *(d)* 1989-90, *(e)* 1990-91, for the latest date available, and the forecast for 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: The information available is listed in the tables. No reliable data exist for the period before 1983-84 on numbers of claimants who got both supplementary benefit and help with housing or rate costs.

Thousands

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*[1]
Rent rebate	—	1,930	1,920	—	—	—	1,760	1,670	1,780
Rent allowance	—	520	540	—	—	—	580	610	590
Rate rebate/community charge benefit	3,070	3,200	3,190	3,400	3,320	2,920	3,020	3,230	—

[1] Forecast.

Notes:

(1) The available data relates to claimants only, not dependants.

(2) The figures partially overlap as eg. some people who get a rent allowance also get community charge benefit.

(3) No forecast has yet been made of community charge benefit caseload for 1991-92 because of the recent general reduction in charges.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are dependent on *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit, broken down into claimants, dependants and children for (i) the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow, (ii) Inverclyde district council area, (iii) Strathclyde and (iv) Scotland as a whole.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 14 March 1991]:* Income support and family credit information for the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow and the Inverclyde district council area or in respect of the number of partners or children is unavailable and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Information in respect of Greenock and Port Glasgow local offices, Strathclyde and Scotland is as follows:

	Greenock and Port Glasgow	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
Income support[1]	15,940	284,900	506,900
Family credit	[2]1,010	[2]16,200	[3]39,000

[1] Data derived from February 1991 count of cases in action, which include a number where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

[2] Number of awards actually in payment on 8 February 1991, i.e. excludes awards on claims made before that date but not decided at that stage.

[3] True caseload at the end of July 1990, i.e. including backdated awards. Information on this more comprehensive basis is only available for Scotland as a whole.

Housing benefit information for the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow or in respect of the number of children is unavailable and could be

obtained only at disproportionate cost. The information in respect of Inverclyde district council area, Strathclyde and Scotland is as follows:

	Inverclyde district council[1]	*Strathclyde*[1]	*Scotland*
Claimants[2]	11,900	266,000	544,000
Partners[2]	[3]3,400	[3]75,000	[3]153,000

[1] Does not include information about New Towns or Scottish Homes properties.
[2] Data relates to August 1990.
[3] Partially estimated.

Benefits (Norwich)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in the *Official Report* the number of people refused unemployment benefit in the Norwich area under the availability/actively seeking work rules since April 1990, the number of claimants in Norwich on income support who have had benefit penalties imposed through the use of the availability/actively seeking work rules since April 1990, and the number of social fund applicants in Norwich who have been refused loans in the last financial year because of local social fund budget restraints.

Mr. Jack: The information concerning income support recipients in the Norwich area who have had benefit penalties imposed through the use of the availability/actively seeking work rules is not kept and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Statistics on unemployment benefit adjudication are not separately identified for Norwich. To indicate trends, figures are provided at table 1 for the East Midlands and Eastern region, which includes Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Nottinghamshire. The information is collected quarterly for the purpose of publication in the "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Decisions of Adjudication Officers", a copy of which is available in the Library. Monthly figures are not separately available.

Information on the number of people being refused social fund loans because of local social fund budget restraints is not collected. Table 2 shows the number of applications refused at the Mountergate and Chantry Norwich offices because they were considered to be for items of insufficient priority.

Social fund officers are required to take account of the local guidance on priorities, provided by the office manager, and they are further required to view each and every case on its merits having regard to the needs and circumstances of the customer. Wherever possible the social fund officer will look to elevate the overall priority of the application to ensure that payment is made. I understand that the managers of the Norwich local offices have written to the hon. Member separately on the subject of local guidance on priorities, and they will notify him of any future changes to this guidance.

Table 1
Adjudication Statistics—East Midlands and Eastern Region (From April 1990)

Subject	*Period ending*	*Decisions of Adjudication Officers*	
		Allowed	*Disallowed*
Availability	June 90	317	490
	September 90	291	657
	December 90	337	555
Restricted availability	June 90	400	149
	September 90	385	141
	December 90	436	115
Actively seeking work	June 90	8	17
	September 90	14	12
	December 90	20	10

Table 2
Social Fund Loan Refusals for the Norwich Mountergate and Chantry Offices (Period 1 April 90—28 February 91)

	Refusals due to Low Priority	
	Budgeting Loans	*Crisis Loans*
Mountergate	180	0
Chantry	1,229	1

Correspondence

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to answer the letter from the hon. Member for Birkenhead, sent on 2 November 1990, and the reminder sent on 20 February 1991, about the chairman of the Attendance Allowance Board.

Mr. Scott: I replied to the hon. Member on 27 March.

Local Office, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to alter the disposition of offices for *(a)* the payment and *(b)* the processing of social security benefit claims in Cardiff.

Miss Widdecombe: The management team for the new Cardiff district has now been appointed and one of its main priorities is to look at ways to provide the best possible service to its customers. This will include considering a variety of options for organising work and paying benefits within the district. There will be the widest possible consultation with Members of Parliament, and with local statutory and voluntary organisations. Members of Parliament will, therefore, be kept consulted over any proposed changes affecting their constituency.

Occupational Pensions Board

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will list the current members of the Occupational Pensions Board and give the relevant experience of each member; how many of the board are females; and what percentage of the total membership they comprise.

Miss Widdecombe: In addition to the chairman and deputy chairman there are currently 12 members of the Occupational Pensions Board. Four members of the board

are female—representing almost 29 per cent. of the total membership. As from 6 April 1991 membership of the board is as follows:

Chairman: SIR JEREMY ROWE, CBE.

Deputy Chairman: MR. JOHN MARTIN, Consulting Actuary.

Members:

MR. R. AMY
Compensation and Benefits Director; Former Chairman of the National Association of Pension Funds' (NAPF) International Committee; Former Treasurer of the NAPF; Former Chairman of the NAPF Parliamentary Committee.

MRS. R. BROWN
Managing Director; Author and broadcaster on pensions matters; Former member of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

MISS C. H. DAWES
Pensions lawyer; Member of the Association of Pensions Lawyers (APL); Member of the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) Trust.

MR. R. ELLISON
Pensions lawyer; Member of the APL; Chairman of the Law Society Pensions sub-committee; Council member of the NAPF; Member of the OPAS Trust.

MR. R. J. HEBBLETHWAITE
Financial and marketing adviser.

MR. A. U. LYBURN
Vice-President of the Faculty of Actuaries; General Manager (Personnel) of a large Insurance Company.

MR. R. NEALE
CBI nominee; Former Pension Fund Manager; Member of Governing Council of the OPAS.

MR. A. PICKERING
Head of Trade Union Membership Services Department; Pension scheme trustee; Council member and Treasurer-Elect of the NAPF.

MR. W. M. R. RAMSAY
Director and Executive Committee member of a large Asset Management Company.

MR. K. R. THOMAS
TUC nominee; Pension scheme trustee; Member of the OPAS Trust.

BARONESS TURNER OF CAMDEN
Principal Opposition Spokesperson on Social Security, Employment and Pensions matters in the House of Lords; Former member of the EOC.

MISS H. WIESNER
Consumer consultant; Member of Board of LAUTRO; Member of Board of the Investers Compensation Scheme; Member of the Insurance Brokers Registration Council.

Rent Rebates

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many tenants in the public and private sectors, respectively, are in receipt of rent rebates; and what percentage this is of the total number of tenants in each sector.

Miss Widdecombe: The information in respect of Scotland is as follows:

		Percentage of Total tenants
Tenants in the Public Sector (Rent rebates)	470,000	55
Private Sector (Rent allowances)	80,000	39

DEFENCE

HMS Endurance

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the future of HMS Endurance.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to my answer of 25 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), *Official Report*, column *304*.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received from Colonel Mike Brooke of the Royal Engineers who is leading a six-nation ordnance clean-up team in Kuwait on the scale of the problems which are to be faced.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces have been reporting through the military chain of command on a regular basis on their activities. These activities have principally involved immediate humanitarian assistance in Kuwait in areas where we have special expertise, including explosive ordnance disposal.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions are given to commanders in the Gulf on the treatment of private photographs or film used to record environmental and ecological scenes by service men stationed in the Gulf; whether confiscation is permitted; and what provision is made for confiscated film to be recovered.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any instructions on the treatment of private photographs or film of environmental and ecological scenes in the Gulf.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *232*, if he will set out in tabular form the optical and chemical properties of the oil smoke plume as measured by Royal Air Force aircraft.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Measurements made by the meteorological research flight aircraft within the smoke plume at about 100 km from Kuwait showed the following concentrations:

Sulphur dioxide—around 500 ppb (parts per billion); a typical value in an urban environment is 25 ppb.
Nitrogen oxides—around 25 ppb.
Ozone —around 40 ppb.

The nitrogen oxides and ozone levels are consistent with those found in an urban environment.

At the 100 km distance the soot concentration was about 150 micrograms per cubic metre and contained about 20,000 soot particles per cubic centimetre, 0·1 to 10 microns in size. Visually the particles caused substantial reductions of sunlight beneath the plume and almost complete darkness within the plume. At 1,000 km from Kuwait, particle concentrations within the plume were less than 1,000 per cubic centimetre, only the very smallest particles remained.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been made of the rise and temporary decline in temperature between convenient points in *(a)* region and *(b)* time (i) in Kuwait, (ii) Bahrain and (iii) on the Kuwait/Iraq border, as a result of oil-well fire effects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Meteorological Office has made estimates of the depression of maximum day-time temperatures in the Gulf area based on the generally sparse measurements of surface temperature that are available. When the smoke plume is overhead, calculations indicate that the day-time temperatures in Kuwait city are depressed by 4 to 6 degs. C, in Bahrain the depression is 1 to 3 degs. C. No surface measurements are available from the Kuwait-Iraqi border. Values similar to Kuwait city are expected. Larger depressions of temperature may occur close to the source of the plume and beneath high concentrations of smoke.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in clearing mines and booby traps in the Ahmadi and Magwa oil fields.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces have been providing assistance in Kuwait in areas where we have special expertise, including explosive ordnance disposal. Much has already been achieved and progress continues to be made. It is not possible to comment in detail on operations in specific areas as they involve several other agencies and can change from day to day.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the tonnage of bombs dropped by coalition forces on Kuwait and Iraq which *(a)* missed their target and *(b)* accurately hit their target.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The assessment of the effectiveness of weapons used by British forces during the conflict is not yet complete. Information is not available for other coalition countries.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information was received from the Soviet Union on the ground deployment of Iraqi forces during Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to comment on such matters.

RAF Edzell

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is funding the recently awarded contract for construction work on the communications building at RAF Edzell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This work is being funded by the United States navy.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the role of RAF Edzell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The role of RAF Edzell is to facilitate the interoperability of Royal Navy and United States navy communications systems, and to provide communications support to Royal Navy ships.

Oilfield Fires

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to measure and monitor the potential carcinogenic effects on service men of burning oil field smoke of *(a)* carbon monoxide, *(b)* carbon dioxide and *(c)* sulphur dioxide.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. These compounds are not known to be carcinogenic.

International Military Services

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the intended future role of International Military Services in relation to overseas defence sales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements he has made to sell International Military Services to the Saudi Arabian Government.

Mr. Alan Clark: The scale of IMS business is being re-assessed in the light of current market developments. Within overall Government policy, decisions on individual business ventures are matters for the company's commercial judgment and are regarded as commercial in confidence.

Iraqi Military Equipment

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *264*, to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) how much Iraqi equipment has been recycled in the period 23 March to 10 April.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Explosives and Propellants Agreement

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will place a copy of the explosives and propellants agreement between the Government and British Aerospace/Royal Ordnance in the Library;

(2) on what date the explosives and propellants agreement, between the Government and British Aerospace/Royal Ordnance, was signed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The explosives and propellants procurement agreement between my Department and Royal Ordnance was signed on 18 August 1986. The details are commercially confidential.

HMS Daedalus (Slipway)

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what powers are available to his Department for controlling access to and use of the slipway connecting HMS Daedalus to the sea at Marine Parade West, Lee-on-Solent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence owns the slipway connecting HMS Daedalus to the sea at Marine Parade West, Lee-on-Solent. We therefore have the normal powers of a landowner to regulate access and thus to remove trespassers.

Radio Frequency Radiation

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has performed any trials of the use of radio frequency radiation as a weapon.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) to the hon. Member on 25 March, column *302*.

Fox Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the organisations and individuals authorised to shoot foxes on Ministry of Defence land at Kirknewton camp, West Lothian, Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No organisations or individuals have been authorised to shoot foxes on Ministry of Defence land at Kirknewton camp.

Sandhurst and Military Beagles

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is responsible for the costs of staff for the Sandhurst and Military Beagles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is responsible for the cost of the single kennel huntsman who is employed to look after the Sandhurst and Military Beagles and also part of the academy's grounds.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what agencies of the CSCE have so far been set up; what is the foundation and composition of each and where is it located; and when he expects ministers of the CSCE member Governments to meet to more closely define the functions of each of these agencies and enable them to make progress in achieving the tasks assigned to them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Paris summit of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe established three institutions: secretariat, conflict prevention centre and office for free elections. The Paris charter, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, defines their size, composition and function.

The institutions are accountable to the Council of Foreign Ministers of CSCE states, which will meet for the first time in Berlin in June.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions the United Kingdom is making to *(a)* the Western European Union, and *(b)* the secretariat and crisis prevention centre of the CSCE and other agencies of that organisation; and what is the approximate manpower in post in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom will meet 9·1 per cent. of the approved budgets of the CSCE secretariat, the conflict prevention centre and the office of free elections. When fully operational, these will have a total staff of eight, seven and five respectively. We meet 17 per cent. of the WEU budget. The overall staff total of WEU institutions is approximately 109.

Kuwait

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the availability of smog masks in Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Many people living and working in Kuwait have acquired smog masks. There is no difficulty in importing them from Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what knowledge he has of the effect of mixture of hydrocarbons and chlorine in the drinking water in Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Environmental damage to drinking water supplies and the build-up of hydrocarbons in the food chain in Kuwait are elements proposed as part of the comprehensive environmental assessment now being carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme together with other United Nations agencies.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what knowledge he has of the countries to which substantial numbers of the population of Kuwait have fled since the end of the war.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Many of those who were resident in Kuwait at the time of the Iraqi invasion have not yet returned. We have no information about residents who have left Kuwait since 28 February.

The ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross, which has a delegation in Kuwait, is in touch with the Kuwaiti Government about the position of foreign communities, including those who may wish to leave the country.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what knowledge he has of the build-up of hydrocarbons in the food chain in Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Environmental damage to drinking water supplies and the build-up of hydro-carbons in the food chain in Kuwait are elements proposed as part of the comprehensive environmental assessment now being carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme together with other UN agencies.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the effects of oil pollution on the lungs of sheep in Kuwait.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the diaspora of Palestinians from Kuwait since 1 March.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We do not hold details of departures by Palestinian residents of Kuwait. We have repeatedly expressed our concern to Kuwaiti Ministers about reports of ill-treatment of Palestinians. ICRC representatives in Kuwait are now in touch with the Kuwaiti Government about their position.

Kuwait

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the ill-treatment and torture of Palestinians in Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to express our concern to the Kuwaiti authorities that Palestinians should be treated fairly and in accordance with the law. Our latest reports suggest that the situation is improving. The ICRC, which has been given access to Palestinian detainees, confirms that their conditions have greatly improved. We shall continue to monitor the situation and raise it with the Government of Kuwait whenever necessary.

Dried Milk (Embargo)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken since 8 March concerning the embargo on dried milk for Iraq being applied to Jordan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations sanctions against Iraq do not apply to Jordan. We have no evidence that shipments of dried milk to Jordan have been affected.

NATO

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals are currently under discussion for the reconfiguration of NATO.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The NATO summit, held in London in July 1990, agreed on the adaptation of the alliance to the changes taking place in Europe. This review process, which is likely to be completed later this year, involves changes in NATO's strategy and force structures, including the development of smaller, more mobile and flexible active forces, increasing reliance on multinational formations, reduced readiness and training requirements and greater reliance on the ability to build up larger forces if and when they might be needed. In the nuclear field, the alliance will maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces, based in Europe, and kept up to date where necessary. But the size and tasks of NATO's nuclear deterrent forces will change. NATO's political role is also changing to reflect the changed political situation in Europe. The alliance has extended the hand of friendship to the Soviet Union and the eastern European countries. Contacts between these countries and NATO are increasing in frequency and scope.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Special European Council met on 8 April. Ministers discussed the political, security and economic aspects of the post-war situation in the Gulf. At British request, they considered the plight of the refugees in and from Iraq and agreed to provide 150 mecu in emergency aid. Ministers condemned the Iraqi Government's repression of its civilian population particularly the Kurds and called for the maintenance of sanctions while current Iraqi policies persist. Ministers also considered the conditions for peace and stability in the region and the role of the Community in the peace process. I also refer my hon. Friend to the statement on the situation in Iraq made in the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs this afternoon.

The Economic and Finance Council met on 8 April and discussed tax issues relating to road transport; the financial implications of the Commission's 1991-92 common agricultural policy price-fixing proposals; the Commission's proposals for a loan to Romania; articles 4 and 8 of the takeovers directive; and the regulated markets provision of the investment services directive. New proposals to remove withholding taxes on cross-border interest and royalty payments within groups of companies and to provide tax relief for the losses of companies' overseas permanent establishments and subsidiaries were formally presented to the Council, although without discussion. The Ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union on 8 April discussed progress made by Ministers' personal representatives over the last month, in particular focusing on capital liberalisation and transition to stage 2.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 15 April and may discuss the follow-up to the informal European Council meeting of 8 April. It will review progress in the EC-EFTA negotiations on a European economic area and consider the next steps in the negotiations. The Commission might report on the negotiations taking place for association agreements with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In EPC discussions, Ministers may discuss, inter alia, the latest developments in Iraq, Yugoslavia and Albania. Ministers will discuss EC-Japan relations including a draft declaration, which the presidency and Commission intend to agree with Japan in May and also the Commission's draft document on the energy charter. A ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on political union will be held on 17 April and will discuss a full range of issues including an overview of progress in negotiations.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 18 April and will discuss the 10th and 11th amendments to the conservation regulation, the Commission communications on the common fisheries policy and data on the landing of fisheries products in member states.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 22-23 April and will discuss the 1991 price-fixing proposals and the agriculture aspects of the GATT Uruguay round.

The Research Council will meet on 24 April and may discuss relations with the European Parliament in the light of its request for the Commission to withdraw the five proposals for research programmes under the third framework programme on which the Council has agreed common positions. The Council will discuss the position of foreign-owned companies in Community research programmes. It is possible that common positions will be agreed on the information technologies, biomedical and health, non-nuclear energy, industrial and materials, and agro-industrial research programmes of the third framework programme.

The Industry Council will meet on 29 April and may discuss the Commission's communications on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), biotechnology and the future of the ECSC Treaty. Ministers may also discuss industrial policy, the consumer electronics and semiconductors industries and the state of work concerning the textiles industry (annual report).

Palestinians

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *259*, whom he classifies as representative Palestinians; and what information he has on calls for elections in the occupied territories by Palestinians living there.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not for us to say who should form a Palestinian delegation, but if a negotiation with Israel is to achieve results it is essential for this delegation to be able to speak on behalf of the majority of Palestinians. There is a continuing debate in the occupied territories on the desirability of elections there and the form these might take: no consensus has yet emerged.

Turkey

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits to the Diyarbakir region of Turkey have been made by Her Majesty's Government's staff from the embassy in that country; whether they visited the Iraqi Kurdish refugee camps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 10 April a first secretary from our embassy in Ankara, together with a senior Overseas Development Administration official, travelled to south-east Turkey for a four-day visit to view at first hand the refugee camps and the effectiveness of the relief effort. Also, our air attaché in Ankara has been in Incirlik from the outset of the relief operation, and flew with the first RAF relief sortie.

Antarctica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he consulted *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Japan on the recent review of Government policy towards Antarctica.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We did not consult the USA or Japan during the recent review of United Kingdom policy on Antarctica. However, once the review was complete we put the United Kingdom proposals to all Antarctic treaty consultative parties, including the USA and Japan, for their consideration in advance of the special consultative meeting in Madrid later this month.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are to be the objectives of the Government at the forthcoming meeting of Antarctic treaty parties in Madrid in April with regard to *(a)* a prohibition on mining, *(b)* the time limit on any prohibition and *(c)* the mechanisms necessary to extend the prohibition.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, wrote to all Members of Parliament on 25 March setting out the United Kingdom's proposals for a moratorium on mining in Antarctica which we believe may hold the key to a return to consensus.

We have not proposed a specific length for the moratorium or a mechanism for its termination or extension. We have, however, made clear our requirement that a legal vacuum at the end of the moratorium should be avoided. These issues will be taken forward at the meeting in Madrid.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Community partners he consulted on the recent review of Antarctica policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We did not consult our EC partners while conducting the review of United Kingdom policy on Antarctica. However, once the review was complete, we put our proposals to all Antarctic treaty consultative parties including France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, for their consideration in advance of the special consultative meeting that will be held in Madrid later this month.

Japanese Prisoners of War

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards claims by British ex-prisoners of war for compensation against the Japanese Government for injury suffered during the 1939-1945 war.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The question of compensation for the sufferings of former British prisoners of war of Japan was settled in the 1951 treaty of peace with Japan. We received a total of £4,816,473 from the Japanese Government, which was paid to claimants in instalments between 1952 and 1956. The level of compensation was less than we would have wished, but it was agreed by the allied powers that the Japanese Government had fully discharged their obligations.

Libya

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his German counterpart about the involvement of German companies in the development of Libya's chemical weapons plant at Sebha; and if he will raise the matter at the next European Foreign Affairs Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have been, and remain, in close touch at all levels with the German authorities about this issue.

Kurds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 13 March, *Official Report*, column *550*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), what recent meetings Her Majesty's Government's representatives have had with representatives of Kurdish movements in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met Iraqi Kurdish representatives on 9 April. I met Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, in Damascus on 12 March. Contacts between officials and Kurdish representatives continue.

Mr. Abdul Malik

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on the application made by Abdul Malik (Ref: IMM/99947) to the post in Islamabad to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Mr. Rashad Mahmood

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be made on the application made by Rashad Mahmood (Ref: IMM/82219) to the post in Islamabad to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Solomon Smolyar

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Soviet Government about their failure to grant an exit visa to Solomon Smolyar of Leningrad who has been offered treatment at the Rambam medical centre in Haifa.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Smolyar's case is among those on which we regularly press the Soviet authorities, and has been raised again recently. We shall keep up the pressure until there is a satisfactory outcome.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate has been made of the cost of not having a single seat for the European Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any single official estimate.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Council of Ministers last discussed the seat of the European Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Council of Ministers has not held a formal discussion of the European Parliament seat for some years. But the subject has been discussed informally at various times. Heads of Government briefly considered the European Parliament seat at the Dublin European Council last June.

Hong Kong and China

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his visit to Hong Kong and China from 1 to 10 April.

Mr. Hurd: I paid an official visit to China from 3-8 April at the invitation of the Chinese Foreign Minister, and visited Hong Kong for a day at each end of that visit. This was the first visit by a Foreign Secretary to China since 1986.

In Peking I had two full sessions of talks with the Foreign Minister and met the Party General Secretary, the Premier, the chairman of the National People's Congress and the director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office. With the Foreign Minister, I covered major international issues of common concern, including the middle east, arms proliferation and Cambodia. We also discussed a number of bilateral matters, including commercial relations. I raised our concerns about human rights, including in Tibet, both with the Foreign Minister and with the General Secretary.

A central element in my discussions was Hong Kong. I told the Chinese that we wanted to intensify work on the practical issues which need to be resolved in order to ensure a smooth transition in 1997. In achieving this we need to respect two key principles. On the one hand, Britain, China and Hong Kong need to co-operate on the implementation of the joint declaration. On the other, the Hong Kong Government need to be able to fulfil their duty to govern effectively. Seeking the views of China on certain important matters, and paying close attention to those views where possible, is compatible with those principles, but the task of taking decisions rests with the Hong Kong Government.

The Chinese reaffirmed their support for the joint declaration and agreed that we should strengthen the work of the joint liaison group. We were unable to achieve a breakthrough on the question of Chinese support for the new airport in Hong Kong. It is an economic fact that private investment in such a project is unlikely to appear unless investors are confident that it has Chinese support.

Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what shark products in what quantities have been imported into Hong Kong in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* The only shark product of significant quantity imported into Hong Kong is shark fin. The following quantities have been imported over the past three years:

	Tonnes
1988	3,738
1989	3,556
1990	3,838

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the Hong Kong authorities to make the next assessment of the total commercial ivory stock held within the colony.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* It is likely that the Hong Kong authorities will initiate the next assessment of the total commercial ivory stock held in Hong Kong towards the end of this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the ivory exported from Hong Kong since 17 July 1990 in accordance with the CITES requirements.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* No commercial exports of ivory covered by CITES have been authorised since midnight on 17 July 1990 except for one pre-convention specimen, consisting of one antique piece weighing 0·1 kg.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *55*, if he will state the disposal arrangements for the ivory name seals and blocks seized in Japan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* The disposal of the ivory name seals and blocks seized in Japan is a matter for the Japanese authorities. The seized items have not been returned to Hong Kong.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is known to his Department about destruction by *(a)* coalition forces and *(b)* Iraqi forces of holy places at Samarra; and what he has done since his letter of 28 January to the hon. Member for Linlithgow to avoid damage.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

We have no information about damage to holy places at Samarra. Throughout the air campaign, coalition pilots attacked only military targets or facilities supporting Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. These attacks were carefully planned, and took account of the locations of Islamic holy places and sites of historical importance.

SCOTLAND

Primary School Testing

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total cost to date of introducing national testing in primary schools, including all costs for advertising, leafleting, training and additional materials in schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 6 February 1991. Expenditure on leaflets and advertising has amounted to £250,000.

Crofting

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crofting tenants there now are.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: According to the records held by the Crofters Commission, there were 13,444 crofting tenants at 31 December 1990. This figure includes crofters who are tenants only of a share or shares in common grazings.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crofts in each crofting area have transferred from tenure to owner-occupancy under the terms of the Crofting Reform Act 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Former county	*Number of whole croft purchases[1] intimated to the Crofters Commission since enactment of the Crofting Reform Act 1976*
Argyll	313
Caithness	317
Inverness (including Skye, Harris and Uists)	591
Orkney	191
Ross and Cromarty (including Lewis)	282
Sutherland	208
Shetland	322
Total	2,224

[1] In addition to the figures for whole croft purchases, 447 part-crofts have been purchased and 1,597 croft house sites.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crofting tenants, by estate, of the Secretary of State have exercised their right to buy *(a)* the house site and *(b)* the croft, under the Crofting Reform Act 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Crofting County/Estate	*A*	*B*	*C*
Argyll			
Ardachy	2	2	—
Balmeanach	2	—	—
Bonnavoulin	—	—	1
Calgarry	3	—	—
Killeonan	10	1	3
Kinlochlaich	2	1	—
Knockvologan	2	—	1
Moy	2	—	1
Pottie	2	—	—
Sunart	23	1	4
Tomaig	3	—	—
White Hart Parks	7	—	—
Total	58	5	10
Caithness			
Dunn and Scarmclate	20	—	1
Forss	1	—	—
Hallum	1	—	—
Hoy and Braal	1	—	—
Lochend	6	—	1
Lybster	2	—	—
Skaill	5	1	—
Stempster	3	1	—
Upper Dounreay	7	1	—
West Murkle	4	—	—
West Watten	11	—	—
Total	61	3	2
Inverness-shire			
Balranald	1	1	4
Barra	—	2	9
Benbecula	9	8	14
Beolary	—	1	3
Borve	—	1	2
Bracadale	11	21	66
Claigan	—	2	2
Eoligarry	1	2	8
Inshes	10	—	1
Kilbride	—	2	5
Kilmuir	22	56	83
Kingsburgh	4	5	11
Luskentyre	—	1	4
Mains of Ardersier	6	—	—
Milton of Culloden	4	—	2
Ness-side	4	—	—
Newton	3	1	12
Raasay	4	17	10
Scallasaig	2	1	3
Scaristavore	—	1	3

Crofting County/Estate	*A*	*B*	*C*
Scorrybreck	1	8	6
Tomich	12	—	2
Vatersay	—	—	1
Woodside of Culloden	3	—	2
Total	97	130	253
Orkney			
Stove	5	—	—
Ross and Cromarty			
Arabella	3	1	3
Balnabean	2	—	3
Broomhill	4	—	1
Corntown	7	—	2
Culcairn	2	—	1
Dounie	1	—	2
Geanies	2	—	4
Kinbeachie	4	—	—
Kinkell	2	—	2
Raddery	3	—	1
Seafield	4	—	1
Total	34	1	20
Shetland			
Ordale	4	—	4
Sutherland			
Armadale	13	1	9
Borgie	2	—	1
Syre	6	—	4
Total	21	1	14
Grand Total	280	140	303

A = Whole croft
B = Part croft
C = Croft house

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the number of persons employed by the Crofters Commission *(a)* in the Inverness headquarters and *(b)* elsewhere in the crofting counties, in each of the last five years and in 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The numbers of staff employed in the Inverness headquarters of the Crofters Commission on 1 April in each of the years were:

	Permanent staff[1]	*Casual staff*
1979	52½	—
1986	51	—
1987	51	—
1988	51	1
1989	52	3
1990	48	5

[1] These figures do not include Commissioners.

(b) No staff are employed by the Commission outwith Inverness. However the Commission is able to call upon the services of professional staff from the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department area offices throughout the crofting counties in respect of crofting schemes and regulatory matters.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the total cost to the Exchequer of the Crofters Commission in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Total expenditure of the Crofters Commission

Financial year	*£'000s*
1986-87	[1]154
1987-88	752
1988-89	849
1989-90	936
1990-91	[2]1,080

[1] Comparable figures are not available for this year as the costs of the permanent staff were until then incorporated in the overall Scottish Office staffing expenditure.
[2] Forecast outturn.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the crofting estates owned by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland with, in each case, the number of tenants, the acreage of inbye land and the acreage of common grazing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information relating to crofting estates belonging to the Secretary of State is set out in the table. The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department does not hold separately information relating to the acreage of inbye land or common grazing. The total hectarage figures given, however, includes both inbye land and common grazing.

The Secretary of State's crofting estates as at 31 December 1990

Area and estate	*Crofting lets*[1]	*Other agricultural lets*	*Total hectarage*
ARGYLL:			
Kinlochlaich	5	—	1,500
Sunart	38	1	2,548
Morven-Bonnavoulin	1	—	29
Isle of Mull			
Glenforsa[3]	—	2	4,789
Isle of Islay			
Whitehart Parks	8	—	264
Mull of Kintyre			
Killeonan	1	—	9
Moy	3	—	64
Totals	56	3	9,203
INVERNESS (Mainland):			
Mains of Arderseir	1	—	4
Inshes	2	—	30
Milton of Culloden	1	—	6
Woodside of Culloden	1	1	6
Beolary	6	—	972
Tomich	8	1	120
Scallasaig	10	—	1,985
Total	29	2	3,123
ROSS AND CROMARTY:			
Arabella	2	—	73
Balnabeen	5	—	73
Corntown	5	—	98
Culcairn	1	—	53
Dounie	2	—	56
Geanies	2	—	63
Kinkell	2	—	58
Raddery	2	1	77
Seafield	3	—	30
Totals	24	1	581

Area and estate	Crofting lets[1]	Other agricultural lets	Total hectarage
CAITHNESS:			
Dunn and Scarmclate	11	—	584
Forss	7	1	605
Hoy and Braal	2	—	100
Lochend	2	—	223
Lybster	1	—	132
Stempster	2	—	67
West Murkle	1	—	23
West Watten	2	—	88
Totals	28	1	1,822
SUTHERLAND:			
Armadale	95	2	4,735
Borgie	9	—	4,958
Keoldale	43	—	11,032
Syre	20	—	4,736
Totals	167	2	25,461
INVERNESS (SKYE AND RAASAY)			
SKYE:			
Bracadale	166	8	19,697
Claigan	4	—	1,480
Kilbride	10	—	3,451
Kilmuir	373	—	19,120
Kingsburgh	27	—	5,334
Scorrybreck	16	—	4,003
RAASAY:			
Raasay	33	2	6,731
Totals	629	10	59,816
INVERNESS (WESTERN ISLES)			
HARRIS:			
Scaristavor	10	1	1,240
Luskentyre	10	—	2,397
Borve	32	—	3,014
NORTH UIST:			
Balelone/Balmartin	5		
Balranald	49		6,555
Newton	49	7	
BENBECULA:			
Benbecula	76	2	1,045
BARRA:			
Barra	56	1	1,143
Eoligarry	66	1	1,324
VATERSAY:			
Vatersay	43	1	1,362
Totals	396	13	18,080
NORTHERN ISLES			
ORKNEY:			
Stove	4	—	247
SHETLAND:			
Cliff	24	—	312
Fetlar	6	—	71
Ordale	11	1	807
Westafirth	13	—	971
Totals	58	1	2,408
Grand Total	1,387	33	120,494

[1] The number of "crofting lets" may differ slightly from the number of "tenants" because of some multiple tenancies.
[2] Leasehold subject.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information on the pollution of drinking water in Scotland, including levels of aluminium and other toxic substances, his Department is gathering.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Records are maintained of the quality classification of drinking water supply sources and of those supply zones where water does not currently meet the quality standards set in the EC drinking water directive and the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990.

Where a standard is persistently infringed, a water authority may in certain circumstances apply for authorisation of a relaxation, but otherwise must submit an undertaking to make a necessary quality improvement within a specified time. There are separate arrangements for reporting specific pollution incidents or other significant water quality failures. No water supply zones have been notified as failing to meet the standards for any toxic substance. For lead arising from plumbing systems, water authorities are due to report by the end of this year on any zones where there is a risk that tap water will not meet the new lead standard, stricter than that of the EC directive, set in the water quality regulations.

The standard for aluminium, not classed as a toxic substance in the EC directive, may be relaxed if the aluminium is of natural origin. My answer to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 4 March 1991, column *65-66*, gave details of maximum authorised levels of aluminium in such cases.

Other substances such as nitrates and pesticides are the subject of specific inquiries to water authorities from time to time.

Annual reports to be published by water authorities by 30 June 1991 will provide information and data on water quality standards in all supply zones.

Education Spending

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total spending on education in Scotland as a percentage of Scottish gross domestic product in real terms in each year since 1978.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Public expenditure on education includes expenditure both by the Secretary of State directly and by education authorities. Details are as follows:

	Expenditure by Secretary of State and education authorities in real terms at 1989-90 prices (£ million)	Expenditure as a percentage of the Scottish GDP
1977-78	2,090	7·06
1978-79	2,107	7·06
1979-80	2,071	7·11
1980-81	2,159	7·67
1981-82	2,214	7·80
1982-83	2,366	8·16
1983-84	2,367	7·93
1984-85	2,318	7·74
1985-86	2,293	7·37
1986-87	2,379	7·24
1987-88	2,450	7·28
1988-89	2,475	7·04
1989-90	2,544	7·12

Note: 1989-90 = estimated outturn.

Sources: A Commentary on the Scottish Programme
The Scottish Office Departmental Report
Scottish Economic Bulletin

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure on *(a)* nursery, *(b)* primary and *(c)* secondary education by local authorities in Scotland in 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is given in the table, which has been compiled from local authority financial returns.

Net current expenditure on nursery, primary and secondary schools 1989-90

	£ million
Nursery	39·658
Primary	605·294
Secondary	751·602

Feu Redemption

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has concerning the current average cost of feu redemption; and whether he has any plans to abolish such a charge;

(2) if he has any plans to review the law on feu redemption.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information about costs of feu duty redemption is not held centrally. Before considering whether any legislation on this question is desirable, my right hon. Friend proposes to await the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission on completion of its current major review of property law in Scotland.

Housing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Scottish Homes board to discuss progress being made in the proposed disposal of former Scottish Special Housing Association houses in the Borders region in terms of the voluntary disposal procedures in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether, in the event of the disposal of the former SSHA houses in the Borders region being rejected in whole or in part, by a majority of the tenants or by himself, he would require to give his consent to any proposed agents to factor any properties remaining in the possession of Scottish Homes;

(2) if he will allow local authorities to be considered as appropriate bodies to compete to act as agents of Scottish Homes in any future factoring arrangements on expiry of exisiting contractual arrangements of Scottish Homes properties in the Borders region;

(3) what instructions he will give to Scottish Homes in terms of future factoring arrangements for former SSHA housing stock in the Borders region;

(4) if he will make a statement on how he intends to exercise his powers in section 3A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, relative to his consent being required for Scottish Homes appointing other persons to act as its agents.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In terms of Scottish Homes (Powers) General Authority 1989, a general authority given by my right hon. Friend in terms of section 2(3)(a) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, Scottish Homes may appoint such agents as it considers necessary, on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit and reasonable. The general authority does not, however, authorise Scottish Homes to appoint agents to manage houses where the cost of doing so is greater than if Scottish Homes managed those houses without an agent.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *142*, if he will publish the revised timetable for the proposed disposal of former SSHA housing stock in the Borders region including the time for Scottish Homes to process proposals to purchase stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has asked Scottish Homes to publish the proposed timetable and expects it to do so during May.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now reconsider his policy of proscribing tenants choice of landlord in relation to the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to amend the relevant legislation.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *144*, if he will now publish the safeguards he will insist upon as a condition of his consent to a voluntary transfer of housing stock under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 in protecting the interests of tenants against any private sector or voluntary sector landlord who is subsequently made bankrupt or goes into liquidation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have nothing to add to my reply of 5 March.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether multi-option ballots are to be allowed to be put to tenants under the voluntary disposals of former SSHA housing stock in the Borders region in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the guidance which my right hon. Friend has given to Scottish Homes there is nothing which prevents the agency from putting forward two or more options to the ballot stage for consideration by tenants. I understand that it remains Scottish Homes' intention, however, that at each ballot only one proposal for change will be put to the tenants.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet in a position to publish details of the burdens and other heritable conditions to be determined by Scottish Homes which are to be inserted in the title deeds of the heritable properties to be disposed of under the voluntary disposals of former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Borders region in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988; what specific heritable conditions will be imposed to protect and safeguard future tenants; and what powers he has to vary any such conditions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As stated in my reply of 5 March, these properties are owned by Scottish Homes

and which, if any, burdens or other heritable conditions are imposed on the stock to be transferred is a matter for the agency.

My right hon. Friend has no powers to vary any such conditions, although he may take these into account in the giving or withholding of his consent to any disposal.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *144*, regarding the valuation system to be adopted in any large-scale voluntary transfer of housing stock, what procedures are to be put in place to decide what condition the stock is in and who will arbitrate in the event of a dispute about the valuation of the necessary remedial work.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In terms of Scottish Homes' published procedures, the agency itself will undertake a current survey of the properties so that the condition can be established. As stated in my answer of 5 March, the district valuer will be invited to assess the market value of the stock. This valuation will be on the basis of open market value subject to existing tenancies with account being taken of the condition of the stock. Negotiations on the offers made by prospective landlords will be a matter for Scottish Homes.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what power he has to ensure that former SSHA tenants, currently holding tenancies with Scottish Homes, will continue to be the subject to affordable levels of rent in the event of being transferred to another private or voluntary sector landlord under the voluntary disposal of stock provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The basis for determining future rents will form part of the overall proposal which will be put to tenants in the ballot which will precede the approval of any such disposal. Future rental increases will be determined by the provisions of the tenancy agreement and in the case of dispute will be subject to the arrangements for rental increases under assured tenancies under the provisions of sections 24 and 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988. These provisions allow the tenant to refer the prescribed notice of increase in rent to the rent assessment committee for determination.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of financial support he expects to pay to private sector landlords acquiring former SSHA housing stock in the Borders region in terms of the voluntary disposal provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988; and what financial support will be provided to cover elements of any management costs involved in making the successful bid to purchase.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes would be responsible for the consideration and payment of any request for financial support from a private sector landlord. It would be for the agency to consider, in the first instance, the elements of costs which might be assisted. In terms of section 3(a) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, any proposal by Scottish Homes to provide financial support would require the approval of my right hon. Friend given with the consent of Treasury. Before granting that approval, he would wish to be assured that the assistance would be in accordance with his and Scottish Homes' policy objectives and would provide value for the public funds involved, relative to the competing demands for those funds.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that any tenants of Scottish Homes who do not wish to transfer to the private sector, in terms of the voluntary disposal of former SSHA houses in Borders region under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 will be permitted to remain as tenants of Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. However, my right hon. Friend will withhold his consent to any disposal if he is not satisfied that the interests of tenants have been fully protected and he will give his consent only if a majority of those replying to the ballot are in favour of the proposal put to them.

In the guidance which he issued to Scottish Homes in February 1991, my right hon. Friend asked Scottish Homes to ensure that tenants are advised of their rights and of all the opportunities available to them, as soon as possible after Scottish Homes' initial clearance of any case put to it for disposal. He will wish to ensure that advice has been given to tenants before giving his consent.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the mobile breast cancer screening programme to be fully operational; and what is the total budget allowed for the programme in 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The programme will be fully operational by August and the total budget for 1991-92 is £3·346 million.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps have been taken to advertise and publicise the mobile breast cancer screening units which are currently operational in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The arrangements for advertising and publicity are made by the health boards in consultation with the screening units. Publicity will be given prior to a visit by a screening unit to a local area and can take the form of a local or national press notice, local radio and television. In addition promotional seminars for the primary health care teams are held by the screening unit about one month in advance of a scheduled visit.

Information leaflets about the breast screening service in Scotland have been placed in all GP surgeries, in community centres and libraries.

Fish Farms

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to the problems of eider duck and golden-eye duck devouring substantial quantities of young mussels and other products on fish and shellfish farms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Consumption of young shellfish by eider ducks or golden-eye ducks is known to occur at some shellfish farms. Licences can be issued by my right hon. Friend, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to shoot protected birds where that is necessary to prevent serious damage. So far no application for a licence to shoot these or other species of protected bird has been made in respect of a marine shellfish or fish farm.

Advice on non-lethal methods of deterring predation by these ducks at shellfish farms is being prepared by the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland in conjuction with the Association of Shelfish Growers and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. This advice will take account of the findings on such predation carried out by Aberdeen university department of zoology and commissioned by the HIDB and the Scottish Office.

Vacation Hardship Allowance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much was paid out in vacation hardship allowance in 1989-90 in Scotland;

(2) how many students received vacation hardship allowance in 1989-90 in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of £3,860·60 was paid in vacation hardship allowances to 14 students during academic session 1989-90.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the unemployment rate in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In February 1991, the Scottish seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 8·2 per cent. of the work force.

Property Development

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now relax the rules about the Scottish Enterprise or local enterprise companies only being property developers of last resort.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No. The right approach is to promote and, where appropriate, assist private sector develolpment and the normal functioning of the industrial property market in Scotland. There is no case for the use of public money to finance property development in cases where the private sector would be prepared to make the necessary provision.

Temporary Sheriffs

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current daily rate paid to a temporary sheriff sitting in the sheriff court in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The current daily rate effective from 1 April 1991 is £212.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many temporary sheriffs were employed in the Scottish courts for more than 80 per cent. of the available court sitting days in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table:

Year	
1988	0
1989	0
1990	3

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many temporary sheriffs hold commission to serve in sheriff courts in Scotland; how many sessions were put in by temporary sheriff courts for the latest period for which figures are available in Scotland; and what was the cost to his Department.

Mr. Lang: Ninety-three temporary sheriffs currently hold a commission to serve. Between 1 March 1990 and 28 February 1991, temporary sheriffs sat on 4,300 occasions at a cost of approximately £1,100,000.

Primary Schools (National Testing)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on national testing in primary schools; and how many were for his proposals and how many against.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: To date 1,100 representations have been received covering a complete spectrum of views on testing.

School Inspections

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the intended and actual frequencies of inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in Scotland for *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* primary schools, *(c)* secondary schools, *(d)* further education colleges, *(e)* centrally-funded institutions, *(f)* community education services and *(g)* other services;

(2) how the frequency of inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors has altered for various categories of educational institution since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 4 February 1991]:* Each year a management plan for Her Majesty's inspectorate is agreed with the Secretary of State. This establishes a programme of inspections which will provide the necessary information on an agreed range of issues from a balanced sample of schools. The inspections vary in nature, from full inspections which examine all aspects of the work of an institution and lead to a published report on the institution, to more limited selective inspections which focus on a particular issue and may contribute to a published or an internal report. The configuration of the inspection programme therefore varies in accordance with the issues under investigation.

Publication of reports on full inspections began in 1983 and the numbers of reports on institutions published since then are as follows:

	Reports published						
Session	*Nursery*	*Primary*	*Secondary-independent*	*Special*	*College*	*Community*	*Total*
1983-84	4	112	23	6	3	3	151
1984-85	7	118	21	9	1	2	158
1985-86	9	112	24	11	4	2	162
1986-87	11	116	26	6	2	2	163
1987-88	10	113	23	4	4	3	157

Session	Nursery	Primary	Secondary-independent	Reports published Special	College	Community	Total
1988-89	9	86	20	6	2	2	125
1989-90	6	69	18	4	2	1	100

The reduction in the number of full inspections in 1988-89 and 1989-90 was to accommodate an increase in surveys of aspects of education and other priority work undertaken by the inspectorate. There has been a corresponding increase in the rate of publication of aspect reports in recent years. In 1988-89 16 of these were published, and 22 in 1989-90, compared to an average of six per session in earlier years.

Bathing Water

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the amounts of loans received from the European investment bank in each of the past three years which were used for the improvement of river and bathing water quality.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* No loans from the European investment bank for this purpose were received in Scotland during 1988 to 1990.

Local Government Finance

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the anticipated income for each local authority in Scotland for 1991-92 from *(a)* aggregate external finance and *(b)* community charges.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* The figures are shown in the table.

	Aggregate External Finance £000	Total CC Income £000
Borders	79,835	17,667
Central	182,112	54,602
Dumfries & Galloway	112,446	26,385
Fife	240,865	75,373
Grampian	366,160	83,647
Highland	184,082	36,917
Lothian	479,248	212,866
Strathclyde	1,693,546	434,203
Tayside	280,835	81,108
Berwickshire	1,484	555
Ettrick & Lauderdale	2,789	1,318
Roxburgh	3,121	1,311
Tweeddale	1,226	516
Clackmannan	5,122	3,758
Falkirk	13,365	4,988
Stirling	9,703	6,198
Annandale & Eskdale	2,530	1,919
Nithsdale	4,339	2,846
Stewartry	1,605	925
Wigtown	2,554	1,422
Dunfermline	11,592	6,915
Kirkcaldy	12,336	8,162
North East Fife	6,399	4,214
Aberdeen City	26,209	16,940
Banff & Buchan	7,183	4,045
Gordon	6,039	2,734
Kincardine & Deeside	3,766	1,184
Moray	7,159	2,669
Badenoch & Strathspey	938	368
Caithness	2,338	659
Inverness	5,022	1,507
Lochaber	2,224	943
Nairn	796	279
Ross & Cromarty	5,761	2,148
Skye & Lochalsh	1,684	405
Sutherland	1,470	506
East Lothian	8,810	5,384
Edinburgh City	59,443	41,209
Midlothian	7,157	4,474
West Lothian	12,961	5,901
Argyll & Bute	10,224	4,831
Bearsden & Milngavie	3,497	2,366
Clydebank	6,891	3,993
Clydesdale	5,694	3,944
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	5,204	2,795
Cumnock & Doon Valley	4,197	2,130
Cunninghame	14,601	10,456
Dumbarton	7,423	7,723
East Kilbride	5,637	6,735
Eastwood	4,272	2,070
Glasgow City	135,736	54,606
Hamilton	10,545	7,424
Inverclyde	10,830	5,585
Kilmarnock & Loudoun	7,232	4,458
Kyle & Carrick	10,697	9,700
Monklands	12,887	7,440
Motherwell	16,041	8,011
Renfrew	22,061	15,857
Strathkelvin	8,797	6,142
Angus	8,069	3,842
Dundee City	23,459	12,316
Perth & Kinross	11,913	5,725
Orkney	24,566	2,027
Shetland	54,719	2,399
Western Isles	53,017	3,624

Footnotes

1. The Community charge income figures shown are local authorities' own budgeted estimates for 1991-92 of community charge receipts from personal, collective and standard charges, inclusive of community charge benefits and receipts from the transitional relief and community charge reduction schemes. They accordingly reflect the position before the decision to increase the level of central government support for local authorities and to reduce all 1991-92 personal community charges by £140.
2. Aggregate External Finance includes revenue support grant, estimated non-domestic rate income and estimated specific grants for each authority. An additional £47·2 million of specific grant relating to the urban programme expenditure has not yet been allocated to individual authorities.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were *(a)* gross local authority revenue expenditure, *(b)* net local authority revenue expenditure, *(c)* rate support grant/revenue support grant, *(d)* local authority income from non-domestic rates and *(e)* local authority income from domestic rates/community charges at constant prices for each year from 1978-79 to 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* The information is set out in the table:

	(1) Gross revenue expenditure £ million	(2) Net revenue expenditure £ million	(3) RSG £ million	(4) Non-domestic rate income £ million	(5) Domestic rates/ Community charge income £ million
1978-79	4,692·9	4,309·5	2,625·4	974·0	520·7
1979-80	4,921·4	4,532·9	2,583·3	989·6	523·5
1980-81	5,111·5	4,771·9	2,651·2	1,134·8	607·5
1981-82	5,218·3	4,835·1	2,519·9	1,391·2	768·0
1982-83	5,273·8	4,875·9	2,540·7	1,445·9	816·1
1983-84	5,323·8	4,908·1	2,555·0	1,387·1	772·2
1984-85	5,299·6	4,869·5	2,364·7	1,373·2	784·4
1985-86	5,184·7	4,756·9	2,278·7	1,372·5	853·5
1986-87	5,316·0	4,881·5	2,148·5	1,437·5	911·2
1987-88	5,394·8	4,943·2	2,212·3	1,524·5	991·3
1988-89	5,469·5	4,961·3	2,289·7	1,510·5	994·6
1989-90	n/a	5,021·4	2,414·7	1,313·5	1,059·2
1990-91	n/a	5,131·9	2,495·3	1,189·0	1,062·1
1991-92	n/a	5,243·6	2,615·5	1,298·1	1,266·8

Notes:

1. Gross revenue expenditure figures are only obtained from local authorities in Local Financial Returns (LFRS). The LFR is for 1988-89.
2. The figures in column 2 are taken from LFRS to 1988-89, Final Outturn returns for 1989-90, Provisional Outturn returns for 1990-91 and Budget Estimate returns for 1991-92.
3. In column 3 the figures represent the redetermined amounts of rate and revenue support grant where appropriate.
4. The figures in column 4 are Final Outturn to 1988-89. For 1989-90 to 1991-92 the figures represent the Non-Domestic Rate Income estimated by the Department as part of AEF.
5. In column 5 the figures are Final Outturn to 1988-89 and Provisional Outturn for 1990-91. The 1991-92 figure shown is the total of local authorities' own budgeted estimates. It reflects the position before the decision to increase the level of central government support for local authorities and to reduce all 1991-92 personal community charges by £140.
6. All figures have been converted to real terms by means of the Treasury GDP deflator (March 1991). All years are at 1990-91.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the anticipated net local authority revenue expenditure and gross local authority revenue expenditure for 1991-92 for *(a)* all regional council services, *(b)* education, *(c)* police and fire services, *(d)* social work, *(e)* roads and transport, *(f)* loan charges attributable to regional services, *(g)* all district council services, *(h)* leisure and recreation services, *(i)* loan charges attributable to district council non-housing services, *(j)* cleansing services, *(k)* libraries and museums and *(l)* environmental health services.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* The only information at present available to my Department in relation to expenditure in 1991-92 is based on local authorities' budget estimate returns. These show that authorities plan expenditure on services supported by aggregate external finance and personal, collective and standard community charges as follows:

	Column 1 Revenue expenditure £ million	Column 2 Loan and leasing charges £ million	Total columns 1 and 2 £ million
(a) All regional services	4,117·7	474·7	4,592·4
(b) Education[1]	2,278·8	167·5	2,446·4
(c) Police and Fire services[1]	598·4	30·2	628·6
(d) Social Work[1]	631·2	39·9	671·1
(e) Roads and Transport[1]	393·0	193·6	586·5
(f) Loan Charges *(Regions)*	—	474·7	—
(g) All district services	691·4	188·1	879·5
(h) Leisure and Recreation[2]	254·4	55·2	309·6
(i) Non-housing district loan charges	—	188·1	—
(j) Cleansing services[3]	164·8	16·4	181·2
(k) Libraries and Museums and Art Galleries [2 4]	93·8	13·0	106·8
(l) Environmental Health services[2]	50·5	3·2	53·8

[1] Figures include Regional and Island authority expenditure.
[2] Figures include Regional, Island and District authority expenditure.
[3] Figures include Island and District authority expenditure.
[4] Figures include expenditure on Art Galleries as well as Museums as separate figures for these two services.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total investment in manufacturing industry in Scotland in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The table shows estimates of capital investment in terms of net capital expenditure for manufacturing industry in Scotland between 1974 and 1988, the latest year for which figures are available.

Scottish net capital expenditure for manufacturing industry

Year	Net capital expenditure £ million current prices Orders III to XIX SIC 1968	Divs 2-4 SIC 1980
1974	310	—
1975	426	—
1976	465	—
1977	493	—
1978	551	—
1979	597	589

Year	Net capital expenditure £ million current prices Orders III to XIX SIC 1968	Divs 2-4 SIC 1980
1980	—	654
1981	—	617
1982	—	542
1983	—	491
1984	—	623
1985	—	866
1986	—	777
1987	—	736
1988	—	1,026

Source: Annual Census of Production.

Note: From 1988 contributors to the Annual Census of Production were asked to include as capital expenditure the value of assets acquired under financial leasing arrangements.

Industry (Fixed Capital)

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the gross domestic fixed capital formation for *(a)* all industries and *(b)* manufacturing industry in Scotland in each year since 1978.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The information requested is given in the table, covering 1978 to 1988, the latest years for which data are available.

Gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scotland for (a) all industries covered[1] and (b) manufacturing industry

Year	All industries covered[1]	GDFCF (£ million current prices) Manufacturing industry
1978	2,072	523
1979	2,327	562
1980	2,668	645
1981	2,575	586
1982	2,621	541
1983	2,661	470
1984	2,852	597
1985	3,130	862
1986	3,079	789
1987	3,034	738
1988	3,573	951

Source: Central Statistical Office.

[1] The industries covered are Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Energy and Water Supply, Manufacturing, Transport and Communications (excluding air and sea transport) and Dwellings.

Notes:

(1) Figures exclude leased assets and investment in land and existing buildings.

(2) Figures after 1979 are not entirely consistent with those for earlier years. However, differences are thought to be small.

Carstairs Hospital

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients at the state hospital at Carstairs no longer require to be kept in secure wards and could be returned to semi-secure wards at local hospitals if they existed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 March 1991]:* Where patients are suitable for transfer, arrangements will be made for this to take place.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an analysis, comparable with table 5·7 of Cm. 1520, showing that local authority expenditure in Scotland which falls outside expenditure within his own responsibility.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested, consistent with that given in the statistical supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement (Cm. 1520), is given in the following table.

Local authority expenditure in Scotland on functions outside the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland

£ million

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Pay	15	17	18	22	22	48
Other current expenditure on goods and services	10	11	13	14	14	
Current grants to persons	285	335	386	400	456	528
Net capital expenditure on assets	2	2	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	313	364	419	438	493	577

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 16 April 1991

HOME DEPARTMENT

Imprisonment (Remission)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those offences, other than relating to non-payment of the poll tax, for which there is no remission in cases of imprisonment.

Mrs. Rumbold: In addition to those imprisoned for non-payment of the community charge, inmates in custody in the following circumstances are not eligible for remission.

(i) non-payment of: rates; a maintenance order; any civil debt; sums due under legal aid contribution orders; sums due on forfeiture of a recognisance; costs ordered to be paid by a magistrates' court; debts under the Debtors' Act 1869;
(ii) non-compliance with court orders other than financial penalties;
(iii) most civil offences.

Full details of the terms of imprisonment that do not attract remission are set out in prison standing order 12, a copy of which is in the Library. A revised version of the standing order, to be published in a few months' time, will include reference to the community charge.

Broadcasting

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about ultra high frequency television coverage and the future of the relay programme in the light of the prospective privatisation of the transmission operation system previously owned and operated by the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The announcement made on 4 July 1989 by the then Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), confirmed that it was our intention to privatise the transmission networks owned and operated by the BBC and the IBA as soon as we were in a position to do so. The IBA welcomed the proposal and the Broadcasting Act provided for the IBA's replacement by two new regulatory bodies—the Independent Television Commission (ITC) and the Radio Authority —and a transmission company which is to be privatised. The transmission company, National Transcommunications Limited (NTL), started trading on 1 January this year. The position of the BBC's transmission operation will be reviewed in the run-up to the expiry of its royal charter at the end of 1996.

The existing BBC and independent television services currently reach about 99·4 per cent. of the United Kingdom population. The BBC and the IBA have shared responsibility for a rolling programme of relay station construction. The current policy on the relay programme was announced on 20 May 1980 by the then Home Secretary, Lord Whitelaw, who said that approval had been given to proposals to extend UHF coverage to groups of fewer than 500 whenever it was reasonably practicable to do so. Because of the varied nature of these small groups, there could be no obligation on the BBC and the IBA to provide a service to them and a precise lower limit could not be specified. In practice, groups of fewer than 200 have not benefited from the programme.

In addition, the 1980 statement announced new arrangements for self-help television schemes, generally serving groups not qualifying under the relay programme. There are now over 300 groups covered by the scheme. The BBC and the IBA have provided advice on the new schemes which are continually being established.

It is our aim to see existing UHF television coverage of the four main terrestrial channels maintained and increased where appropriate. We have agreed that the existing programme of up to 25 relay stations a year should be maintained until 1996 when we will reconsider the position, including alternative forms of delivery. We have also agreed that the BBC and the ITC should continue to be responsible for providing advice on new self-help schemes, with assistance from NTL.

The BBC will continue its part of the relay programme as at present. The ITC will work with the BBC to determine the order and rate at which the stations are to be constructed, co-ordinating with the ITV companies or Channel 3 licensees, Channel 4 or S4C as appropriate. Responsibility for the IBA's share of relay planning and construction will fall to NTL. Until 1993 the necessary additional coverage requirements will be implemented by means of the contracts between the ITC and the ITV companies, and the contracts between those companies, Channel 4, S4C and NTL. From 1993, the Broadcasting Act provides for the ITC to set technical standards of quality, coverage and reliability in the Channel 3 and 4 licences and for the Welsh Authority to provide S4C to high technical standards. NTL will be obliged by its own Telecommunications Act licence to provide services enabling the ITV, Channel 3 and Channel 4 companies and S4C to meet the required standards of coverage which will include the continuation of the relay programme until 1996, or as then further decided.

Fire Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government have for the Fire Service College.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has decided that the Fire Service College should become a candidate for executive agency status under the Government's "Next Steps" initiative. The projected launch date is 1 April 1992.

The college, established under the Fire Services Act 1947, is the principal provider of training to officers in local authority fire brigades. It provides technical training in firefighting and fire safety and courses on command and management for all grades of fire officer. It also trains students from the private sector and from overseas. The recent introduction of direct charging of brigades commensurate with their use of the college's facilities enables the college to be more responsive to the individual needs of its customers. Executive agency status will provide the college with the flexibility and control necessary to deliver high-quality training more cost-effectively and responsively.

My right hon. Friend fully appreciates the close interest taken by the local authorities and the fire service in maintaining high professional standards through training at the college and there will be full discussions with the constituent members of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council and other interested parties over the coming months.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is making any changes in the membership of the Police Complaints Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The right hon. Roland Moyle is retiring from his post as deputy chairman of the Police Complaints Authority when his term of appointment expires on 28 April. I wish to take this opportunity to thank him for his service with the authority. His knowledge and experience have made an outstanding contribution to the establishment of the authority as a key part of the police complaints system.

Peter Moorhouse, who has been a member of the authority since July 1988, has accepted my invitation to succeed to the vacant deputy chairman post on 29 April.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made following the expiry of the terms of appointment of the members of the interception of communications tribunal on 10 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Sir Cecil Clothier, KCB, QC, Mr. David Calcutt, QC, Mr. Ivor Guild, CBE and Mr. Peter Scott QC have been reappointed for a further five years as members of the tribunal established under the Interception of Communications Act 1985. Their new terms of office commenced on 11 April.

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected outturn for British Rail's external financing for the 1990-91 financial year.

Mr. Rifkind: British Rail's external financing requirement for 1990-91 was £1,016 million. This represents an overshoot of £316 million on the revised limit of £700 million. British Rail will publish full details of the 1990-91 financial year in the annual report and accounts in July.

Road and Rail Expenditure

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the planning totals of Department of Transport expenditure on road and rail, respectively, for each of the three decades from 1960 to 1989.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Consistent information in terms of planning totals is not available. However, road and rail investment in Great Britain for the three decades is as follows:

Road and rail investment: Great Britain[1]

£ million in cash prices

	Road[2]	*Rail*[3]
1960-69	2,330	1,190
1970-79	7,440	2,190
1980-89	16,850	6,220

[1] Because of definitional changes, figures can only be used to give broad comparisons.

[2] Expenditure by central and local government on new construction and improvement on all roads, and major structural maintenance on motorway and trunk roads.

[3] Investment in rolling stock and infrastructure by British Rail, London Underground Limited, Dockland Light Railway and Manchester Light Rapid Transit. British Rail channel tunnel investment is included but not investment by Eurotunnel plc.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what evidence he has that privatisation of electricity in Great Britain has led to a reduction in electricity prices to consumers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is too early to assess the full impact of privatisation and the introduction of competition on electricity prices. However, since April last year consumers have, for the first time, been protected by price controls against unjustified increases and, under the phased arrangements for the transition to full competition, large users, outside the franchise, have been able to negotiate the keenest available terms from potential suppliers.

Gas Turbine Power Stations

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *359*, to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), he has any proposals to change the criteria he uses in considering the granting of consent for new gas-fired combined cycle power stations under *(a)* section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 or *(b)* the Energy Act 1976; if he will consult the Director-General of Ofgas in such considerations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are currently no proposals to change the criteria for the Secretary of State for Energy's consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to construct new gas-fired generating stations. The Government are aware that the EC directive restricting the use of gas in generating stations was repealed on 18 March 1991. We therefore intend to repeal the powers relating to the use of natural gas in power generation contained in section 14 of the Energy Act 1976 at the earliest legislative opportunity. In the interim period, the Government will continue to exercise those powers in a manner consistent with previous practice.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Finsbury Park and Highgate Offices

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff are currently employed at Finsbury Park and Highgate DSS offices; how many were employed in March 1990; how much of the work has been transferred to other offices in the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The numbers of staff employed in Finsbury Park and Highgate offices are as follows:

	Finsbury Park	*Highgate*
1 March 1990	191·5	202
1 April 1991	31·5	33

All work which did not require face-to-face contact with the public has been relocated to the Euston district office and the Glasgow social security centre as was recommended in the Business of Service report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

HMS Endurance

Q9. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to continue the deployment of HMS Endurance in the south Atlantic including South Georgia and Antarctica; and if he will make a statement on the replacement of the present vessel by the mid-1990s

The Prime Minister: Endurance will return from her current deployment in the south Atlantic in May, which is the end of the Antarctic summer. Studies into the best way of fulfilling the role currently undertaken by Endurance are continuing.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what requests Her Majesty's Government have had for air cover from anti-Saddam forces in *(a)* northern Iraq and *(b)* southern Iraq.

The Prime Minister: We have received a number of representations requesting the coalition forces in the Gulf to prevent the Iraqi air force from flying missions. Security Council resolution 688 demands that the Iraqi Government should end their repression of their own people. We are working urgently to create safe havens for Iraqi refugees. The United States has warned Iraqi aircraft not to fly north of the 36th parallel.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the United States Government about a permanent *(a)* United States, *(b)* United States/British and *(c)* coalition presence in Iraq.

The Prime Minister: We have no intention of establishing a permanent coalition presence in Iraq. Our recent contacts with the Americans have focused on the need for urgent humanitarian aid to Iraqi refugees both in the north and south of the country. We shall continue to maintain close contacts with the United States on the way ahead.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) of 14 March, *Official Report*, column 1095, what discussions he has had with the allies on the subject of the use of chemical weapons in Iraq.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The use of chemical weapons by Iraq is a matter of great concern and has been discussed on many occasions with our allies. We have no firm evidence that such weapons were used during or after the Gulf conflict. At our instigation United Nations Security Council resolution 687, which has been accepted by the Iraqi Government, sets out the United Nations terms for the destruction of Iraq's chemical weapons capability and affirms that grave consequences would follow any use by Iraq of such weapons.

WALES

Welsh Agricultural College

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to finance the Welsh agricultural college, Aberystwyth, in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Arrangements have been made for officials to discuss the future of the Welsh agricultural college with officers of the WAC joint education committee later this week.

EC Wild Birds Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Countryside Council for Wales regarding the implications of the Leybucht Bay judgment of the European Court of Justice on 28 February in Luxemburg on the proposals for development in Welsh estuaries in special protection areas or candidate special protection areas under the wild birds directive 1979.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Science Base

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policies to encourage the growth of a science base in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 27 March 1991]:* The Government's policy with regard to science is designed to operate on a United Kingdom basis. The aims of the Government's science programme are to advance knowledge and technical capability; to train scientific manpower at postgraduate level; and in these and other ways to contribute to the realisation of economic, social and cultural benefits for the United Kingdom. Financial support is channelled through the research councils and other funded bodies. Higher education institutions in Wales can and do receive support from these funds for research activity in Wales.

In addition, many projects in Wales are funded by the Department's own research and development programme which covers the whole range of its responsibilities. The Welsh Office estimated expenditure on research and development in 1991-92 is £3·1 million.

The Department also specifically seeks to promote and develop the science base within the NHS in Wales. To this end the provision of training for clinical scientists is currently under review. The Department also sponsors the Welsh scheme for the development of health and social research which specifically supports the career development of research workers. In addition Welsh Office-sponsored projects account for some £1·1 million of the £22·9 million held by the Department of Health for the combined England and Wales health and personal social services research programme for 1991-92.

Some of the Department's industrial policies also have a direct effect in strengthening the more commercially oriented aspects of our science base. For example there are the activities of WDA Technology Marketing, the WDA support for various major centres of excellence within the university of Wales, the proposed Imperial science park at Newport and our promotion of relevant Government and European schemes such as LINK, the teaching company scheme and the collaborative research and development grant support at both the United Kingdom and European level including through the pan-European EUREKA programme.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Management of Schools

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *234*, on the implications of local management of schools, what system has been established to ensure that recoupment charges payable to the providing authority are earmarked for the specific school concerned rather than absorbed in the overheads of that providing authority.

Mr. Fallon: As I had intended to make clear to my hon. Friend in my answer of 22 March, formula allocations to schools under an LEA's scheme of local management are calculated on the basis of the number of pupils in schools, regardless of where those pupils live. Schools will automatically receive funding for out-county pupils at the same level as for pupils who live within the authority. In this way schools receive in their budgets credit for the pupils whom they have attracted from another authority.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Sub-Post Offices

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, by region, the number of sub-post offices which have *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed since 1979.

Mr. Leigh: Decisions on the provision of post office services in particular areas are an operational matter for the Post Office. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the period mentioned has seen considerable organisational change in the Post Office and I understand that the information is not available in the form requested.

The Post Office has, however, told me that the overall number of post offices has fallen from 22,639 in 1979 to 20,401 in 1991. Within this total the number of agency offices—which includes both rural and sub-post offices, community offices and restricted hours offices—has fallen from 21,056 to 19,160 over the same period.

Chief Executives

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on the employment as chief executive of a company of a person who has held a similar position in a company that has failed.

Mr. Lilley: In general there is no legal impediment to the appointment of the chief executive or any other officer of a failed company to a similar position in another company. However, any company considering such an appointment would wish to consider carefully the prospective appointee's performance record. Moreover, there are safeguards provided in the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 which requires every liquidator, administrative receiver or administrator to submit a report to the Secretary of State if he considers that the conduct of a director of an insolvent company has been such as to make him unfit to be concerned in the management of a company. An application may be made to the court for such a person to be disqualified from acting as a director or from being involved in the management of a company. During the year ended 31 March 1991 the Secretary of State directed that 499 such applications be made to the courts.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to obtain from his counterpart in the United States a copy of the Commerce Department's latest assessment of countries capable of producing chemical weapons and export control guidance given to industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: We work with other like-minded countries, including the United States, in taking harmonised international measures to prevent the proliferation of chemical weapons.

There are regular meetings at which information is exchanged on new controls and procedures.

The Gulf

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the potential value to British industry of contracts to reconstruct parts of Kuwait and Iraq following the Gulf war.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department has not sought to estimate the value of Kuwait reconstruction work to British industry. Various estimates of the total cost of reconstruction work have been made, most commonly in the region of US $50 billion.

Company Projects

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list grant funding available to United Kingdom companies undertaking feasibility studies for projects in Europe, both inside and outside the European Community.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 March 1991]:* The overseas projects fund operated by my Department

provides assistance to the pre-contractual expenses, including feasibility studies in certain circumstances, of British companies seeking contracts for major projects outside the European Community. Information on grant funding from other sources could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Middle East

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had in the current year with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in regard to the middle east region.

Mrs. Chalker: We receive regular reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on its activities in the middle east region, and we are in very close touch over the current Iraq crisis.

Honduras

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current aid programme to Honduras and the equivalent figure for each of the last 10 years; what participation the United Kingdom takes in the EC programmes that affect Honduras; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The bilateral country programme runs at about £1 million a year; we provide disaster relief when appropriate; the Commonwealth Development Corporation invests in Honduras. Gross United Kingdom bilateral aid expenditure (including CDC) and the United Kingdom share of EC aid from 1980 to 1989 were as follows:

	Gross United Kingdom bilateral aid £,000	*United Kingdom share of EC aid £,000*
1980	335	510
1981	5,002	780
1982	2,272	1,350
1983	6,670	980
1984	3,446	1,880
1985	3,653	480
1986	1,258	520
1987	811	520
1988	1,166	640
1989	701	[1]

[1] Not available.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Honduras

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held by Her Majesty's ambassador and staff in Tegucigalpa with human rights organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's ambassador in Tegucigalpa meets periodically representatives of the main Honduran human rights organisation. He is also in regular contact with Ministers and officials on human rights questions.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Honduras concerning their treatment of trade unionists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: None. No issue has been brought to our notice either directly affecting British interests or giving sufficient grounds for general concern such as to merit representations.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters have been received by his Department on the subject of tax simplification since 1 September last year from industrial and commercial companies; and how he proposes to respond to these representations.

Mr. Maude: A total of 113 letters have been received on the subject of tax simplification, following my hon. Friend's circular to finance directors of industrial and commercial companies. I have assured all those who have written that I very much share the concern that the tax system should avoid unnecessary complexity and that we shall continue to introduce simplifications wherever possible.

European Community

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community Economic and Finance Council, the meeting of the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union and the interinstitutional meeting with the European Parliament.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 8 April. The intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union met that morning when there was also an interinstitutional meeting of Ministers with the European Parliament. The Minister for Corporate Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at ECOFIN and I attended the IGC and the meeting with the European Parliament.

A Commission initiative concerning the debt owed to the Community by the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries linked by the Lomé convention was discussed, but it was agreed that the proposal was inconsistent with the international debt strategy. A modified proposal may be discussed by a future Council.

The Council reached agreement in principle to provide guaranteed loans to Romania equal to the amount offered by the non-EC members of the G24 up to a maximum of 375 million ecu.

Ministers also discussed agricultural price fixing. I made clear the Government's determination not to increase the agricultural guideline calculated in accordance with the 1988 budget discipline decision; and emphasised the importance which the Government attach to respect for budgetary discipline.

The future taxation of road transport was also discussed, but without agreement. The Commission made

a brief presentation of two company tax measures which are currently before the Council and which concern the taxation of cross-border interest payment and royalties and the treatment of tax relief for losses within groups of companies. There was no discussion of these measures.

There was a brief discussion of the proposed takeovers directive but no significant progress towards an agreement. Several member states, including the United Kingdom, expressed major reservations about the Commission's proposals.

On the investment services directive, the Council discussed a compromise text from the Presidency on the issue of regulated markets. The Commission proposed a further compromise for discussion at a future Council.

The ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on EMU focused on the transition from stage 1 to stage 2 of EMU. Differing views emerged on the degree of economic convergence necessary before a move to stage 2. I argued that it was necessary to determine the content of stage 2 before taking any decision on when it should start; and that economic convergence was a key element in making further progress towards economic and monetary integration. The United Kingdom proposals would establish, in stage 2, a mechanism to encourage convergence on the best inflation performance.

I also attended the inter-institutional meeting held with the European Parliament to allow Members of the European Parliament to put their views on the EMU IGC to Finance Ministers. Members of the European Parliament expressed a range of views. The meeting was purely consultative in nature.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *268*, on overseas investment, if he will provide a similar table for investment from outside the EC only.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Complete information on inward investment in the European Community from outside the EC is not available. However, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, in a recent study, made estimates of foreign direct investment in EC member states, adjusted to exclude intra-EC flows. These estimates exclude reinvested profits because a number of member states do not compile such information. The figures for the United Kingdom given in the table below are therefore on a different basis from those published by the CSO. The information is as follows:

Inward net foreign direct investment (excluding reinvested profits) in the EC
(Excluding intra-EC investments)

million ECU

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
In EC	6,177	5,637	6,840	12,578	14,278
of which:					
In United Kingdom	1,995	623	3,324	4,986	4,562
United Kingdom as percentage of EC Total	32	11	49	40	32

Source: Eurostat estimates.

Civil Servants (South Dorset)

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants work in south Dorset now; and how many of these jobs are currently subject to active review to be either removed or relocated.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* There were around 4,900 non-industrial civil servants in south Dorset at 1 January 1991. Equivalent data for industrial staff are not available.

No information is collected centrally about Departments' plans for the removal and relocation of posts in particular regions, so it is not possible to give figures for those posts in south Dorset under active review.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Beef Imports

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the use of drugs in beef imports from the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the safety of imported beef from the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Maclean: Beef from the Republic of Ireland is routinely monitored as part of the extensive programme of surveillance of veterinary drugs residues carried out by the Ministry. A total of 400 imported samples of beef muscle, liver and kidney were taken during 1990, of which about one fifth are estimated to have been from the Republic of Ireland. To date, within the hormone and beta-agonist groups, only one positive from Ireland has been found. This was for the hormone Zeranol, and did not pose a threat to human health. Full results of the Ministry's programme of veterinary drug surveillance for the years 1986-90 are to be published in a food surveillance paper which is now in preparation.

Veterinary Medicines

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets he has set for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate in 1991-92.

Mr. Gummer: The chief executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) and I have agreed the following targets for 1991-92:

full cost recovery for the three business activities of licensing, policy work and residues monitoring;

100 per cent. of new licence applications to be issued within 120 clock days;

an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.

These are more demanding targets than those set in 1990-91 and they reflect the good progress being made by the VMD as a "Next Steps" agency.

Microwave Ovens

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will publish his response to the Agriculture Committee's first report of 1990-91 on microwave ovens.

Mr. Gummer: The Government's response has been published today and copies are being placed in the Library of the House. The Government response endorses many of the conclusions reached by the Committee. In particular, it endorses the Committee's conclusions that there is nothing inherently unsafe about microwave ovens, that efforts to improve the performance of microwave ovens should be regarded as sensible precautionary measures, and that it is incumbent on oven manufacturers and retailers to ensure that consumers are furnished with the necessary instructions to enable them to cook food properly. These principles underlie what MAFF is seeking to achieve through its microwave working party.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ridley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the proportion of local authority revenue expenditure paid in rate or revenue support grant in 1979-80, 1989-90 and 1990-91 respectively; and what was the total of the grant in each of those years expressed in 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Heseltine: The information for the English local authorities is as follows:

	Rate/revenue support grant as a proportion of local authority expenditure	*Rate/revenue support grant expressed in 1989-90 prices*
		£ million
1979-80[1]	0·49	15,792
1989-90	0·29	9,577
1990-91	0·26	8,807

[1] England and Wales.

Glass Fittings

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce higher mandatory standards for the quality of glass fitted in new homes, rather than an advisory code.

Mr. Yeo: The Department has issued a consultation paper proposing that requirements controlling the glazing used in critical locations in new houses and other buildings should be included in the Building Regulations 1985. Such requirements would have legal force, and would be supported by detailed practical guidance about ways in which they could be met including guidance on the quality of glass to be used. Responses to the consultation paper are currently being considered, and it is hoped that final decisions can be taken later this year.

Prestwich Hospital, Salford

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he turned down the planning application from Salford health authority relating to the redevelopment of part of the Prestwich hospital, Salford, site; and when he received this application.

Sir George Young: Permission was refused on 23 August 1989 for the proposals called in on 2 September 1987.

An appeal for a new scheme is currently before my right hon. Friend.

Hazardous Waste (US Bases)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on shipments of hazardous waste to England for disposal from United States military bases in Turkey, Greece, the Azores and Iceland during the last 10 years *(a)* reported under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations and *(b)* not so reported; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The consignment note system under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 is designed to ensure that waste is disposed of safely at suitable facilities. It does not require consignees to identify the source of the hazardous waste. There have been very few shipments of waste from these countries and none of these has been consigned directly by the United States forces.

Endangered Species

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with his opposite numbers in the European Community Council of Ministers concerning the further European Community directives on the protection of endangered, valuable or rare plant and animal species.

Mr. Baldry: The proposed Council directive on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora has been discussed at several meetings of the European Community Council of Environment Ministers. At the meeting held on 18 March my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside welcomed the significant progress achieved by the Presidency and said that the United Kingdom was fully committed to the objectives of the proposed directive.

EC Wild Birds Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the Environment Commissioner of the European Community regarding the implications of the Leybucht Bay judgment of the European Court of Justice on 28 February, for the development proposals currently affecting Britain's estuarial special protection areas and candidate special protection areas designated or to be designated according to the European Community wild birds directive of 1979.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Landfill Gas

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the results of the survey into the incidence of landfill gas production at landfill sites undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: In December 1987 HM inspectorate of pollution asked all waste disposal authorities in England and Wales to provide details of all landfill sites producing landfill gas.

In order to update the information obtained from the first survey, HMIP issued further requests for information in August 1988 and May 1989. The responses to these have been considered by the inspectorate and their conclusions are set out in a recently published report which has been sent to all waste disposal authorities in England and Wales. Copies have also been placed in the Library of the House.

The Government allocated £33 million in 1990-91 to enable local authorities to carry out remedial works to such sites, and further resources are available in future years. So far take-up by authorities of these resources has been slow with less than £12 million expected to be spent in 1990-91. I hope that the publication of this report will encourage authorities to put forward new proposals for remedial works at gassing landfill sites.

Tarmac Plant, Derbyshire

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to reply to the letter sent to him by Mr. J. Cooper, Clock Cottage, Spinkhill, Derbyshire, at the start of February, concerning the operation of the Tarmac plant at Renishaw, Derbyshire.

Mr. Baldry: *[holding answer 27 February 1991]:* I am now in a position to reply and Mr Cooper will receive a letter within a few days.

Community Charge

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of people who will benefit from the community charge reduction scheme *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the area covered by Kirklees council.

Mr. Key *[pursuant to the answer, 27 March 1991, Official Report, c. 456]:* Our estimate of the number of charge payers in England who will benefit from a community charge reduction in 1991-92 is about 16 million.

Mr. Andrew Mackay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the workings of the community charge reduction scheme in relation to properties which were not individually rated.

Mr. Key *[pursuant to the answer, 27 March 1991, Official Report c. 456]:* The effect of the recent changes which we have made to the community charge reduction scheme is that the calculation of reductions must be based on the total number of eligible charge payers resident in a property or a group of properties which formed one hereditament. Under transitional relief the calculation was limited to two community charges where there were two or more eligible charge payers. This change will help in particular people living in larger households or houses of multiple occupancy and people living in groups of properties which shared one rateable value only.

HEALTH

National Health Services Practices

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from representatives of health authorities in the north as to practices within the national health service.

Mr. Waldegrave: I meet, and receive correspondence from, health authorities in the north on a wide variety of matters concerning the national health service.

Hospital Waiting Lists

16. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of persons currently on waiting lists for hospital in-patient treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 31 March 1990, the latest available date, there were 710,253 people waiting for

in-patient treatment in England, excluding those who had asked for their admission to be deferred. This is 6 per cent. less than in 1979. Furthermore, in the 12 months to March 1990 the number waiting over a year for in-patient treatment fell by 9 per cent. and 5 per cent. fewer people now wait over a year than in 1979.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of persons currently on waiting lists for hospital in-patient treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1990, the latest available information, there were 705,706 people waiting for in-patient treatment, excluding those who had asked for their admission to be deferred. It is the time individual patients wait that matters, not the total number on the list. In the 12 months to March 1990 the number waiting over one year for in-patient treatment fell by 9 per cent. and by a further 2 per cent. in the following six months to September 1990.

Psychotherapy

17. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations have been received by his Department concerning the conduct towards their clients of private psychotherapists, counsellors, hypotherapists and analysts.

Mr. Dorrell: One; the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) wrote to me on 28 January 1991 drawing attention to a potentially distressing case.

NHS Administrative Costs

18. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the cost of administration and organisation within the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The cost of headquarters administration at regional and district health authorities in the national health service in England for 1989-90 was £730 million, which represents 4 per cent. of total revenue expenditure.

20. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the additional administrative costs to the national health service of the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have provided more than £380 million to the national health service in 1991-92 to meet in full the additional costs of implementing the national health service review. This includes over £80 million for the introduction of additional consultant posts and for the development of audit for general practitioners and nurses, as well as funds for developments outside the area of direct patient care.

Divorce (Conciliation Services)

22. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what responsibilities his Department has for the provision of conciliation services for couples pending divorce.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The lead responsibility for conciliation lies with the Lord Chancellor's Department. The Department of Health has no direct responsibility.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of pressure being put on employees against participating in the formation of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has written recently to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) about a letter issued by the hon. Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes), to the manager of a hospital which is in the process of applying for NHS trust status. The letter effectively threatened him with dismissal unless he agreed to withdraw the application. I am pleased to say that the right hon. Member for Islwyn dissociated himself from these bullying tactics and I hope that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) will do likewise.

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his assessment of how NHS trusts will improve the local nature of the health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS trusts will be better able to respond to patients' needs through greater freedoms and flexibility. They will also encourage greater local involvement and pride.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress towards establishment of NHS trust hospitals.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) earlier today.

Lung Cancer, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage rate of lung cancer in Liverpool among women and men; and what the Liverpool mortality rate is in comparison with the United Kingdom rates.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest figures available show that in 1985 the incidence among males was 0·18 per cent. and 0·07 per cent. among females. The mortality rate in 1989 was for males 13·8 per 10,000 of the population compared with 9·8 nationally and for females 7·8 per 10,000 of the population compared with 4·2 nationally.

Health Care (Ethnic Minorities)

25. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the Government are doing to improve access to health care for people from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for ethnic minorities in the provision of health services. This involves positive action to take account of differences in the incidence of disease, and in language and culture.

We have launched a number of initiatives to improve the quality of health care for ethnic minorities and to promote access to information on health promotion and the health services available. Some examples are: funding a report by the National Association of Health Authorities to advise health authorities on how to improve services for ethnic minorities; funding a seminar in 1988 for NHS senior managers on delivering services for ethnic

minorities; piloting, through the Asian mother and baby campaign, the use of link workers to help overcome language and cultural barriers to communication; spending £500,000 a year to produce materials to improve access to health services; funding projects to develop good practice guidance to help improve access to services; and recently funding a compendium of good practice in family health service work.

The NHS reforms establish each health authority's responsibility to secure appropriate health care for all its population. Each health authority will assess the health needs of its population and plan services accordingly, ensuring that the services available are both relevant, and accessible, to the whole local population including members of ethnic minorities.

The 1991 census will include, for the first time, a question on ethnic origin and it is proposed to include equivalent information on patients in the data collected by health authorities. This will enable health authorities to plan and target services effectively. The Department is also funding the establishment of a database on ethnic minority health which will gather information on good practice, on developments in services for ethnic minorities, and epidemiological data. These sources of information taken together will help health service planners to assess the health needs of ethnic minorities, to plan appropriate services, and to monitor the effectiveness of services.

Prescriptions

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescription items were dispensed free in the last year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1990 276·9 million items were dispensed free in the national health service.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of a prescription in 1979 in current prices; and what is it now.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1989-90, the latest year for which information is available, the average cost of a prescription in the family health service in England was £6·36. In 1979-80 the cost at 1989-90 prices was £4·92.

Huddersfield Resource Management Scheme

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the resource management scheme operated by Huddersfield health authority.

Mr. Dorrell: Huddersfield health authority has made excellent progress with the implementation of resource management at Huddersfield royal infirmary, since the hospital was named as a resource management pilot site in 1986. The work at Huddersfield and the other five pilot sites has provided valuable information about resource management, and is being used to support the extension of resource management to all other large acute hospitals in the country.

Mentally Ill People

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to monitor and evaluate the continuing care of mentally ill people resident in the community.

Mr. Dorrell: We will continue to monitor and evaluate services for mentally ill people through the established arrangements for reviewing health authorities' performance and inspection of social services provision by the social services inspectorate. Provision for the mentally ill is also subject to review by the health advisory service.

General Practitioner Budgets

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those general practitioners' practices in the Sunderland, Hartlepool and Durham health authorities intending to hold their own budgets as from April in the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Carr, the chairman of the Northern regional health authority, for details.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will arrange for a copy of the financial profile produced by the Audit Commission for each district health authority to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: The health authority audit profiles are drawn up to assist the Audit Commission in its examination of the health authorities. A copy is made available to each of the authorities concerned. The Audit Commission's reports on the accounts of the health authorities, and certain other reports, are made public but there are no plans for working documents such as audit profiles to be made more widely available.

Nicotine Chewing Gum

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when nicotine chewing gum will be given pharmacist-only status; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: An order amending SI 1983 No. 1212, The Medicines (Products other than Veterinary Drugs) (Prescription Only) Order, was laid on 10 April and is due to come into operation on 1 May. This will give effect to changes in the legal status of a number of medicines, including allowing the 2mg strength of a nicotine chewing gum, licensed as an aid to smoking cessation, to be supplied from pharmacies without a precription.

NE Thames RHA

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the projected 1991-92 central programme for the North East Thames regional health authority; and how much of it will be funded from anticipated capital receipts.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that North East Thames regional health authority is planning a capital programme for 1991-92 of £103·4 million. The region expects to receive £8·4 milion from previous land sales and hopes to achieve further sales during the year.

Friern Barnet Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of patients in Friern Barnet hospital, what plans he has to ensure that on closure they will all be in satisfactory accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that there are currently 477 patients in Friern Barnet hospital. The satisfactory transfer of these patients and the provision of associated new residential and day facilities on the hospital's closure, is a matter for North East Thames regional health authority. Since 1 April all psychiatric patients who are discharged, or are being considered for discharge, are subject to the care programme approach contained in circular HC(90)23/LASSL(90)11, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Hospital Safety

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about safety in hospitals in Stockport.

Mr. Dorrell: In any workplace the responsibility for complying with health and safety legislation rests with the employers and others in the workplace. This also applies to hospitals in Stockport. The Health and Safety Executive is responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation in hospitals.

Joint Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total expenditure on joint finance for each year since 1983-84, in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 8 March 1991]:* The summarised accounts of regional and district health authorities in England record total expenditure on projects jointly financed with local authorities as:

	Expenditure (at cash) £ million	*Expenditure (real terms—using GDP deflator)* £ million
1978-79	31·2	31·2
1979-80	39·8	34·1
1980-81	60·1	43·5
1981-82	72·8	48·1
1982-83	83·1	51·3
1983-84	85·6	50·5
1984-85	93·7	52·6
1985-86	105·6	56·2
1986-87	112·5	57·9
1987-88	118·5	57·8
1988-89	121·7	55·3
1989-90	119·2	50·9

Dentists

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists were registered with each FHSA covering the Greater London area on 1 October 1989, 1 October 1990 and 28 February 1991, respectively.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 21 March 1991]:* The information requested is shown in the following table. In addition, the tables set out in my previous replies on the same subject on 14 March 1991, c. *643-44* and on 21 March 1991, c. *197-200* have been revised for purposes of ease of interpretation and consistency of response and they are also presented as follows.

Number of registered dentists on Greater London FHSA lists at 30 September 1989, 30 September 1990 and 28 February 1991

	30 September 1989	*30 September 1990*	*28 February 1991*
Barking and Havering	114	107	118
Barnet	204	203	182
Brent and Harrow	222	229	222
Bromley	144	140	145
Camden and Islington	240	230	205
City and East London	238	232	212
Croydon	153	151	150
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	323	329	311
Enfield and Haringey	218	238	216
Greenwich and Bexley	166	167	158
Hillingdon	97	101	97
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	404	366	325
Kingston and Richmond	149	149	157
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	332	328	323
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	283	282	282
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	182	167	167

Revised Table: Changes to the number of registered dentists on FHSA lists since 30 September 1990 (England only)

FHSA	*Total at 30 Sep 90*	*Total at 28 Feb 91*	*Net change*
Cleveland	157	155	−2
Cumbria	146	145	−1
Durham	161	155	−6
Northumberland	100	100	0
Gateshead	69	73	4
Newcastle upon Tyne	126	115	−11
North Tyneside	74	75	1
South Tyneside	44	42	−2
Sunderland	86	85	−1
Humberside	215	220	5

FHSA	Total at 30 Sep 90	Total at 28 Feb 91	Net change
North Yorkshire	257	259	2
Bradford	182	187	5
Calderdale	65	67	2
Kirklees	115	119	4
Leeds	290	288	−2
Wakefield	97	96	−1
Derbyshire	269	277	8
Leicestershire	245	244	−1
Lincolnshire	121	133	12
Nottinghamshire	292	296	4
Barnsley	68	69	1
Doncaster	85	93	8
Rotherham	80	83	3
Sheffield	188	188	0
Cambridgeshire	195	193	−2
Norfolk	225	225	0
Suffolk	202	201	−1
Bedfordshire	136	141	5
Hertfordshire	436	429	−7
Barnet	203	182	−21
Brent and Harrow	229	222	−7
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	329	311	−18
Hillingdon	101	97	−4
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	366	325	−41
Essex	438	443	5
Barking and Havering	107	118	11
Camden and Islington	230	205	−25
City and East London	232	212	−20
Enfield and Haringey	238	216	−22
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	167	167	0
East Sussex	294	293	−1
Kent	523	513	−10
Greenwich and Bexley	167	158	−9
Bromley	140	145	5
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	328	323	−5
Surrey	485	496	11
West Sussex	299	300	1
Croydon	151	150	−1
Kingston and Richmond	149	157	8
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	282	282	0
Dorset	233	231	−2
Hampshire	527	526	−1
Wiltshire	175	169	−6
Isle of Wight	50	49	−1
Berkshire	271	274	3
Buckinghamshire	242	247	5
Northamptonshire	154	150	−4
Oxfordshire	215	213	−2
Avon	367	372	5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	151	147	−4
Devon	364	367	3
Gloucestershire	206	202	−4
Somerset	147	148	1
Hereford and Worcester	222	221	−1
Salop	134	132	−2
Staffordshire	268	264	−4
Warwickshire	141	141	0
Birmingham	346	344	−2
Coventry	90	85	−5
Dudley	95	94	−1
Sandwell	101	104	3
Solihull	76	78	2
Walsall	73	76	3
Wolverhampton	68	66	−2
Cheshire	350	351	1
Liverpool	172	170	−2
St. Helens and Knowsley	107	106	−1
Sefton	111	110	−1
Wirral	130	134	4
Lancashire	427	437	10
Bolton	82	82	0
Bury	75	77	2
Manchester	234	238	4
Oldham	86	91	5
Rochdale	68	65	−3
Salford	91	91	0
Stockport	125	126	1
Tameside	79	74	−5

FHSA	Total at 30 Sep 90	Total at 28 Feb 91	Net change
Trafford	103	103	0
Wigan	106	108	2
TOTAL	17,246	17,131	−115

Revised table

Changes to the number of registered dentists on FHSA lists between 30 September 1989 and 30 September 1990
England only

FHSA	Total at 30 September 1989	Total at 30 September 1990	Net change
Cleveland	153	157	4
Cumbria	146	146	0
Durham	157	161	4
Northumberland	99	100	1
Gateshead	70	69	−1
Newcastle upon Tyne	119	126	7
North Tyneside	69	74	5
South Tyneside	47	44	−3
Sunderland	90	86	−4
Humberside	210	215	5
North Yorkshire	254	257	3
Bradford	172	182	10
Calderdale	60	65	5
Kirklees	115	115	0
Leeds	291	290	−1
Wakefield	96	97	1
Derbyshire	261	269	8
Leicestershire	246	245	−1
Lincolnshire	120	121	1
Nottinghamshire	278	292	14
Barnsley	67	68	1
Doncaster	86	85	−1
Rotherham	74	80	6
Sheffield	195	188	−7
Cambridgeshire	196	195	−1
Norfolk	214	225	11
Suffolk	197	202	5
Bedfordshire	148	136	−12
Hertfordshire	442	436	−6
Barnet	204	203	−1
Brent and Harrow	222	229	7
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	323	329	6
Hillingdon	97	101	4
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	404	366	−38
Essex	444	438	−6
Barking and Havering	114	107	−7
Camden and Islington	240	230	−10
City and East London	238	232	−6
Enfield and Haringey	218	238	20
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	182	167	−15
East Sussex	294	294	0
Kent	498	523	25
Greenwich and Bexley	166	167	1
Bromley	144	140	−4
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	332	328	−4
Surrey	487	485	−2
West Sussex	297	299	2
Croydon	153	151	−2
Kingston and Richmond	149	149	0
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	283	282	−1
Dorset	225	233	8
Hampshire	521	527	6
Wiltshire	170	175	5
Isle of Wight	47	50	3
Berkshire	266	271	5
Buckinghamshire	239	242	3
Northamptonshire	145	154	9
Oxfordshire	213	215	2
Avon	365	367	2
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	146	151	5
Devon	363	364	1
Gloucestershire	204	206	2
Somerset	152	147	−5
Hereford and Worcester	214	222	8
Salop	133	134	1

FHSA	Total at 30 September 1989Total at 30 September 1990	Net change	
Staffordshire	257	268	11
Warwickshire	142	141	−1
Birmingham	357	346	−11
Coventry	90	90	0
Dudley	93	95	2
Sandwell	99	101	2
Solihull	71	76	5
Walsall	71	73	2
Wolverhampton	67	68	1
Cheshire	343	350	7
Liverpool	171	172	1
St. Helens and Knowsley	103	107	4
Sefton	109	111	2
Wirral	124	130	6
Lancashire	412	427	15
Bolton	79	82	3
Bury	70	75	5
Manchester	208	234	26
Oldham	77	86	9
Rochdale	67	68	1
Salford	88	91	3
Stockport	118	125	7
Tameside	74	79	5
Trafford	106	103	−3
Wigan	100	106	6
Total	17,060	17,246	186

Note: The figures in all three tables are derived from information on the number of registered dentists on an FHSA list as notified by FHSAs to the Dental Practice Board. Since some dentists practise in more than one FHSA, the total number of dentists is less than the sum of the dentists who have contracts with individual FHSAs. As the DPB calculates this information at the end of each month, the figures provided are for 30 September 1989 and 30 September 1990, rather than 1 October 1989 and 1 October 1990.

EMPLOYMENT

Clothing Manufacturing (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on how many workers have been made redundant and how many are on short time in the clothing manufacturing industry in the Easington constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: In January 1991 (the latest month for which data are available) there were no confirmed redundancies in the footwear and clothing manufacturing industries (SIC(80) 45) in the Easington constituency. Estimates on short-time working are not available at constituency level.

European Social Fund

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all payments to each training project in Greater London from the European social fund due for each of the last five years, the date on which each payment was made and the total number of payments still outstanding for each project.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I am, however, writing to the hon. Member.

Disability

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for developing the Employment Service's special services for people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Helping people with disabilities is an agreed priority for the Employment Service agency. In 1989-90 it placed 76,900 people with disabilities into jobs.

Following consideration of comments on the consultative document, "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities", I have now agreed with the agency major improvements in the special help which it currently provides through disablement resettlement officers, the disablement advisory service and the employment rehabilitation service.

New local teams will be set up, over the next 12 to 18 months, to provide more accessible, professional and integrated special help to individuals and employers. The teams will offer to individuals specialist advice, assessment and help in finding and keeping jobs, and to employers encouragement and help in applying good practice. Staff training will be strengthened.

The Employment Service will now implement the plans for improved employment rehabilitation announced in the consultative document. These will involve more use of voluntary and other agents. Nine Employment Service centres—in West London, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff and Glasgow—will be developed as centres of excellence. The Employment Service expects to be able to phase out the others over up to five years as adequate agency provision is put in place. Access to residential rehabilitation will be assured for those who require it.

Following those changes, local coverage of specialist assessment and rehabilitation will be substantially increased, the Employment Service's own service will be more coherent, professional and effectively managed, and have a higher profile; and sources of expertise and commitment in the wider community will be more effectively harnessed. They represent major improvements

in the quality of service to both individuals and employers and will help more people with disabilities to get and keep suitable jobs.

I will take decisions on possible developments in other forms of help provided by the Employment Service to people with disabilities after relevant comments on "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities" and the "Evaluation of the Special Schemes for People with Disabilities" have been fully considered.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total Scottish local authorities' *(a)* current expenditure and *(b)* capital expenditure in real terms as a percentage of Scottish gross domestic product in each year since 1970.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The available information is given in the table.

	Current expenditure as a percentage of the Scottish gross domestic product per cent.	*Capital expenditure as a percentage of the Scottish gross domestic product per cent.*
1971-72	10·0	5·6
1972-73	10·3	5·9
1973-74	10·0	6·8
1974-75	12·5	7·4
1975-76	14·2	6·2
1976-77	13·4	5·3
1977-78	12·8	4·9
1978-79	13·1	4·3
1979-80	14·5	4·4
1980-81	15·1	3·9
1981-82	15·3	4·0
1982-83	15·0	3·9
1983-84	14·5	4·2
1984-85	14·7	3·8
1985-86	14·0	3·5
1986-87	13·7	3·4
1987-88	13·7	3·7
1988-89	13·2	3·5
1989-90	13·0	3·5[1]

Figures on the Scottish gross domestic product are not available for 1970 and are not yet available for 1990. The interim years' figures were supplied by the Central Statistical Office.

Local Authority Child Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children in Scotland were received into local authority care where the specific cause was family homelessness, in every year since 1979 until the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of children admitted into care primarily because of family homelessness were as follows:

	Number
1979	[1]67
1980	[1]65
1981	[2]41
1982	[2]20
1983	[2]22
1984	[2]13
1985	41
1986	26
1987	21
1988	18
1989	7

Footnote:
[1] excludes Glasgow
[2] excludes Strathclyde
[3] excludes Glasgow, Ayr and Lanark.

Health Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland from what date health boards will be responsible for their capital charges.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The capital charging system came into operation on 1 April 1991 and health boards have become responsible for the capital charges on their assets from that date.

Agriculture

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future organisation of the agricultural scientific services of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that under the "next steps" initiative the agricultural scientific services should be a candidate for executive agency status within the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Environment

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the amount of grant aid being made available under the special grants (environmental) programme in 1991-92 to voluntary bodies in Scotland working in the environmental field.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that the grant aid totalling £239,250 has been offered to the following voluntary bodies in the financial year 1991-92, to assist them in carrying out environmental conservation, improvement or educational work in Scotland:

	(£)
APRS	2,250
Buchan Countryside Group	2,250
Centre for Human Ecology	5,000
Council for Scottish Archaeology	13,000
Community Service Volunteers	7,000
Environment Centre	5,250
Friends of the Earth (Scotland)	13,800
Highland Forum	9,000
John Muir Trust	4,500
Locus	1,750
National Society for Clean Air	3,860
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland	3,500
Rural Forum	15,000
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	10,000
Scottish Community Woods Campaign	6,250
Scottish Conservation Projects	27,750
Scottish Ecological Consultants	2,000

	(£)
Scottish Environmental Education Council	27,150
Scottish Field Studies Association	7,500
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust	13,000
Scottish Rights of Way Society	5,000
Scottish Scenic Trust	2,000
Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link	9,500
Scottish Wildlife Trust	23,000
Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust	7,000
Venture Scotland	2,165
Water of Leith Conservation Trust	5,000
West Galloway Fisheries Trust	1,275
Woodland Trust	4,500

A further £35,750 is being held in reserve to support suitable projects which will further the aims of the Government's White Paper, "This Common Inheritance".

The experience of the schemes has been generally very good. I am satisfied that the grants now offered will, as they have done in the past, greatly assist the voluntary organisations to increase the level of their activity and do much useful work.

Forestry

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will arrange for the Forestry Commission's regional advisory committees to publish an account of their meetings held to consider disputed grant aid and felling applications and of the advice they give to the Forestry Commission in such cases.

Mr. Lang: We addressed the question of publicising the work done by the Commission's regional advisory committees in their consideration of disputed grant aid and felling proposals when we responded to the Agriculture Committee's report on land use and forestry last May. We concluded that it would not be practical or conducive to the committees' conciliation role in such cases to throw open their discussions with the applicant and the objecting authority or authorities to anyone who wished to attend. We did, however, ask the Forestry Commission to look at the possibility of an account of such meetings and of the regional advisory committee's subsequent advice to the Forestry Commissioners being published. I am pleased to say that such information will be provided in all future cases in the form of a press release to be issued at the stage that the committee reports to the commissioners.

This is an important change which I am sure will be widely welcomed. It will make the work of the committees in this area more open and serve to demonstrate the value and objectivity of their contribution.

Household Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of the numbers of households in Scotland according to whether they contain one, two, three or more adults aged over 18 years and the percentage this represents in each category of the total number of households.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The available information gives the number of persons aged 16 and over rather than over 18 years old in the household. Estimates of the numbers of households containing one, two, three and four or more persons aged 16 and over (either living alone or with children under the age of 16) in Scotland are given in the following table.

Estimated number of households in 1991 containing:	*Number ('000s)*	*Per cent of total households*
1 person aged 16 and over	583	29
2 persons aged 16 and over	1,005	50
3 persons aged 16 and over	281	14
4 persons aged 16 and over	141	7

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the latest available estimate of the number of households in Scotland which consist of one adult only and of the likely number in five, 10 and 20 years' time, respectively;

(2) what is his latest available estimate of the number of households in Scotland and of the number in five, 10 and 20 years' time, respectively.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Projections of the numbers of households in Scotland are at present available for the years to 2005 only. Figures for that year and the others requested are set out in the following table. Projections of the numbers of households consisting of one adult rather than one person are not available.

	Total households	*Households containing one person*
1991	2,009,330	535,770
1996	2,072,750	589,680
2001	2,111,070	638,140
2005	2,134,760	676,180

Source:
1987 based household projections.
The Scottish Office Environment Department.

Community Charge

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what estimate he can make of the cost to his Department in 1991-92 of payments to local authorities to reduce individual liability for the poll tax under the reduction scheme announced in the Budget; and what will be the net cost after allowing for the clawback on the rebate scheme, community charge reduction scheme and other savings;

(2) what he estimates will be the net benefit to poll tax payers in Scotland in 1991-92 of the reduction scheme announced by the Chancellor in the Budget.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The general reduction of charges in Scotland will cost about £490 million. After taking into account consequent reductions in the amounts paid by way of community charge benefit and community charge reduction and the enhancements that have been made to the community charge reduction scheme, additional resources of some £380 million will be available.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many poll tax payers in Scotland in 1991-92 he estimates will have their liability in that year reduced by £28 as a result of the poll tax reduction scheme announced in the Budget.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* About 600,000.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are registered in Scotland for poll tax purposes at the latest available date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* As at 1 July 1990, 3,834,410 people were included in the community charge registers in Scotland. This figure includes full-time students (who are liable only for 20 per cent. of the community charge) but excludes those liable for collective or standard charges.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the cost to his Department of paying compensation to local authorities for their administrative losses arising from the poll tax reduction scheme announced in the Budget.

Mr Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Local authorities will be compensated for the additional administrative costs associated with the issuing of revised community charge bills for 1991-92. We will be consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities about the detailed arrangements.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland will benefit from the poll tax transitional relief scheme in 1991-92; and how that figure will be varied when the community charges reduction scheme is in operation.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The personal community charge reduction scheme has replaced the personal community charge relief scheme with effect from 1 April 1990. It is expected that about 1 million people will benefit from the reduction scheme in respect of the financial year 1990-91 and about 600,000 in 1991-92, following the reduction of charges under the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many poll tax payers in Scotland will benefit in 1991-92 to the full extent of £140 under the reduction scheme announced in the Budget.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* At least 2·25 million.

Tenants

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of public and private sector tenants, respectively, in Scotland at the latest available date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Estimates of the stock of dwellings by tenure are published quarterly in the Scottish Office Statistical Bulletins on housing. Copies are sent to Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the House Library. These give the numbers of dwellings rented privately or with a job or business, and rented from local authorities, new town corporations or Scottish Homes. Estimates of the number of tenants who occupy these dwellings are not available.

Dwelling Units

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he can give an estimate of the number of domestic dwelling units in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Estimates of the stock of dwellings in Scotland are published quarterly in the Scottish Office Statistical Bulletins on housing. Copies are sent to Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the House Library.

DEFENCE

Submarines (Movement Limitation)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received for limiting the presence of submarines in intensive fishing areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the past six months the Ministry of Defence has received some 70-80 such representations from hon. Members, borough councils and members of the public.

Nuclear Reactors, Tuwaitha

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the appropriate Soviet and French authorities were contacted in regard to the design details of the nuclear reactors at Tuwaitha before the authorisation of an attack on the facility; and what attempts have been made subsequent to the bombing of the reactors to ascertain the extent of the damage inflicted.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As the design and construction of the two reactors at Tuwaitha were well known prior to the Gulf conflict, there was no need to approach the Soviet or French authorities before the attack on the facility by coalition forces. It is very unlikely that there has been any significant radioactive contamination outside the immediate area of the site, because of the nature of the reactors and local topographic features. Inspections of Iraq's nuclear facilities to be carried out in accordance with Security Council resolution 687 adopted on 3 April should provide an opportunity to determine the effects of the allied attacks.

Honduran Service Men

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether training facilities have been provided to service men from Honduras in the current year and in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: According to available records, no United Kingdom military training has been provided to Honduras during this period.

Weapon Storage Vaults

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further information he has on United States proposals to build new weapon storage vaults at their bases in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Agreement has now been reached on a programme to instal the new weapon storage and survivability system at certain airbases operated by the United States air force in the United Kingdom, as part of a wider NATO-funded infrastructure programme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ulster People's College

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what proposals he has to provide core funding for the Ulster People's college as part of the cross-community education initiative;

(2) what funds have been received by the Ulster People's college from his Department since 1982; and for what purposes;

(3) what request he has received from the Ulster People's college for funding for full-time staff for community relations work.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education has made available to the college grants totalling £153,132 as follows:

£65,132 from 1982 to 1988 in respect of the salary and other costs, including the production of learning materials, of a tutor-organiser undertaking a project on "Culture and Political Education";

£60,000 from 1985 to 1988 in respect of a community area education project; and

£30,000 in 1990 in respect of a contribution towards the purchase of the college premises.

In 1989, the college requested the Department of Education to provide an annual grant of approximately £160,000 for community relations activities. No offer of annual grant was made and the Department has no plans to provide core funding grant aid to the college at the level sought.

In 1990, the Department undertook to make a £25,000 grant, initially in 1991-92 and in 1992-93, for the development of a community relations project among young people.

Investors

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the number of prospective investors from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* other European Community countries which (i) his Department, (ii) the Industrial Development Board and (iii) the Local Enterprise Development Unit have taken to each council area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The number of prospective investors from Great Britain, the United States, Japan and other European Community countries who have been taken by the Industrial Development Board to each council area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years is detailed in the table. The information relates to first-time visits only and in some instances these visits concentrated on detailed discussions with the Industrial Development Board and were confined to IDB house, Belfast. In addition a number of inward investment missions, comprising groups of companies, visited Northern Ireland over the period.

The Department of Economic Development and the Local Enterprise Development unit have not taken any prospective investors from those countries to district council areas during that period.

Prospective investors

	Japan					*Other EC countries*				
District council areas	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Antrim	—	1	2	8	—	1	3	2	7	1
Ards	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Armagh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—
Ballymena	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	3	—
Ballymoney	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Belfast	3	3	2	7	2	10	2	4	16	15
Carrickfergus	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	—
Castlereagh	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Coleraine	2	—	2	—	—	—	2	2	1	—
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	—	—	1	1	—	4	—	1	4	—
Derry	2	—	1	—	—	1	2	3	6	2
Down	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	2	—
Dungannon	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	—
Fermanagh	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	—
Larne	1	—	2	—	1	1	1	—	2	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	—	—	2	—	1	3	—	2	2
Magherafelt	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Moyle	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	1
Newtownabbey	1	1	4	3	1	—	1	3	3	1
North Down	3	1	1	—	—	—	3	1	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—

Prospective investors

	United Kingdom					*United States of America*				
District council areas	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Antrim	1	6	11	25	7	7	4	6	11	7
Ards	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	1
Armagh	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	2
Ballymena	—	—	1	2	—	1	—	1	1	1
Ballymoney	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	2	1
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1

District council areas	United Kingdom 1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	United States of America 1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Belfast	15	9	13	60	37	39	11	7	28	31
Carrickfergus	7	4	2	3	3	3	1	—	4	5
Castlereagh	2	—	1	—	1	2	—	—	2	1
Coleraine	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	—	2	2
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	2	2	2	8	3	6	2	2	2	3
Derry	—	1	—	1	3	2	3	1	5	8
Down	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	2	1
Dungannon	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	—	—	—
Fermanagh	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—
Larne	1	1	—	—	1	5	3	1	1	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Lisburn	3	3	4	8	1	8	2	1	6	4
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	2	—	1	—	2	1	—	—	2
Newtownabbey	1	2	6	5	8	7	5	3	10	7
North Down	2	—	3	3	2	7	3	—	4	2
Omagh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Council Clerks

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many clerks to a council in Northern Ireland are members of *(a)* an education board and *(b)* a health board.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Traffic Lights

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will provide a filter system at the traffic lights at the junction of Regent street and William street, Newtownards, for the use of traffic turning right from Regent street into William street.

Mr. Needham: A survey will be carried out within the next few weeks to ascertain whether a filter system is necessary at this location.

Belfast Action Team Programme

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the extent of the Belfast action team programme in *(a)* Braniel estate and *(b)* Belvoir estate in the borough of Castlereagh.

Mr. Needham: The Belfast action team initiative does not extend to these estates.

Strangford Lough

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the last inspection of the sea walls and water defences around Strangford lough; and what is the programme for maintenance of these walls.

Mr. Needham: The sea walls and water defences around Strangford lough were last inspected during January 1991. A programme of routine maintenance costing approximately £20,000 is carried out every year. In the current financial year an extra £50,000 has been allocated for this purpose.

Civil Servants

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the number of civil servants in each branch who are to be moved to Castle Court in Belfast; what are the numbers of *(a)* Roman Catholics, *(b)* Protestants and *(c)* others in each branch so moved; how many new posts and at what levels are to be created by this movement; what area is to be taken into account in assessing whether fair employment exists in the staff so transferred; and what effect the transfer of these staff to Castle Court is expected to have on the proportions of Roman Catholics, Protestants and others employed in the civil service in Castle Court.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently 308 civil servants located within Castle Court. A further 406 civil servants are to be transferred to Castle Court as follows:

Branch	Number of staff
Central Benefits	288
Disability and Incapacity Benefits	69
Industrial Injuries	32
Ancillary	17

The number of new posts being created as a consequence of the move to Castle Court is:

Grade	Number of staff
Staff Officer	1
Executive Officer I	2
Executive Officer II	2
Administrative Officer	2
Administrative Assistant	1
Support Manager Grade 3	1
Support Grade Band 1	5
Support Grade Band 2	19

The Northern Ireland civil service has an equal opportunities monitoring system which contains information on the sex, community background and disability of its staff. However disclosure of information on the community background of Northern Ireland civil service staff is governed by a code of practice which stipulates that no statistical summaries will be produced which fall outside the categories of analyses agreed with the equal opportunities Whitley committee.

The Northern Ireland civil service recruits on a wide basis. The community background of successful candidates plays no part in determining the office to which

such candidates are posted. Consequently there is no reason why a particular office in terms of its community background should represent the local community in which it is located. An assessment of fair employment for the staff in question is thus inappropriate and has not been undertaken. Fair employment considerations are addressed for the Northern Ireland civil service and details of the community background of staff together with their sex and any disability is given in the series of reports published by the NICS's equal opportunities unit which is based in the Department of Finance and Personnel of the Northern Ireland civil service; copies of these reports are placed in the Library.

Employment Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the male employment rate in Northern Ireland as at 1 January in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: Estimates of the civilian work force are produced on a quarterly basis and relate to March, June, September and December of each year. Estimates of the male civilian work force and the proportion in employment at December in each of the last three years are as follows:

December	*Male civilian work force in employment*[1] *(number)*	*Male civilian work force (number)*	*Males in employment as a percentage of male civilian work force*
1988	340,340	419,960	81·0
1989	343,350	417,720	82·2
1990	348,090	421,260	82·6

[1] Including the self-employed and those involved in work-related Government training schemes.

Capital Works

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show the sums expended by his Department on capital works in each council area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years *(a)* in total, *(b)* per elector and *(c)* per capita.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested; departmental expenditure is not disaggregated by district council area. Total capital works expenditure by Department for 1985-86 to 1989-90 is as follows:

Department	*1985-86 £ million*	*1986-87 £ million*	*1987-88 £ million*	*1988-89 £ million*	*1989-90 £ million*
Agriculture	9·043	10·024	12·332	11·418	15·795
Economic development	11·375	11·817	13·793	15·011	15·904
Education	36·800	49·500	55·800	60·100	71·800
Environment (Northern Ireland)	217·000	180·000	181·000	200·000	199·000
Finance and personnel	NIL	NIL	NIL	1·810	1·540
Health and social services	19·281	16·499	22·517	23·342	23·901

Employment Prospects

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums he has expended in each travel-to-work area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years in order to increase the prospects of employment in each of the areas.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he intends to take during the current year to increase the employment prospects of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in (i) the Coleraine council area, (ii) the Limavady council area, (iii) the Magherafelt council area, (iv) the Londonderry council area and (v) the Strabane council area.

Mr. Needham: The full range of financial assistance and advice provided by the Department of Economic Development, the Industrial Development Board and the Training and Employment Agency and their associated public bodies is available to increase the employment prospects of both men and women in the five district council areas listed.

In addition, employment opportunities will be increased as a result of a number of Government-sponsored special initiatives. These include the Londonderry initiative and the CRISP programme (funded by the Department of the Environment and the International Fund for Ireland) which seeks to bring economic and environmental benefits to disadvantaged areas.

Job Creation

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show *(a)* the number of jobs created in each local government area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years by (i) the Local Enterprise Development Unit and (ii) the Industrial Development Board, *(b)* the cost per job created in each case, *(c)* the total expenditure and *(d)* the employment sector in which such jobs were created.

Mr. Needham: The information cannot be supplied in the form requested as figures on job creations are not available. However, table A shows the number of jobs promoted by LEDU and IDB in each local government area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years. Tables B to D also show for the same period the average cost per job promoted, the financial assistance offered by LEDU and IDB to promote these jobs and the employment sectors in which the jobs were promoted. The figures in tables B to D relate to Northern Ireland as a whole as this information is not available by local government area.

Table A
Jobs promoted by LEDU in Northern Ireland according to local government area

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Antrim	26	112	80	127	220
Ards	118	214	55	107	100
Armagh	105	91	122	107	297
Ballymena	105	77	143	100	160
Ballymoney	7	11	30	39	48
Banbridge	27	37	10	67	66
Belfast	789	828	938	1,108	1,510
Carrickfergus	113	157	246	207	103
Castlereagh	32	26	70	60	13
Coleraine	185	140	168	61	123
Cookstown	84	98	61	126	40
Craigavon	197	325	218	281	232
Down	139	222	172	120	190
Dungannon	267	336	201	311	252
Fermanagh	101	196	62	164	200
Larne	34	37	42	85	46
Limavady	44	23	28	80	28
Lisburn	152	163	112	115	256
Londonderry	273	248	361	326	540
Magherafelt	152	111	116	87	108
Moyle	13	57	13	10	16
Newry and Mourne	276	300	347	440	425
Newtonabbey	135	161	103	115	189
North Down	300	105	139	137	154
Omagh	89	83	87	136	163
Strabane	125	86	123	65	31
Total	3,888	4,244	4,047	4,581	5,510

Table A (Continued)
Jobs promoted by IDB in Northern Ireland according to local government areas

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Antrim	30	477	364	712	798
Ards	155	247	298	164	67
Armagh	28	137	51	110	34
Ballymena	71	8	187	90	206
Ballymoney	17	35	35	16	40
Banbridge	24	15	—	99	—
Belfast	94	279	92	303	601
Carrickfergus	21	15	103	452	100
Castlereagh	141	168	124	95	404
Coleraine	185	88	254	115	127
Cookstown	28	—	—	16	70
Craigavon	506	434	808	169	417
Down	10	67	108	318	24
Dungannon	94	102	400	108	136
Fermanagh	162	35	245	296	76
Larne	—	22	127	148	78
Limavady	75	—	80	—	—
Lisburn	232	255	123	1,039	85
Londonderry	650	227	393	432	827
Magherafelt	—	21	101	155	53
Moyle	—	52	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	70	28	446	82	32
Newtownabbey	198	1,178	523	720	743
North Down	74	75	108	14	147
Omagh	20	32	—	—	36
Strabane	25	190	330	—	30
Total	2,910	4,187	5,300	5,653	5,131

Table B
The average cost per job promoted

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
LEDU	4,758	4,461	4,505	4,504	4,115
IDB	15,263	11,418	11,637	15,393	16,177

Table C
Total assistance offered £(000)

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
LEDU	18,499	18,933	18,233	20,634	22,674
IDB	44,418	47,809	61,676	86,886	76,533

Table D
Jobs promoted by employment sector

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
			LEDU		
Engineering	731	639	722	765	740
Wood/furniture	347	237	324	457	507
Clothing/Textiles	356	364	441	320	461
Food/fish/drink	690	467	560	706	597
Other	1,764	2,537	2,000	2,333	3,205
			IDB		
Engineering	465	1,678	836	2,720	1,528
Textiles	391	570	1,029	612	1,164
Clothing	803	507	810	616	256
Food processing	401	540	1,452	618	507
Other manufacturing	785	714	1,121	1,017	999
Tradeable services	65	178	52	70	677

Census

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether a validation survey will be carried out in relation to the Northern Ireland census on similar lines to the validation survey planned for the Great Britain census; and whether the same confidentiality rules will apply.

Mr. Hanley: Yes. In line with the plans for Great Britain, a voluntary validation survey on the Northern Ireland census will be carried out to check both the accuracy of the information and the completeness of coverage. Information gathered in the survey will be treated in the same strict confidence as information given on the census form itself. The confidentiality of information collected in the survey will be covered by the Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 as amended by the Census Confidentiality (Northern Ireland) Order 1991. The results of the survey will be laid before Parliament and published as soon as possible after the census.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims for cold weather payments were received by the Department of Health and Social Services since 1 January; and how many claims were (i) approved, (ii) refused and (iii) still outstanding at 31 March.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The following table gives the information requested.

Claims for cold weather payments
1 January 1991 to 31 March 1991

	Number
Received	63,889
Approved	50,415
Refused	11,512
Outstanding	1,962

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 17 April 1991

TRANSPORT

HGV Speed Limiters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to make it mandatory for all heavy goods vehicles of over 7·5 tonnes gross vehicle weight to be fitted with speed limiters.

Mr. Chope: The Department has consulted about a proposal to require new heavy goods vehicles of more than 7·5 tonnes gross vehicle weight to be fitted with speed limiters, to ensure that these vehicles cannot be driven at more than 60 mph, their motorway speed limit. I am considering the response to this consultation.

HGV Drivers

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many HGV drivers lost their licences at the age of 45, 50, 55 and 60 years respectively, in each of the last three years; and if he will give the figures by disease or illness for each category in each year.

Mr. Chope: Prior to 1 April 1991 decisions on fitness to hold these licences were a matter for the statutorily independent traffic commissioners. Separate statistics relating to decisions taken on medical ground have been maintained since 1988. These are set out below. Details of the ages of the drivers concerned or the medical conditions in question are not available.

	April 1988 to March 1989	*April 1989 to March 1990*	*April 1990 to March 1991*
Refusals	1,735	2,391	[1]—
Suspensions	706	783	[1]—
Revocations	2,462	1,716	[1]—

[1] Figures not yet available.

Road Traffic Accidents

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of road traffic accidents and the numbers of injuries and deaths that have taken place on the stretch of the A19 which passes through the Easington constituency for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: For the section of the A19 within the Easington constituency the accident figures available for 1990 are as follows.

	Number
Number of road traffic accidents	16
Number of personal injuries	30
Number of deaths	2

The accident rate is higher than I would wish although it is lower than the national average for similar trunk roads.

Pelican Crossing

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects work to be commenced on the A6 trunk road pelican crossing between Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp in Leicestershire; and if the consultations by his Department with the local people concerned are yet completed.

Mr. Chope: Responses to the Department's proposals are still awaited from Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp parish councils. I would expect construction work to begin about six months after the satisfactory conclusion of the consultation with local bodies.

Roadside Lighting

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to install roadside lighting along that stretch of the A19 running through the Easington constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The installation of roadside lighting on the A19 between Murton and Easington is planned for this financial year.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Parents (Appeals)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline the rights of parents of children who have been refused admission to the secondary school of their choice after they have lost their appeal to the local council.

Mr. Fallon: Parents have a right to appeal to an appeal committee, which is independent of the local council, against the council's decision as to the school their child should attend. If their appeal is unsuccessful they may complain to the Secretary of State, who can intervene if he believes that the council has acted unreasonably in refusing to admit the child to the parents' preferred school. "Unreasonably" in this context has the meaning given to it in administrative law: a body has acted unreasonably in this sense if it has acted in a way in which no sensible body, bearing in mind its statutory responsibilities, could decide to act.

Wandsworth CTC

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what sums have been pledged by ADT in respect of the city technology college, Wandsworth; and on what dates and in what amounts these sums are due.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the dates and amounts of funds actually paid over by ADT in respect of their sponsorship of the city technology college, Wandsworth; in what form such payments have been made; and to whom the payments have been made.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: ADT plc has agreed to pay £1 million and to underwrite a further £700,000 as their contribution of the capital costs for establishing the Wandsworth city technology college. A schedule of payments is being drawn up.

ADT has made two payments of £500,000 and £250,000 which were paid in August 1990 and March 1991 respectively, towards the college capital programme.

I congratulate ADT on its public-spirited sponsorship of a very attractive project to improve educational opportunities for children in south London, which is making good progress.

Science

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he is making to the problems of the lack of qualified science teachers in respect of science key stages 1 and 3.

Mr. Fallon: We have taken measures to improve the supply of teachers in shortage areas. A number of these are targeted specifically at science, including the extension of the initial teacher training bursary to biology as well as chemistry and physics courses, support for the development of distance learning materials in physics, chemistry and primary science, teaching taster courses and the undergraduate work experience scheme.

In the current financial year, the Government are making specific grants to support local authority expenditure of some £170 million for the implementation of the national curriculum. It is for local education authorities to apply for these grants, to identify needs and priorities and to direct spending towards them. However, £10 million of this total is earmarked for courses for teachers of maths and science in primary schools.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to increase the number of school laboratory technicians.

Mr. Fallon: Under local management of schools, the governing bodies of schools take their own decisions on staffing matters. The Government are confident that governors are best placed to take decisions including the appropriate deployment of resources between teaching and non-teaching staff, and the nature of the non-teaching staff to be appointed.

Speech Disorders

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children whose homes are in Scotland are being educated at specialist schools for children with speech and language disorders in England.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not collected centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Service (Race Relations)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to improve implementation of the prison service's race relations policies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The prison service is committed to the elimination of racial discrimination in all aspects of its work. This is clearly set out in the service's public policy statement, which emphasises the need to treat all prisoners fairly and without discrimination.

In order to help ensure effective implementation of these policies, we are launching this week a race relations manual for use at all establishments. A copy is being placed in the Library.

The manual explains the service's race relations policies in detail, and their implications for the various areas of prison life. It gives practical advice on how to implement the policies, and enables establishments to audit their current performance. All establishments will be required to carry out the audit process, to draw up action plans to ensure that the policies are being implemented and to develop new initiatives and ideas.

The manual will be used primarily by each establishment's race relations management team, which reports to the governor. Governors and their area managers will maintain an oversight of progress. However, the manual emphasises the responsibilities of all staff to help to implement the service's policies. The manual will be available to all staff and prisoners.

Briefings for governing governors are taking place this week and will be introduced by the director general of the prison service. Training sessions have already been held for representatives from race relations management teams.

The prison service will also be introducing shortly a pack for use by establishments in delivering local race relations training and a pocketbook for staff.

We believe that these initiatives represent a major step forward in ensuring the elimination of discrimination in prisons. They demonstrate the determination of the prison service to ensure that all prisoners are treated fairly, with humanity and with respect.

Television (Listed Events)

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the conclusion of his consultations with interested parties about possible changes to the list drawn up for the purposes of section 182 of the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following consultation with broadcasters, the rights holders of the events concerned, the Sports Council and the Central Council of Physical Recreation I have drawn up a list including eight events. They are:

1. Cricket Test matches involving England
2. The Derby horse race
3. The FIFA World cup finals
4. The FA cup final.
5. The Grand National horse race
6. The Olympic games
7. The finals weekend of the Wimbledon tennis championships and any subsequent days if the championship overruns
8. Additionally in Scotland, the Scottish FA cup final.

The Commonwealth games when held in the United Kingdom and the Oxford and Cambridge boat race have both been removed from the list, as have all but the finals weekend of the Wimbledon tennis championships.

Visa Nationals

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has reviewed the arrangements for visa nationals who travel abroad and return during a period of leave in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: At present, a visa national who intends to leave the United Kingdom for a visit abroad

and then to return before the expiry of his current leave can obtain a re-entry visa from the Home Office. However, because re-entry visas are issued without substantive consideration of applications, they do not contribute to immigration control and I am not satisfied that they represent an effective use of resources. Furthermore, because returning visitors are eligible to receive a fresh six months' leave on each admission, a visa national can in theory prolong a visit indefinitely and without effective scrutiny through repeated use of re-entry visas. I have therefore decided that re-entry visas will no longer be issued with effect from 16 May 1991 and that alternative arrangements should be made.

In recent years it has been the practice, when introducing a new visa regime, to provide an exemption for visa nationals who are settled here or have been admitted for work, study or other long-term purposes. The visa exemption scheme, currently limited to 11 visa nationalities, is functioning satisfactorily and there is no longer any reason why its scope should remain confined in this way. I am therefore laying before Parliament today immigration rules changes to extend the scheme to all visa nationalities. From 16 May any visa national who is settled here and returns after an absence of not more than two years, or has been granted a limited leave of more than six months and returns before the expiry date of that leave, will benefit from the exemption.

Visitors will remain outside the scope of the exemption scheme. However, in order to provide increased flexibility for those who plan to travel abroad and return during a visit, my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has decided to introduce on 16 May a new multiple entry visa valid for six months. This will replace and carry the same charge as the existing six month double entry visa. The existing two year and five year multiple entry visas will remain available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Trade Statistics

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will provide a table showing, for each calendar year from 1970 to 1990 inclusive, *(a)* the non-oil current account surplus or deficit, *(b)* non-oil money GDP, *(c) (a)* above as a percentage of *(b)* above;

(2) if he will publish a table showing, for each year from 1970 to 1990 inclusive, plus the Budget forecast for 1991, the non-oil current account surplus or deficit expressed as a percentage of non-oil GDP.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The annual values for the years 1970 to 1990 of the current account balance less the balance of trade in oil are shown in the table, together with these current balance values expressed as a percentage of non-North sea gross domestic product. Non-North sea GDP is not published as a separate series. There is no standard definition of the non-oil current balance; the measure shown here does not take account of the full impact of the oil industry, nor would it be feasible to do so.

Year	*Current balance*	*Balance on trade in oil*	*Non-North sea current balance*[1]	*Non-North sea current balance as a percentage of non-North sea money GDP*[2,3]
	(1) £ *million*	*(2)* £ *million*	*(3)* £ *million*	*(4)*
1970	821	−496	1,317	2·5
1971	1,114	−691	1,805	3·1
1972	203	−665	868	1·3
1973	−998	−944	−54	−0·1
1974	−6,822	−3,360	−3,462	−4·1
1975	−1,525	−3,062	1,537	1·5
1976	−772	−3,952	3,180	2·6
1977	53	−2,775	2,828	2·0
1978	1,123	−1,989	3,112	1·9
1979	−453	−737	284	0·1
1980	2,843	308	2,535	1·1
1981	6,748	3,105	3,643	1·5
1982	4,649	4,639	10	0·0
1983	3,787	6,972	−3,185	−1·1
1984	1,832	6,933	−5,101	−1·7
1985	2,738	8,101	−5,363	−1·6
1986	−66	4,070	−4,136	−1·1
1987	−4,322	4,183	−8,505	−2·1
1988	−15,542	2,797	−18,339	−4·0
1989	−19,904	1,303	−21,207	−4·2
1990	−12,794	1,576	−14,370	−2·7
Forecast £ billion[4]				
1991	−6	+1	−7	−1

[1] Defined as col. 1 less col. 2.

[2] Non-North sea GDP is the average measure of GDP at current market prices less the value added of the extraction of mineral oil and natural gas industry.

[3] Based on non-North sea money GDP figures adjusted to remove the distortion caused by the abolition of domestic rates.

[4] *Source:* consistent with financial statement and Budget report 1991-92.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Prices

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on farm prices for the current year.

Mr. Curry: Negotiations are continuing on the European Commission's proposals for agricultural prices for the 1991-92 marketing years; the Agriculture Council next meets on 22 and 23 April.

Brucellosis

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in how many herds of cattle brucellosis has been identified in the current year; how many heads of cattle have been destroyed; what is the basis of compensation for cattle killed as a result of this identification of brucellosis; and if he will make a statement on the extent of brucellosis and the measures taken to curtail it.

Mr. Maclean: In Great Britain, no case of brucellosis has been confirmed this year and so far one animal has been slaughtered as a reactor. In Northern Ireland, brucellosis has been confirmed in two herds, and 36 reactors and 196 contact animals have been slaughtered.

Compensation for reactors is paid at 75 per cent. of market value, subject to a ceiling.

The United Kingdom is officially brucellosis free under community criteria, and qualifies for blood testing to be carried out only every two years.

PRIME MINISTER

Correspondence

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Prime Minister when he will be replying to the letter of 19 March from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North on the subject of the campaign for non-payment of the poll tax by a prospective parliamentary candidate.

The Prime Minister: A reply to the hon. Member has been sent today.

WALES

Rents

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average time taken by the rent officer service for Wales to deal with applications made to them under *(a)* section 70 of the Rent Act 1977 and *(b)* section 121 of the Housing Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what increase there has been in personnel employed in the rent officer service in Wales since the introduction of the Housing Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Fifteen.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Authorities

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now able to dissolve the English residuary water authorities.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has today dissolved by order the residuary Anglian, Northumbrian, North West, Severn-Trent, Wessex and Yorkshire water authorities. He will dissolve the remaining authorities as soon as they have discharged their functions.

Gulf Oil Pollution

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by the head of the meteorological research flight on the Hercules flight through the smoke plume in the Gulf.

(2) what has been the assessment of the meteorological research flight in relation to *(a)* hydrogen sulphide, *(b)* carbon monoxide, *(c)* carbon dioxide, *(d)* sulphur dioxide, *(e)* nitrogen compounds and *(f)* combinations of hydrocarbons and chlorine in the smoke plumes in the Gulf; and what was the finding of particles of aerosol per cubic metre.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 15 April, *Official Report*, Vol. 189, columns *65-66*, and to the related documents which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been received from Iran about oil-black rain and oil-black snow.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *538-39*, to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), what interim assessments he has had from the United Nations Environment Programme for a comprehensive assessment of environmental damage in the Gulf.

Mr. Baldry: None so far. I understand that implementation of the 90-day programme for the comprehensive assessment proposed by UNEP has now begun, but it is too early to make a substantive report on progress.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when local authorities are to be compensated in respect of the statutory reduction of community charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A new grant is to be paid to local authorities to reimburse them for the loss of community charge income arising from the provisions of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991. Payment of this grant will be made in 10 monthly instalments of 9 per cent. commencing in April on the basis of an estimate of the income forgone by each authority. Final grant entitlement will be calculated after the end of the financial year 1991-92. Parliamentary approval of this new service will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the relevant vote, class VIII, vote 14. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure (estimated at £435 million for the grant payments to be made in April) will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of *(a)* the total costs of administration of the community charge in England in 1990-91 and *(b)* the costs of the administration of the rates in 1989-90.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 16 April 1991]:* Local authorities budgeted to spend £440 million on the administration of the community charge in 1990-91. This compares with £200 million for the collection of both domestic and non-domestic rates.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the average reduction in 1991-92 in community charges resulting from the provisions of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill for all those entitled to a reduction under the community charge reduction scheme prior to the enactment of the Bill.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Following the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act and the improvements to the community charge reduction scheme, the average reduction in net charge payable after community charge benefit in England, for those who were previously within the scope of the community charge reduction scheme as already planned for 1991-92, is estimated at £86. For those with no entitlement to community charge benefit the average reduction is estimated at £113.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many community charge payers he estimates will benefit, net of rebates and the community charge reduction scheme, from the provisions of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill by *(a)* £140, *(b)* £120 to £140, *(c)* £100 to £120, *(d)* £80 to £100 and *(e)* less than £80; and in each case, how many are (i) pensioners and (ii) income support recipients.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 provides for headline community charges everywhere to be reduced by £140, or to zero where the charge set is less than that figure. About 20 million chargepayers in England will additionally receive help from the community charge reduction scheme and/or through community charge benefit.

Both the community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit help people meet their headline community charges and reduce the amount falling to be paid. The community charge reduction scheme limits increases between 1989-90 rates and community charge liabilities in 1991-92. Community charge benefit helps those with low incomes. It follows that when the headline charge is reduced, the amount of help a person needs to meet the headline charge is also reduced.

For example, a person on income support would only have to pay 20 per cent. of the community charge as reduced by £140 and any entitlement under the community

charge reduction scheme, CCRS. If their original charge was £400, and if there were no entitlement to CCRS, the charge after benefit would have been £80; after the £140 reduction the headline charge is £260 and the charge payable is £52. The 35 per cent. reduction in net charge is the same as the percentage reduction in headline charge.

The information requested is given in the table below:

Reduction in payment per year	*Charge payers (millions)*	*Pensioners (millions)*
(a) £140 plus	14·2	1·9
(b) £120 to £139·99	1·7	0·2
(c) £100 to £119·99	2·2	0·3
(d) £80 to £99·99	2·9	0·5
(e) less than £80	14·6	5·0

All 4 million individuals in England on income support are entitled to maximum community charge benefit and hence fall in category *(e)* in the above table.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he estimates the average community charge will be in England in 1991-92 *(a)* before the effects of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill and *(b)* after the reduction provided for in the Bill, in both cases giving figures (i) gross of the community charge reduction scheme and rebates, (ii) net of the community charge reduction scheme but gross of rebates and (iii) net of the community charge reduction scheme and rebates.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The information requested is as follows:

	£
(a) Before Community Charges (General Reduction) Act	
(i) Average charge (gross)	392
(ii) Average charge less community charge reduction scheme	340
(iii) Average charge less community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit	285
(b) After Community Charges (General Reduction) Act and revision to community charge reduction scheme	
(i) Average charge (gross)	252
(ii) Average charge less community charge reduction scheme	220
(iii) Average charge less community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit	187

Taking account of the allowance in income support for the 20 per cent. minimum contribution, the estimated average charge in England is reduced to less than £175. Charges have been calculated without allowing for reduction in charges due to capping.

Concrete Batching Plant, London N19

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on the inspectors' report into a planning application for a concrete batching plant at Monnery road, London N19; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A decision is expected shortly.

The Gulf

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on action being taken to end environmental destruction in the Gulf region.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 April 1991]:* I listed the actions which the United Kingdom had taken to help alleviate the effects of oil pollution in the Gulf in my reply to the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 15 March, *Official Report*, Vol. 187, columns 1384-91. Since then, the Government have continued to respond positively to requests for assistance from the Gulf states. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was accompanied on his recent visit to Kuwait by a team of experts to advise on the capabilities which United Kingdom industry could offer for extinguishing oil fires and capping the wells. The Government are also making available to the Gulf states an assessment of the health and environment effects of those fires. In relation to the coastal oil slick, part of the £1 million which the United Kingdom has contributed to the International Maritime Organisation is being deployed to clean up Karan island, a key Gulf breeding site for green turtles.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's estimate of the number of homeless people on 1 January of each year since 1981 who are sleeping in *(a)* bed and breakfast accommodation, *(b)* hostels and *(c)* other temporary accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 16 April 1991]:* Information on homeless households for whom local authorities have accepted a statutory duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1985 is reported quarterly to the Department.

Estimates of the number of such households, including some on whom inquiries had not yet been completed, in each type of temporary accommodation at 31 December of each year since 1980 are as follows:

	Bed and breakfast	*Hostels*[1]	*Other*
1980	1,330	3,380	..
1981	1,520	3,320	..
1982	1,640	3,500	4,200
1983	2,700	3,400	3,740
1984	3,670	3,990	4,640
1985	5,360	4,730	5,830
1986	8,990	4,610	7,190
1987	10,370	5,150	9,240
1988	10,970	6,240	12,890
1989	11,480	8,020	18,400
1990	11,130	9,010	25,030

[1] Including women's refuges.
.. Not available.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

West Bank

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli Government about plans to build new housing units for Israeli settlers in the occupied Palestinian west bank.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to make very clear to the Israelis that we oppose all such activity. Israeli

settlements in the occupied territories, including east Jerusalem, are in our view illegal and an obstacle to the search for peace.

Kurds

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been given to Turkey to alleviate the problem of Kurdish refugees from Iraq; what assistance has been given to the Kurds within Iraq; and if he will make a statement on the plight of the Kurdish people of Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have contributed £20 million in response to the United Nations and other international appeals for help to Iraqui refugees. This money is for use in Turkey, Iran and Iraq and other affected countries. We have also contributed three Hercules aircraft and nine Chinook helicopters to assist with the delivery of relief supplies. This is at a cost of some £1 million per week.

We remain concerned at the plight of the Iraqi refugees and determined to play our full part in meeting their needs.

China

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the question of human rights was discussed at his recent meeting in Peking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the subject of human rights, and in particular the present situation in Tibet, with both Mr. Qian Qichen, the Chinese Foreign Minister, and Mr. Jiang Zemin, the General Secretary. He referred to a list of cases of particular concern compiled by Amnesty International. We have made regular representations to the Chinese authorities, both bilaterally and with our EC partners, about reported human rights abuses in China.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken concerning the imprisonment of Catholic priests and clergy of other denominations in China at the most recent date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We regularly make representations to the Chinese about these matters. EC ambassadors in Peking made a demarche on this subject last year and my hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also raised it on his visit to Peking in July last year.

On his recent visit to Peking, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs reminded the Chinese authorities of our general concern about reports of human rights abuses. He referred to a list of cases of particular concern, which included a number of people imprisoned for their religious beliefs.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the question of religious freedom in Hong Kong after the handover to China in 1997 was discussed during his recent visit to Peking.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This question did not arise during the recent discussions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had with the Chinese Government. The Sino-British joint declaration and the Basic Law both make provision for the continuation of freedom of religious belief and practice in Hong Kong after 1997. In addition, the international covenant on civil and political rights, article 18 of which covers religious freedom, will, under the joint declaration and Basic Law, continue to apply to Hong Kong after 1997.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to China.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on 15 April, in *Official Report*, Vol. 189, columns 111-12.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations persuaded the coalition to allow Iraq to use helicopter gunships after the peace treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the meeting between General Schwarzkopf and the Iraqi military authorities on 3 March on the suspension of hostilities, the use of fixed wing combat aircraft by Iraq was prohibited. No limitation was placed on the use of helicopters.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Africa

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will raise in the European Community the special need for additional funds for emergency relief in Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The need for additional funds for emergency relief in Africa was discussed, at our request, at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg on Monday 15 April. The principle of further emergency aid was agreed. Detailed proposals will be presented by the Commission as soon as possible.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government and the European Community have taken to provide additional food supplies to Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the first clear indications of the serious food situation in Africa became apparent in September 1990, the United Kingdom has committed 158,000 tonnes of food aid. I also announced at the beginning of this week an additional £30 million of non-food emergency and relief assistance in Africa. The need for additional funds for Africa was discussed by EC Foreign Ministers on 15 April, and detailed proposals are expected to be agreed soon.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the total number of training places available through employment training has been reduced in the Northumberland area over the last two years.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available. There have been boundary changes and a change in the way data have been collected over the past two years.

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the current members of the Health and Safety Commission and give the relevent experience of each member; how many of the commission are females; and what percentage of the total membership they comprise.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Commission consists of the following members, including the chairman, with their relevant experience:

John Cullen FEng. Phd.—worked in industry for 27 years becoming European director for regulatory affairs, engineering and health and safety for Rohm and Haas Limited. He has been chairman of the Health and Safety Commission since October 1983.

Edward Carrick—has extensive experience in local government including vice convenor of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' environmental committee. He has also been involved in safety standards and training in the construction industry.

Paul Gallagher—has been president since 1987 of the Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union. He has wide negotiating experience in industry.

Peter Jacques CBE—is head of the social insurance and industrial welfare department, TUC and has been a member of the Health and Safety Commission since October 1974.

John C. Marvin—was chief executive-chairman of Hickson International from 1985 to 1990. Previously with ICI, including spells abroad, his special interests are in relation to the Chemical Industries Association.

Dr. Colin Shannon CBE—has wide experience in local government at district and national representative levels. He has been vice chairman of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers since 1983.

Nigel J. Pitcher—is a chartered engineer with wide experience in the contracting industry from power stations to motorways. He is a director of 12 Laing group companies including Laing Engineering Limited and John Laing Construction.

Rex H. M. Symons—is deputy chairman of Merck Holdings Ltd. also a director of British Drug Houses Ltd. being managing director from 1981 to 1989. He acts as the Confederation of British Industry's work place health and safety consultant and is the executive vice-chairman of the Dorset training and enterprise council.

Alan Tuffin—is general secretary of the Union of Communication Workers and a member of the TUC general council. He is chairman of the TUC's social insurance and industrial welfare committee.

Dame Rachel Waterhouse—recently retired as chairman of the Consumers Association, having been a member since 1966. She still serves as a member. President of the Institute of Consumer Ergonomics. Wide experience in consumer and social affairs, having specialised in health and safety matters.

The Commission has one female member, which is 10 per cent. of the total.

Youth Training

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current maximum level of payment per trainee being made by training enterprise councils to agencies providing skill and vocational training to the young, and of this how much is due to the trainee and agency, respectively.

Mr. Jackson: Payments to providers of youth training are a matter for negotiation between them and the training and enterprise councils. Trainees who are not employed must receive a weekly training allowance of at least £29·50 when they are aged 16, and at least £35·00 when they are aged 17 and above.

Career Guidance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's review of career guidance, announced in May 1990.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to place a copy of my Department's internal review of the careers service in the Library. I wrote on March 27 to the local authority associations, the chairmen of TECs, the CBI and the TUC seeking their views on a consultative paper on the future of the careers service. A copy of this consultative paper has been placed in the Library.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income (Statistics)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the net income after the Budget proposals have come into effect (i) after housing costs of a married man with children aged 13 to 16 years earning *(a)* £104 and *(b)* £105 per week, (ii) of a married man with children aged three, eight and 11 years paying average rent and rates as used in the tax benefit model tables earning *(a)* £65 per week and *(b)* £80 per week, (iii) after benefits of a married man with children aged four and six years earning *(a)* £60 per week gross and *(b)* £140 per week gross (iv) under current tax and benefit structure of a married man with children aged three, eight and 11 years with gross earnings of *(a)* £65 per week and *(b)* £105 per week and (v) under the current tax and benefit structure of a married man with children aged four and six years earning *(a)* £80 per week and *(b)* £90 per week.

Mr. Jack: The information is set out in the tables. All assumptions are as set out in the published tax-benefit model tables. For the purposes of these examples, it has been assumed that housing costs remain static irrespective of the level of gross earnings. Each family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to its size and to pay estimated average rent and community charge. Total net income is the product of the interaction of income-related benefits and the tax system at any given level of gross earnings. In the tables relating to the situation after the Budget proposals have come into effect, average rents are provisional 1991-92 figures and community charge has been assessed at £250 per annum. Any relevant changes announced in the Budget, including the increase in child benefit which will take effect in October, have also been incorporated. Those relating to the situation before the Budget use benefit rates in force before the April uprating.

It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical rents so they do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay.

The information is as follows:

Tables (i) to (iii)—post Budget
Married couple with two children aged 13 and 16

Gross earnings (£pw)	*Net income after rent and community charge (£pw)*
104	130·59
105	130·63

Married couple with three children aged three, eight and 11

Gross earnings (£pw)	*Net income after rent and community charge (£pw)*
65	132·67
80	133·48

Married couple with two children aged four and six

Gross earnings (£pw)	*Net income after rent and community charge (£pw)*
60	111·05
140	119·20

Tables (iv) to (v)—pre-Budget
Married couple with three children aged three, eight and 11

Gross earnings (£pw)	*Net income after rent and community charge (£pw)*
65	121·23
105	125·60

Married couple with two children aged four and six

Gross earnings (£pw)	*Net income after rent and community charge (£pw)*
80	103·17
90	103·72

Child Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will explain, as precisely as the information available permits, how the 1977 upratings of child dependency increases and war widows' children's allowances, respectively, were calculated; and what amounts were paid out in respect of these allowances in 1977 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Jack: In November 1977 the rates of child dependency increases of benefit for the first child in a family and war widows' children's allowance were increased by 14·5 per cent. in line with the general up-rating of long-term benefits. The rates of child dependency increases for the second and any subsequent child in a family were calculated by reducing the rate payable for the first child by the 50p differential between the rate of child benefit payable for the first child and that payable for any other child.

On the basis of the information available, expenditure on child dependency increases of benefit in the financial year 1977-78 is estimated to have been in the region of £230 million, of which about £90 million was for child dependency increases of short-term benefits. Since 1984, child dependency increases of short-term benefits have been payable only where the beneficiary has reached state pension age. Equivalent expenditure in the last financial year, 1990-91, is estimated to have been £158 million. Information on expenditure on war widows' children's allowances is not available as no records were kept of the numbers receiving the two levels of allowance then payable; expenditure in 1990-91 was about £1·7 million.

Social Fund

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the cash limits of the social fund for 1991-92 applied to the Peterlee and Seaham offices for 1991-92 and the estimated expenditure on discretionary grants and loans for 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: Details of the district office budget allocations for 1991-92 and monthly local office expenditure up to February 1991, the latest figures available, are in the Library.

Expenditure

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the level of expenditure on social security each year since 1979, both in cash terms and at 1990-91 prices, excluding expenditure on unemployment benefit, income support for the unemployed and their families and other expenditure on the unemployed; and what has been the percentage change in real terms each year and cumulatively.

Miss Widdecombe: Details of total social security spending from 1978-79 to 1990-91, excluding the amount spent on unemployed people, are given in the table. The table is as follows:

	Expenditure £ million			
	Cash	*1990-91 prices*	*Percentage change in real terms*	*Cumulative percentage change*
1978-79	15,228	38,416	—	—
1979-80	18,146	39,234	2·13	2·13
1980-81	21,221	38,774	−1·17	0·96
1981-82	24,941	41,558	7·18	8·14
1982-83	27,989	43,544	4·78	12·92
1983-84	31,180	46,364	6·48	19·40
1984-85	33,630	46,590	2·64	22·04
1985-86	36,525	49,023	3·01	25·05
1986-87	39,533	51,283	4·61	29·66
1987-88	42,292	52,084	1·56	31·22
1988-89	44,483	50,985	−2·11	29·11
1989-90	48,380	52,129	2·24	31·35
1990-91	54,149	54,149	3·88	35·23

Housing Benefit

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* council tenants and *(b)* private tenants in Lambeth were in receipt of housing benefit at the end of February based on claims for refund of housing benefit by his Department to Lambeth.

Miss Widdecombe: This information has not yet been received from Lambeth council.

SCOTLAND

Coronary Surgery, Lothian

19. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the delay in carrying out elective coronary surgery in the Lothian health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have made substantial extra resources available to Lothian for cardiac surgery. Last year, the number of operations increased and waiting lists fell by 5·4 per cent. I will however give further consideration to the programme in the light of the hon. Members' representations.

Ravenscraig

20. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to promote employment prospects in the Ravenscraig district.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Lanarkshire working group, which I supervise, is identifying the constraints to regenerating the Lanarkshire economy and the measures necessary to overcome these constraints. I expect the group to put forward its recommendations for economic development measures, including job creation projects, around the end of this month.

Local Government Finance

21. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the future of the poll tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

25. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the cost of implementing the Government's new proposals for local government finance.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A consultation paper on the Government's proposed new local taxation system will be issued shortly. Until the proposals have been finalised, it will not be possible to estimate the costs of implementation.

38. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet COSLA to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend earlier today to the hon. Members for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) and for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg).

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year from 1967-68 to 1991-92 the aggregate grant percentage for rate/revenue support grant.

Mr. Lang: The percentages for 1975-76 to 1991-92 of rate/revenue support grant to actual relevant expenditure are shown in the table. Figures for earlier years are not readily available.

	RSG as a percentage of relevant expenditure
1975-76	52·2
1976-77	61·0
1977-78	60·4
1978-79	57·4
1979-80	51·6
1980-81	49·6
1981-82	53·7
1982-83	55·7
1983-84	55·0
1984-85	51·0
1985-86	48·4
1986-87	47·2
1987-88	47·1
1988-89	46·7
1989-90	48·1
1990-91	48·3
1991-92	48·0

1. Total relevant expenditure figures include loan and leasing charges.
2. Rate/revenue support grant figures represent the original amounts of RSG awarded.
3. No account has been taken of specific grants payable to local authorities.

34. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the estimated cost of collecting local authority taxes in *(a)* 1991-92, *(b)* 1992-93 and *(c)* 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Based on local authorities' own budget estimates for 1991-92, the cost of collecting the community charge and non-domestic rates will be £47·4 million. The comparable information for 1992-93 and 1993-94 will not be available until local authorities have submitted their budget estimates for those years.

Full account has been taken in successive aggregate external finance settlements of the costs incurred by local authorities in collecting both the community charge and non-domestic rates.

32. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of expenditure by Scottish local authorities in connection with the administration of the community charge for 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Based on local authorities' own budget estimates, the cost of community charge registration and collection in 1991-92 will be £61·6 million.

31. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further progress the Government have made in their review of the poll tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales will be issuing a consultation paper shortly on the Government's proposals to introduce a new local tax to replace the community charge.

27. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the cost of the latest changes in local government funding in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish share of the cost of the step change in the level of central Government funding for local authorities announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 19 March is around £490 million gross. The net cost, after taking into account changes to the community charge reduction scheme and community charge benefit will be about £380 million.

28. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the average level of poll tax is expected to be in the coming year.

Mr. Lang: Following the passage of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991, the average personal community charge in Scotland for this year is £253 and the average combined personal and water charge is £282.

29. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with local authorities about the financing of local government.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Local Government and I met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 8 April to discuss a range of local government finance issues.

Fishing

22. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has plans to meet the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to discuss the tie-up scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have arranged to meet representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on 23 April 1991 to discuss their concerns about the Scottish fishing industry in general.

Unemployment

23. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to discuss unemployment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Meetings with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are normally undertaken by me and my noble Friend the Minister with responsibility for the highlands and islands respectively. We both had contact with the bodies which fall within our responsibilities earlier this month. The Secretary of State has had opportunities for discussion with the chairmen of both Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise during the past two months.

Training and Employment

24. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to discuss training and employment.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise on 26 February and I met the chairman on 2 April. On both occasions a wide range of subjects relevant to Scottish Enterprise was discussed.

Steel Industry

26. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from shop stewards on the future of the steel works at Ravenscraig, Clydesdale and Dalzell.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Since the beginning of last year, Scottish Office Ministers have held seven meetings with trade union representatives from the Scottish steel industry. At these meetings, the unions made representations in support of the case for investment to secure the future of the Scottish plants.

Kuwait and Southern Iraq

30. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the letter of 13 March of the Minister of State, Scottish Office to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what requests he has had from UNICEF or the World Health Organisation or other agencies for help in Kuwait or southern Iraq to fight diseases such as cholera and typhoid; and what response he has sent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been no direct requests to my right hon. Friend from any such organisations for assistance to fight disease in Kuwait and Southern Iraq. The Government support the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and have contributed £2·5 million to its Gulf appeal. We have also contributed $1 million to the United Nations and other agencies through the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation. The work of these organisations will include action to control diseases such as cholera and typhoid.

Elderly People, Glasgow

33. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to further involve the private sector in the provision of care for the elderly in the Greater Glasgow health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for Greater Glasgow health board to decide whether it wishes to extend partnership developments with the private sector in its strategy for care of the elderly.

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

35. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Grampian health board regarding NHS trust status for Aberdeen royal infirmary, Foresterhill.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. However, my officials maintain close contacts with the board on this and other aspects of the NHS reforms.

Housing

36. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss problems in Scottish housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I expect to meet representatives of the Housing Committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 24 September. My last meeting with them was on 25 January.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the statutory rights available to tenants who are transferred out of the ownership of Scottish Homes by means of a ballot in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 against their wishes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Tenants who are transferred to a private sector landlord from Scottish Homes as part of a large-scale voluntary disposal after a ballot, will hold assured tenancies and will have the statutory rights set out in part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 and the associated schedules.

Except for those tenants whose new landlord is a fully mutual co-operative housing association, tenants will have a contractual right to buy their home. This would become a statutory right to buy, after the coming into force of regulations, in terms of section 81A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, which I expect soon to be laid before this House.

In addition, the terms of the new tenancy would be those agreed in advance of transfer and would have been made available to the tenants for their consultation process prior to the ballot taking place.

Fife (Development and Enterprise)

37. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote development and enterprise in Fife region.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government's main instrument for promoting development and enterprise in lowland Scotland is Scottish Enterprise and its associated network of local enterprise companies. For Fife region, the relevant local enterprise company is Fife Enterprise which, for the first year of its operation in 1991-92, has a budget in excess of £21 million.

Poll Tax

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he will take to stop councils being required to pursue people for small sums of unpaid poll tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am satisfied that local authorities have adequate discretion under existing arrangements to decide whether or not to pursue arrears in particular cases.

Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will itemise expenditure by the Industry Department on new towns in every years since 1987-88, including plans for 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Central Government expenditure on Scottish new towns through the new town development corporations since 1987-88 and the planned expenditure for 1991-92 are recorded in tables 3.18 and 3.20 on pages 42 and 43 of the Scottish Office Report "Serving Scotland's Needs 1991-92 to 1993-94", published earlier this year.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of fatal military and civilian casualties in the Gulf war from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Kuwait, *(d)* other countries participating in the coalition force, *(e)* Iraq and *(f)* other countries, respectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Twenty-five military personnel were killed in action during the operation to liberate Kuwait. There were no United Kingdom civilian casualties during the operation. I understand that the figures for military deaths from other coalition countries during the operation were as follows:

	Number
(a) United States	142
(b) Kuwait	One
(c) Other coalition countries	51

As at 16 April, the United States also had five personnel still listed as missing. I understand that it is estimated that about 1,300 Kuwaitis were killed in the first three days following Iraq's invasion and about 1,700 subsequently. We have no authoritative information on civilian casualties suffered by other coalition countries, nor on military or civilian casualties sustained by Iraq or by other countries outside the coalition.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Obstetric Services

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what resident paediatric support exists for the obstetric units at the Royal maternity hospital, the Mater hospital and the City hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: Resident paediatric support for the obstetric units at the Royal maternity hospital, the Mater hospital and the Belfast city hospital is provided at two levels. Registrars are based at the Royal maternity and the Belfast city hospitals and combine with a registrar at the Royal Belfast hospital for sick children to provide a one in three rota for all three obstetric units. This means that a registrar is on call one night in three and one weekend in three. At senior house officer level, two senior house officers in the Belfast city hospital combine with two in the Royal Belfast hospital for sick children to provide a one in four rota for the Belfast city hospital and the Mater. The Royal maternity hospital has four resident senior house officers who between them provide 24 hour cover.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deliveries were recorded in 1989 in the obstetric units of the Royal maternity hospital, the Mater hospital and the City hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: The number of deliveries was as follows:

Hospital	*Live births*	*Still births*	*Total*
Royal maternity hospital	3,171	23	3,194
Mater	887	5	892
Belfast City hospital	2,888	14	2,902

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the current rota for obstetric staff at the Royal maternity hospital, the Mater hospital and the City hospital, Belfast;

(2) how many consultant obstetricians and consultant gynaecologists are currently employed at the Royal maternity hospital, the Mater hospital and the City hospital, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: Eleven consultant obstetricians and gynaecologists are employed in the Mater hospital, Belfast city hospital and royal group of hospitals, including the royal maternity and the royal Victoria hospitals. These consultants provide 24-hour cover to the hospitals concerned.

A rota indicates the degree to which a doctor is on call outside his normal working week. For example a 1:3 rota means that he is on call one night in three and one weekend in three. The term is normally used in relation to junior doctors. Details of the current rota for junior doctors at the hospitals are set out below.

	Rota
Royal Victoria hospital	
Senior registrars and registrars	1 in 4
Senior house officers	1 in 4
House officers	1 in 3
Belfast city hospital	
Senior registrars and registrars	1 in 4
Senior house officers	1 in 4
Mater hospital	
Registrars	1 in 2
Senior house officers	1 in 3

Milk

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the quantity of milk produced in the year ending 31 March 1991; what was the relevant quota for milk production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Wholesale milk production in Northern Ireland in the year ending 31 March 1991 is provisionally calculated to have been 1,285·950 million litres. This volume will be adjusted to take account of its butterfat content. The final wholesale production figure will not be known for some time. Wholesale quota for the Province is 1,285·628 million litres. This figure may be increased by the addition of any unused direct sales quota. Direct sales quota is 5·6 million litres. Direct sales production will not be known until final returns have been received from direct sellers.

Industrial Development Board

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure of the Industrial development board in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* the United States, *(c)* South Korea and *(d)* Japan in each of the past five years.

Mr. Needham: Expenditure incurred by IDB in maintaining its offices in Germany, United States, South Korea and Japan during 1990-91 was £580,675, £1,598,472, £677,343 and £1,017,050 respectively. The components of this expenditure are salaries, rents, capital works and promotional costs.

Because of changes in IDB's accounting methods, comparable information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost per job to be provided to the industrial development board in each of the past two years for jobs provided by firms from *(a)* Germany, *(b)* the United States, *(c)* South Korea and *(d)* Japan.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

	Cost per job (£s)			
	Germany	*USA*	*South Korea*	*Japan*
1989-90	21,825	23,871	—	39,740
1990-91	—	15,690	—	—

IBR Pneumonia

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of infectious bovine rhino-tracheitis pneumonia in cattle have been identified in each of the past six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Four cases of infectious bovine rhino-tracheitis in cattle have been reported to the Department of Agriculture in the past six months. The occurrences were as follows:

	Number
October 1990	Nil
November 1990	1
December 1990	2
January 1991	1
February 1991	Nil
March 1991	Nil

In each case, the Department of Agriculture has taken the appropriate control measures.

Physical and Social Environmental Programme

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those grants under the physical and social environment programme which have been allocated to *(a)* Irish cultural activities and *(b)* British cultural activities; if both sections of the community are benefiting from this programme; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The physical and social environment programme makes provision for a sub-programme under the broad heading of community reconciliation. The overall aim of the sub-programme is to encourage greater mutual understanding and respect for different cultural traditions, and to promote greater contact between the different communities in Northern Ireland. Within the sub-programme there are five measures:

Cross-community contact
Community relations council
Cultural traditions
District councils
Education

The programme is for the period up to December 1993 with European regional development fund support of £9 million towards gross expenditure of £12 million.

The four projects which have so far received funding are:

Project	Grant £	Measure
Ultach trust	0·5 million	Cultural traditions
Spirit of Enniskillen bursary scheme	0·5 million	Cross-community contact
Cross-community project associated with tall ships race	38,000	Cross-community contact
Lurgan pub with no beer	15,000	Cross-community contact

Inward Investment

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs are expected to be provided by firms attracted from *(a)* Germany, *(b)* the United States, *(c)* South Korea and *(d)* Japan for each of the past five years.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Years	Germany	USA	South Korea	Japan
1986-87	—	—	—	193
1987-88	—	220	—	—
1988-89	100	74	500	—
1989-90	40	785	—	100
1990-91	—	55	—	—

Newcastle Disease

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of compensation being provided for those who have had flocks of poultry destroyed as a result of the recent outbreak of Newcastle disease.

Mr. Hanley: Schedule 2 to the Disease of Animals Order (Northern Ireland) 1981 provides for compensation for flockowners in the case of Newcastle disease. The rate is at the value of the birds immediately before slaughter. Compensation is also paid for any eggs or feed which have to be destroyed. Provision is made for those flockowners who are dissatisfied with the amount of compensation offered to have recourse to independent valuation.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many poultry flocks have been affected by Newcastle disease since 1 April; what is the source of the present outbreak; what precautions have been taken against the spread of Newcastle disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Newcastle disease has been confirmed in one poultry flock since 1 April 1991.

Epidemiological investigations are continuing but the available evidence indicates that the source of the outbreak was contaminated feed.

The Department of Agriculture in accordance with EC and domestic legislation impress restrictions on the movement of all poultry, poultrymeat and eggs in a 10km zone around infected areas.

After consultation with the poultry and compound feedingstuffs industries, the Department introduced regulations requiring all poultry rations to be heat-treated, or until 31 August 1991 handled through closed systems, so as to minimise the risk of contamination. Heat treatment of feedstuffs is the most secure means of preventing the spread of infection from this source. The Department has issued advice to poultry producers on how to prevent infection, the symptoms to look out for and the need to report promptly any suspicion of disease.

Civil Service

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were employed in the non-industrial civil service in each district council area, as at 1 April in each year from 1985 to 1991.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The information relating to the Northern Ireland civil service is as follows:

District council area	[1]1985	[1]1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Antrim	291	298	300	296	349	316	327
Ards	202	200	208	216	198	197	188
Armagh	521	518	523	523	501	467	368
Ballymena	664	662	694	705	660	658	656
Ballymoney	105	115	123	126	115	99	98
Banbridge	122	128	135	140	130	107	109
Belfast	13,322	13,616	13,706	13,743	13,327	13,577	14,209
Carrickfergus	107	114	117	126	148	162	161
Castlereagh	316	366	433	473	489	497	506
Coleraine	751	775	773	769	764	739	729
Cookstown	244	241	250	258	246	232	228
Craigavon	719	748	766	781	781	766	741
Derry	832	838	851	874	863	864	962
Down	424	443	452	466	461	460	453
Dungannon	210	220	231	235	213	201	284
Fermanagh	504	508	517	522	497	459	453
Larne	129	129	133	137	139	129	127
Limavady	126	127	139	141	134	124	117
Lisburn	499	478	482	519	511	495	479
Magherafelt	105	113	116	119	124	106	108
Moyle	14	12	11	10	10	9	10
Newry and Mourne	439	431	428	434	428	389	386
Newtownabbey	278	310	282	293	268	228	299
North Down	802	764	786	831	848	861	864
Omagh	624	628	630	641	642	627	626
Strabane	143	146	147	152	140	125	116
TOTAL	22,493	22,928	23,233	23,530	22,983	22,894	23,604

[1] These figures exclude 82 staff in 1985 and 72 staff in 1986 who were employed in the probation service. Staff working for the newly created probation board for Northern Ireland were excluded from the Northern Ireland civil service figures from 1987 onwards.

HEALTH

Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the current members of the standing pharmaceutical advisory committee and give the relevant experience of each member; how many of the commission are females; and what percentage of the total membership they comprise.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The current members of the Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee (SPAC) are:

Mr. W. M. Darling, CBE, FRPharmS
Mr. T. P. Astill, BPharm, LLB Barrister, MRPharmS
Dr. S. Ellis, MPharm, PhD, FRPharmS
Mr. A. Massam, LLB Barrister, FRPharmS
Mr. J. Ferguson, FRPharmS
Professor A. T. Florence, DSc FRSs FRSE FRPharmS
Professor P. Spencer, BPharm DSc, PhD, FRPharmS, FIBiol, MCPP
Professor D. Ganderton, BPharm, PhD, MRPharmS
Mr. P. J. Keen, FRPharmS
Miss M. E. Tompkins, MRPharmS, MSc
Mr. N. L. Wood, BPharm, MRPharmS
Mr. J. Kirby, FRPharmS
Mrs. L. J. Stone BPharmS

Twelve members are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and the president of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain is an ex-officio member.

Including the ex-officio member, three out of 13 members are female.

All members of SPAC are chosen by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State bearing in mind their standing in the profession and their experience in their own field of pharmacy.

Next Steps Initiative

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has identified any further candidates for agency status under the "next steps" initiative within his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following a detailed feasibility study, I have identified my Department's medicines control agency as a candidate for executive agency status.

I am confident that the move to agency status will be beneficial enabling the agency to operate with greater freedom and clearer responsibility within an agreed framework of objectives, performance targets and resources, thus enhancing the agency's ability to safeguard public health through the control of medicines.

Detailed discussions on an agency framework document have been set in hand with a view to establishing the medicines control agency as an executive agency in 1991.

I will be considering other candidates for agency status in due course.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of persons currently on waiting lists for hospital in-patient treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 16 April 1991]:* The new figures for 30 September 1990 show that 705,706 patients were waiting for in-patient treatment, excluding those who had asked for their admission to be deferred, a 1 per cent. reduction since March 1990. The number waiting over a year for treatment fell by 2 per cent. in the six months to September 1990. This is on top of the 9 per cent. reduction in the previous 12 months. Provisional figures show the downward trend is gaining momentum, with a 12 per cent. reduction expected in the five months to February this year.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 18 April 1991

PRIME MINISTER

Overseas Aid

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister when the United Kingdom first agreed to give official overseas aid equivalent to 0·7 per cent. of annual income; and if he will list the amount in real terms and the percentage for each year since then.

The Prime Minister: The United Nations target for official development assistance to developing countries of 0·7 per cent. of GNP was accepted in principle by the British Government in 1974, although no date was set for meeting it. The United Kingdom has provided net official development assistance since then as follows:

Year	*Net official development assistance £ million (1989 prices)*	*Official development assistance as percentage of GNP*
1974	1,348	0·36
1975	1,395	0·38
1976	1,469	0·39
1977	1,679	0·44
1978	1,803	0·45
1979	2,100	0·51
1980	1,378	0·34
1981	1,678	0·42
1982	1,483	0·37
1983	1,457	0·35
1984	1,402	0·33
1985	1,479	0·33
1986	1,430	0·31
1987	1,331	0·28
1988	1,591	0·32
1989	1,578	0·31

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday April 18.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

East Timor

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister, further to his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, columns *3-4*, on what considerations the Government based their decision not to recognise East Timor's right to self-determination.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom supported United Nations Security Council resolution 389 of 22 April 1976 which confirmed the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination. Since 1982 the United Kingdom, in company with most other member states of the European Community, has supported the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to promote discussions between Indonesia and Portugal with a view to reaching a solution acceptable to all parties.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister, further to his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, columns *3-4*, what guarantees he has received or what monitoring has been undertaken to ensure that Tornados sold to Indonesia have not and will not be used against the civil population of East Timor.

The Prime Minister: There has been no sale of Tornado to Indonesia.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister what the Government are doing to promote United Nations resolution 35/27 of 1980 on East Timor's right to independence.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom abstained on United Nations resolution 35/27 of 1980. We took the view that by so doing, in company with most European Community partners and others, we could help to promote reconciliation and the search for a diplomatic solution by Indonesia and Portugal. Since 1982, the United Kingdom has supported the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to find a solution to the problem which is acceptable to all parties.

Indonesia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister, further to his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, columns *3-4*, on what consideration the Government based their decision to recognise the right of Indonesia to self-determination.

The Prime Minister: My earlier reply referred to the right of self-defence under international law. All states have the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Paul Holmes

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations have been received from the Irish Prisoners' Support Group concerning prisoner Paul Holmes; what reply has been sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Irish Prisoners' Support Group has written a number of letters referring to Mr. Holmes's request for a transfer to a prison in Northern Ireland. The most recent was on 25 January. A reply was sent on 14 March explaining the criteria under which Mr. Holmes's request was refused.

Bedding Material

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column *70*, what is the reason for the increase in the second half of the 1980s in the percentage of incidents, involving children injured in fires related to bedding, where the outcome was the death of the child.

Mr. John Patten: The available information given in the following table suggests the main source and cause is

playing with matches. However, the number of deaths are relatively small and subject to considerable year to year variation, making the interpretation of any changes difficult.

Supposed cause and source of accidental dwelling fires attended by local authority fire brigades, where the material first ignited was bedding[1] and children aged under five died, 1981-89 (United Kingdom)

Number of deaths

Source and cause	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Matches:									
playing with fire	—	3	1	1	8	12	8	7	5
careless handling	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	2	—
Smokers' material:									
playing with fire	1	2	1	—	—	—	2	—	—
careless handling	—	2	—	1	—	—	1	—	3
misuse of equipment	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Electric space heaters:									
placing articles too near	1	—	1	2	2	—	1	—	1
misuse of equipment	2	—	2	—	—	1	—	1	—
cause unspecified	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Gas space heaters:									
placing articles too near	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Electric blanket:									
misuse of equipment	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
fault in appliance	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	6	9	5	5	10	14	16	10	12

[1]bedding is defined as all bedding on the bed including mattress covers, but not beds or mattresses, or cases where the electrical insulation of an electric blanket was recorded as first ignited.
Source: Home Office Fire Statistics—(They are based on reports from fire brigades).

Prison Education Departments

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table for England and for each region in England, giving actual expenditure on prison education departments, and expenditure required by these departments, for each year from 1986-87 to 1990-91, and their plans for 1991-92, and 1992-93, in current prices, in constant prices, and an index of constant price expenditure where 1986-87 = 100.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table shows the information available. It relates to England and Wales. A regional breakdown is available only up to 1990-91 when the Prison Service was reorganised. The information relating to 1991-92 and 1992-93 is therefore presented in totals. The table shows expenditure on teaching services and education materials.

Table showing expenditure on Prison Service Education Departments 1986-87 to 1992-93

(£000)

Region	*South East*		*South West*		*North*		*Midland*		*Total*	
Price Level	*Current*	*Constant*	*Current*	*Constant*	*Current*	*Constant*	*Current*	*Constant*	*Current*	*Constant*
1986-87										
Actual	4,714	4,714	2,371	2,371	4,778	4,778	2,943	2,943	14,806	14,806
Planned	4,447	4,447	2,077	2,077	4,124	4,124	2,337	2,337	12,985	12,985
1987-88										
Actual	5,008	4,754	2,682	2,546	5,666	5,379	3,454	3,279	16,809	15,958
Planned	5,196	4,933	2,514	2,387	5,532	5,252	3,329	3,160	16,571	15,732
1988-89										
Actual	5,970	5,275	3,237	2,860	6,359	5,619	3,942	3,483	19,508	17,236
Planned	6,037	5,334	3,176	2,806	6,467	5,714	3,971	3,509	19,651	17,362
1989-90										
Actual	7,233	6,008	3,661	3,041	7,268	6,037	4,360	3,622	22,523	18,708
Planned	7,100	5,897	3,704	3,077	7,428	6,170	4,829	4,011	23,062	19,155
1990-91										
Actual[1]	6,946	5,355	3,890	2,999	7,638	5,888	5,073	3,911	23,547	18,152
Planned	7,778	5,996	4,208	3,244	7,598	5,857	5,424	4,181	25,008	19,278
1991-92										
Actual	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Planned	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29,137	20,984
1992-93										
Actual	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Planned	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]34,000	23,440

[1]Some expenditure is not yet recorded in the accounts.
[2]Provisional allocation.

Working Visas

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions he has had about the future of the two-year working visa for Commonwealth citizens with *(a)* New Zealand and *(b)* Australia; and what representations he has received from each Government on the issue;

(2) what proposals he has for the future of the two-year working visa for Commonwealth citizens after 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no present plans to amend the working holidaymaker arrangements for young Commonwealth citizens set out in paragraph 37 of the "Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules"—HC251. No recent discussions on the future of this scheme have taken place with either the New Zealand or Australian Government; nor have they made representations to us about this subject.

Rape

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library guidelines issued to the courts dealing with rape cases regarding sentencing and the relevant factors to be taken into account.

Mr. John Patten: Guidance was given by the Court of Appeal in R *v.* Billam (1986). The judgment is in the All England Law Reports for 1986, a copy of which is in the Library.

Fire Brigades

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which fire brigades have not yet fully implemented Home Office technical bulletin 1/89; and if he will give the time scale for implementation for each fire authority.

Mr. John Patten: We are satisfied that all fire brigades in England and Wales have adopted the principal features of the guidance on breathing apparatus contained in Home Office technical bulletin 1/1989.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what items of equipment, and at what cost, Kent fire brigade has purchased for use solely for firefighting and rescue in the channel tunnel and its associated sites;

(2) what contributions have been made by Eurotunnel Ltd. and Transmanche Ltd. to Kent county council for equipment provided by Kent fire brigade for training, firefighting and rescue in the channel tunnel and its associated sites;

(3) what provisions in terms of *(a)* staff and *(b)* equipment and at what financial cost have been made by Kent fire brigade in order that they may fulfil firefighting and rescue commitments in the channel tunnel and associated sites.

Mr. John Patten: Kent fire brigade has provided six uniformed and one civilian staff for channel tunnel site liaison and specialised training during the construction phase at a cost of £141,500, and 24 additional posts at a cost of £399,100 to maintain manning levels on fire appliances in the absence of those undertaking training. Equipment purchased specifically to meet its commitments consists of 40 long-duration breathing apparatus sets, and personal protective clothing, heavy duty lifting jacks and cutting tools at a cost of £565,600. Total contributions made by Eurotunnel plc to Kent county council amount to £628,400 to date, in accordance with the statements made by the concessionaries to the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill.

Victims Charter

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department from which organisations he has received comments on the "Victims Charter", published by his Department on 22 February 1990; and if he has plans to issue a revised edition in the light of such comments.

Mr. John Patten: Comments on the charter were received from the following bodies:

Victim Support
Council of Her Majesty's Circuit Judges
Justices' Clerks' Society
Lord Chancellor's Department
Crown Prosecution Service
Metropolitan Police
Hampshire Constabulary
Staffordshire Police
Association of Chief Officers of Probation
Northumbria Probation Service
Merseyside Probation Service.

Many of the standards of service set out in the charter for the criminal justice agencies are already being met. Others are under discussion with the agencies concerned with a view to implementation as soon as practicable.

Firefighters

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many operational *(a)* men and *(b)* women firefighters are employed in each fire authority/FCDA in England.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table.

Operational men and women firefighters employed in each fire authority/FCDA in England as at 1 January 1991

Authority	*Wholetime*			*Retained*		
	Men	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Avon[1]	—	—	641	—	—	190
Bedfordshire	309	—	309	131	2	133
Berkshire	392	1	393	154	1	155
Buckinghamshire	320	1	321	220	2	222
Cambridgeshire	245	—	245	370	3	373
Cheshire	582	—	582	204	3	207
Cleveland[1]	—	—	647	—	—	75

Authority	Wholetime Men	Wholetime Women	Wholetime Total	Retained Men	Retained Women	Retained Total
Cornwall	154	—	154	410	—	410
Cumbria	296	—	296	403	1	404
Derbyshire	513	2	515	376	2	378
Devon	480	—	480	695	2	697
Dorset[1]	—	—	282	—	—	331
Durham	418	—	418	177	—	177
Essex[1]	—	—	858	—	—	452
Gloucestershire	211	—	211	271	2	273
Hampshire	689	—	689	686	2	688
Hereford and Worcestershire	344	2	346	308	2	310
Hertfordshire[1]	—	—	497	—	—	242
Humberside	734	—	734	313	3	316
Kent	812	—	812	786	3	789
Lancashire	963	—	963	418	2	420
Leicestershire[1]	—	—	434	—	—	226
Lincolnshire[1]	—	—	186	—	—	445
Norfolk	246	1	247	441	1	442
Northamptonshire	298	1	299	245	1	246
Northumberland	256	—	256	159	1	160
Nottinghamshire	574	—	574	329	2	331
Oxfordshire[1]	—	—	199	—	—	271
Shropshire	205	—	205	262	3	265
Isle of Scilly	—	—	—	34	—	34
Somerset	145	—	145	382	—	382
Staffordshire	465	—	465	386	—	386
Suffolk	221	—	221	399	2	401
Surrey	697	—	697	—	—	120
East Sussex[1]	—	—	395	—	—	239
West Sussex	332	—	332	314	2	316
Warwickshire	324	1	325	218	—	218
Isle of Wight	49	—	49	161	2	164
Wiltshire	183	1	184	297	1	298
North Yorkshire	403	—	403	409	2	411
Total	11,860	10	16,009	9,958	48	12,597
Fire and Civil Defence Authority						
Greater Manchester	2,201	2	2,203	40	—	40
Merseyside	1,400	1	1,401	9	1	10
Tyne and Wear	1,085	—	1,085	32	—	32
West Midlands	2,095	1	2,096	13	—	13
South Yorkshire	1,012	—	1,012	129	—	129
West Yorkshire	1,967	2	1,969	241	1	242
London	6,329	47	6,376	—	—	—
Total	16,089	53	16,142	464	2	466
Total	27,949	63	32,151	10,422	50	13,063

[1] Totals only are shown for these authorities as they do not record the gender of their employees.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which fire brigades have yet to provide full A26 specification firefighting uniforms to all *(a)* whole-time and *(b)* retained firefighters; and if he will give the timescale for issue to *(a)* and *(b)* and the estimated cost for each fire authority.

Mr. John Patten: The purchase of firefighters' uniforms is a matter entirely for fire authorities. A recent survey indicated that 33 fire brigades in England and Wales issue firefighting tunics providing protection to specification A26.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce regulations to ensure that cars are designed to better standards in respect of their vulnerability to theft.

Mr. Chope: My Department is pressing for the adoption, as a European Community directive, of requirements for mechanical locking systems in passenger cars, as contained in British Standard AU 209 part 1. We are also supporting an international standard on motor vehicle alarms which could when completed form the basis of another EC directive. We hope to incorporate the provisions of such directives in national regulations at the earliest opportunity. In addition, we are pressing vehicle manufacturers to improve car security by voluntary means without waiting for regulation. During national crime prevention week we are emphasising that there is ample scope for improvement here.

Public Transport (Safety)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to improve the safety of mainline railway stations in the light of recent terrorist bomb attacks;

(2) if he will introduce measures to make the physical environment of coach, bus and railway stations safer in the event of terrorist bomb attacks.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is responsible for the safety of mainline railway stations, and has taken a number of steps to improve security measures following the explosion at Victoria. These include a heightened police presence, the withdrawal of left luggage locker facilities, removal of litter bins, sealing of letter boxes and more regular cleaning of station concourses. Security at bus and coach stations is the responsibility of the owner and operators, and increased security measures again include a heightened police presence. Continuing vigilance by both staff and passengers is also vital, and regular reminders are issued by operators about suspicious packages.

Vehicle Safety and Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce regulations to improve the safety and security of vehicles by stipulating higher standards of glass in cars.

Mr. Chope: A proposal for a European Community directive which requires windscreens to be made of laminated glass is being considered in the Council of Ministers. If this is adopted, it will be included in our national type approval requirements for new vehicle models and will eventually apply to all new vehicles.

Work is in hand for a British standards code of practice on windscreen glass repair which may be incorporated into the MOT test.

Although laminated glass may improve vehicle security, we are not intending to require it for other windows because it can increase the risk of entrapment in a vehicle following an accident. We are, however, pressing for agreement in the European Community on other measures for improving vehicle security.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether his Department makes comparisons of accident statistics on lit and unlit sections of Britain's motorways;

(2) what recent studies his Department has engaged in regarding the effect on accident statistics of lighting Britain's motorways.

Mr. Chope: A study by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory "Light on Motorway Accident Rates" was published in 1987. Accident statistics are continually monitored, including comparisons of lit and unlit sections of motorways.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received over the past three years in support of the lighting of Britain's motorway networks.

Mr. Chope: Those who have made representations over the past three years include the National Chamber of Trade, the editor of the *Sunday Mercury*, various Members of Parliament, a small number of police authorities and individual members of the public. We also receive representations against further lighting of the motorway network from other interested parties.

A14

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to let the contract for each of the remaining stages of the A14 in Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.

Mr. Chope: All remaining contracts are programmed to be let by the end of the year.

Cyclists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if pedal cyclists are part of the London area transport survey currently being undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Chope: Yes. Pedal cyclists are being covered in both major components of the 1991 London area transport survey. The household survey includes questions about the ownership of cycles and the use made of them and the roadside surveys treat cycles as a separate vehicle category.

M1 (Tourist Signs)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many tourist signs are located on the M1 motorway between Leeds and exit 34; and which tourist attractions they relate to.

Mr. Chope: There are four tourist signs on the M1 motorway between Leeds and exit 34; two northbound and two southbound at junction 38, relating to the Yorkshire sculpture park.

Archway Road, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many properties on the line of the abandoned A1 Archway road widening scheme are owned by his Department; and what plans he has to sell them.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 16 April 1991]*: The Department owns 54 dwellings including some flats and 24 business premises. We are currently considering a proposal from the Archway Road tenants association for the purchase of the residential units. We are also arranging to dispose of the business premises as soon as possible.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) by what date at the rate currently envisaged for 1992 under the current assumptions indicated in the oral statement by the Minister of State, *Official Report*, 14 January, column 644, payment for the Severn bridge will be completed; and what annual toll income would be in the final year at constant prices;

(2) on the basis of current assumptions about traffic growth on the second Severn bridge and toll levels for 1992 indicated in the oral statement by the Minister of State on 14 January, *Official Report*, column 644, what at constant prices, is the forecast annual income from tolls for each year from 1992 until the bridge is paid for.

Mr. Chope *[pursuant to his answer, 15 April 1991, c. 2-3]*: The costs of the two Severn bridges, including the outstanding deficit on the existing Severn bridge, are due to be paid by the end of the concessionaire's tolling period.

If the concession begins on 1 January 1992, then, on the basis of the concessionaire's traffic forecasts and the tolling regime for 1992 and subsequent years set out in the Severn Bridges Bill, it would end on 30 June 2013.

On these assumptions, the concessionaire's forecast toll revenues, in 1989 prices, are as follows:

	£ million
1992	29·6
1993	32·4
1994	35·4
1995	38·8
1996	39·7
1997	40·6
1998	41·6
1999	42·6
2000	43·7
2001	44·6
2002	45·6
2003	46·6
2004	47·6
2005	48·7
2006	49·7
2007	50·8
2008	51·8
2009	52·9
2010	54·0
2011	55·1
2012	56·2
2013	28·6

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Leicester Schools

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will make it his policy to collect data on the number of pupils attending schools in a different district from their home within the same local education authority;

(2) what is his policy on securing equitable funding arrangements for schools such as Bushloe high school, Wigston Magna, Leicestershire which draw a high proportion of pupils from outside their catchment areas;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of Leicestershire county council's formula for funding schools on the loss of teachers for schools such as Bushloe high school in the Oadby and Wigston area; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what representations he has received about the effect of local management of schools on the number of teachers at Bushloe high school, Wigston Magna, Leicestershire;

(5) if he will now list the budget allocation per unit for local management of schools in *(a)* Wigston, *(b)* South Wigston and *(c)* Oadby; what is the average budget allocation per unit for schools in the city of Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: I refer my hon. Friend to my replies of 22 March and 17 April, *Official Report*, columns *234* and *137*. Under local management, schools are funded principally on the basis of the numbers and ages of pupils on roll. Schools are not penalised for attracting pupils from outside the home local education authority; they receive funds in respect of those pupils through the LMS formula. In this way pupils of the same age are funded at the same level, irrespective of where they live and which school they attend within the authority.

We have received a small number of representations from schools in Leicestershire which serve the 10 to 14 age range, including Bushloe high school.

I shall write to my hon. Friend to explain the situation in more detail.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning opting out of schools in the Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston areas in view of the underfunding of schools which draw up to a quarter of their pupils from outside their catchment areas.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor received a number of representations from schools in these areas, some of which referred to the possibility of seeking grant-maintained status.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research is being undertaken into the effect of the summer heat in Kuwait turning oil lakes into tar, hampering plans to suck oil into tankers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: None of the research councils is currently undertaking any research in this area.

Official Visits

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the official visits he has made since his appointment to schools, sixth-form colleges, further education colleges, universities, polytechnics and other educational establishments, with the dates, name of the establishment, its area and the purpose of the visits, in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My official visits have been as follows:

26 November 1990:
Ribston Hall GM Grammar school
(Gloucestershire)

30 January 1991:
Stockingford First school
Stockingford Middle school
Alderman Smith High school
(Warwickshire)

8 April 1991:
The Open University
(Buckinghamshire)

I have also made informal and political visits to universities and colleges, and attended conferences and meetings with teachers and lecturers.

Planned official visits to LEA-maintained schools in Gloucestershire and Lancashire were cancelled at a late stage due to urgent ministerial business. My plans before the end of the summer term include visits to maintained schools and PE colleges in the following local education authorities: Cambridgeshire, Camden, Devon, Essex, Hereford and Worcester, Kent, Liverpool, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Sheffield; to two GM schools; to one CTC; to colleges of the universities of Oxford and London, and to the university of Nottingham; and to the polytechnics of Liverpool and Sheffield.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in full the organisations with which Ministers or officials in his Department plan to hold meetings with regard to establishing the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts; and on what dates such meetings will take place.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend and the Minister for Sport are due to meet the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on 24 April to discuss the establishment of a Foundation for Sport and the Arts. I envisage discussing the foundation with a variety of sports organisations over the coming months.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in full the organisations with which Ministers or officials in his Department have held meetings with regard to establishing the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts; and on what dates such meetings took place.

Mr. Fallon: Officials from the Department of Education and Science met officials from Her Majesty's Treasury on 21 March to discuss the establishment of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Officials have also spoken, informally, to a number of sporting organisations.

Birmingham City Action Team

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many meetings of the Birmingham city action team in 1990 and the first three months of 1991 were attended by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I attended the meetings on 12 March 1990 and 30 January 1991 to agree the annual action plan.

FE Lecturers

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update the information provided in his answer of 18 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *35-36*, to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) relating to the pay received by further education lecturers.

Mr. Eggar: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on electricity prices.

Mr. Wakeham: Electricity prices are a matter for the regional electricity companies subject to their statutory and licence requirements.

Onshore Petroleum Licensing

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his future plans for onshore petroleum licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The Petroleum (Production) (Landward Areas) Regulations 1991 (SI 1991 No. 981) were laid before the House today. These regulations are in substantially the same form as the previous regulations which provide for separate licences to cover the conduct of each of the exploration, appraisal and development stages. Operations under the licences are subject to the normal planning process. The new regulations, which follow discussions with the industry, incorporate a number of small changes and are designed to facilitate the conduct of operations. They will come into force on 9 May and will govern the arrangements for the next onshore licensing round.

As soon as possible, I will publish in the London and Edinburgh *Gazettes* a formal announcement giving the detailed financial terms for new landward licences and the basis on which awards will be made. The notice will invite applications for a new round of landward exploration licensing.

In parallel with the new regulations, I will be making arrangements allowing holders of old-style production licences, which covered exploration, appraisal and development activities, to transfer the exploration acreage in these licences to the new style of exploration licences.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the Government buildings currently using combined heat and power technology.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Office of Electricity Regulation—OFFER—is in the process of compiling a database of CHP projects operating in Great Britain which will include the Government estate. The information requested by the hon. Member will start to become available when the OFFER database becomes operational this autumn.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Union Flag

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has supplied a union flag to the vehicle inspection and driving test centre, Hamiltonsbawn road, Armagh; if the centre has been advised of the dates on which the union flag is to be flown; why no union flag was flown at these premises on St. Patrick's day and on Easter day; what steps are being taken to arrange for the union flag to be flown on 12 July; and if he will make a statement about future arrangements to fly the union flag at these premises.

Dr. Mawhinney: A union flag has been supplied to the vehicle inspection and driving test centre, Hamiltonsbawn road, Armagh and the centre has been advised of the prescribed days on which the union flag is to be flown. The union flag was not flown on St. Patrick's day and Easter Sunday due to an oversight by the staff at the centre. This oversight has been drawn to the attention of the staff and they have been instructed to ensure that the union flag is flown on all appropriate dates.

Firefighters

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many operational *(a)* men and *(b)* women firefighters are employed in each fire authority/FCDA in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The Fire Authority for Northern Ireland which serves the whole of the province employs 1,792 male and one female firefighters.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received from Mr. James Nichol, lawyer for Mr. Colin Wallace.

The Attorney-General: I have received no representations from Mr. Nichol, and have no reason to anticipate any.

Bowbelle

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will take steps to ensure that a decision is taken this week as to whether to proceed with the prosecution of the skipper of the dredger the Bowbelle.

The Attorney-General: The decision whether to seek a re-trial rests with the Director of Public Prosecutions; he is reviewing the case. His decision will be taken with the maximum expedition consistent with thorough consideration. I have drawn the hon. Member's concern to his attention.

Rape

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the training provided to judges to enable them to deal adequately with rape cases.

The Attorney-General: The Judicial Studies Board is responsible for the provision of training and information for judges. The policy with regard to the proper conduct of trials and appropriate levels of sentence in the Crown Court are laid down in decisions of the Court of Appeal criminal division.

The board has produced guidance for trial judges in summing up to juries and a volume of sentencing guidelines, which includes sentences for rape. Copies have been distributed to each judge.

At seminars run by the board judges are reminded that it is their duty to be sensitive to the difficulties of all those who come to court, including complainants in cases of alleged rape or other sexual assaults, who are often under considerable strain and may suffer distress whilst giving evidence.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General whether he contemplates any action against British companies named by the US Government who have allegedly been trading in weapons with the Iraqi Government.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 15 April by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, columns *30-31*. The list published by the United States Department of the Treasury concerned a number of companies and individuals whom the director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control had determined to be owned or controlled by or to be acting or purporting to act directly or indirectly on behalf of the Government of Iraq. I am informed that the US authorities have not alleged that those on the list have broken sanctions or controls on the export of arms. A very few cases concerning persons or companies in the United Kingdom where possible breaches of restrictions on exports to Iraq have come to light are being investigated by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Women Judges

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General how many women judges are currently appointed; and what was the percentage of women judges for each of the last 10 years appointed to the High Court and equivalent in criminal cases.

The Attorney-General: There are currently 22 women judges—4·3 per cent.—out of a total of 517 High Court and circuit judges. High Court and circuit judges are not generally assigned exclusively to criminal or civil work and most sit in the Crown Court at some time. Figures for appointments to the High Court and circuit bench over the last 10 years are as follows:

	Numbers appointed	*Women appointed*	*Percentage*
1981	23	1	4·3
1982	28	—	—
1983	31	2	6·5
1984	35	—	—
1985	35	2	5·7
1986	59	3	5·1
1987	29	—	—
1988	44	1	2·3
1989	39	1	2·6
1990	41	4	9·8
[1]1991	15	2	13·3

[1] To 17 April.

Judiciary

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals the Lord Chancellor has to improve the qualifications and training of the judiciary.

The Attorney-General: The Courts and Legal Services Act was considered and approved by both Houses prior to receiving Royal Assent on 1 November 1990. Section 71 and schedule 10 of that Act revised the qualifications for appointment to all levels of the judiciary. The new arrangements, which have effect from 1 January 1991, mean that higher judicial appointments are now open to solicitors as well as barristers who obtain the required qualifications, and posts are open generally to those who obtain the required rights of audience before the courts whether they are solicitors, barristers or otherwise qualified. My noble and learned friend the Lord Chancellor has no plans to change the qualifications for judicial appointment again in the near future. In addition, to ensure a well-qualified judiciary, appointments to part-time posts are normally made from candidates with standing and experience in the relevant field of law. In

making or recommending appointments to a full-time judicial post the Lord Chancellor normally requires the candidate to have served in a similar post in a part-time capacity. Both before and during this part-time service the Lord Chancellor assesses the candidate's work and abilities to establish his or her competence and suitability for judicial posts.

The training of newly appointed judicial officers and the provisions of continued judicial studies for the experienced judiciary is the responsibility of the Judicial Studies Board. Originally the training provided by the board was confined to the criminal field but in recent years its role has been extended to cover judicial studies in the civil and family jurisdictions and also the stipendiary magistrates and certain legal chairmen and members of tribunals.

In addition to its regular programme of induction courses and refresher seminars the board organises training in respect of new legislation, such as the Children Act and on specialist subjects such as fraud.

Despite the fact that the volume and range of training provided by the board has already increased significantly improvements will continue to be made. The content and format of seminars will be reviewed regularly as will the range of topics covered. The publications produced by the board are also being revised and consideration is being given to issuing further volumes and other material such as video or audio tapes.

The board and the four committees have produced a strategy document to cover the next five years. It will be included in the Judicial Studies Board report which will be published during autumn 1991.

Conciliation Services

Mr. Sims: To ask the Attorney-General what financial support the Lord Chancellor's Department plans to give for the provision of conciliation services.

The Attorney-General: The Government have no immediate plans to provide financial support for conciliation services. The Government are presently reviewing all aspects of divorce reform and conciliation is under consideration as part of that review.

EMPLOYMENT

Gas Surge (Royston)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set up a public inquiry into the gas surge in Royston on 8 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are currently investigating the gas incident on 8 March in Royston. I do not propose to set up a public inquiry since this would be unlikely to identify any causes or contributory factors which will not be identified by the HSE investigation. The results of HSE's investigation will be published.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the actions he has taken since the gas surge in Royston on 8 March in order to prevent a recurrence of this event.

Mr. Jackson: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are carrying out a full investigation into the gas incident at Royston on 8 March. The HSE will decide what action, if any, is appropriate when the investigation is completed.

I understand that British Gas has replaced approximately 4,000 m of pipeline as a result of the incident.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the dates of the contacts he has had, whether by telephone, letter or meetings, on the lessons of the gas surge in Royston on 8 March with *(a)* Royston town council and *(b)* British Gas.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Executive has had contact on the following dates with Royston town council and British Gas about the gas incident in Royston on 8 March:

(a) Contact with Royston Town Council	*(b) Contact with British Gas*
15 March	11 March
21 March	12 March
25 March	27 March
28 March	11 April
10 April 1991	12 April
	16 April 1991

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will visit Royston as part of his assessment of the implications of the gas surge on 8 March.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Executive is keeping me informed of progress with its investigation into the gas incident in Royston on 8 March. I have no plans to visit Royston.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auditors

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received reports from the Director General of Fair Trading under part II of the Companies Act 1989 on the effect on competition of the rules and guidance of qualifying and supervisory bodies for auditors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. The director general has submitted reports on the rules and guidance of all the applicants for recognition under part II of the Companies Act 1989, and I have placed copies of his reports in the Library. Further copies can be obtained from his office. Copies of the applications can be obtained from the applicants on request.

The director general discerns no significant anti-competitive effects in the rules and guidance of the qualifying bodies which have applied for recognition. He finds that a number of rules of some of the supervisory body applicants relating to the ownership and control of audit firms are likely to restrict or distort competition to a significant extent.

I would welcome comments on the director general's findings, and in particular on whether the rules he finds anticompetitive are nevertheless reasonably justifiable having regard to the purpose of part II of the 1989 Act. I should be grateful if any comments reached me by 15 May. Comments on any other aspects of the applications made under part II should also reach the Department by that date.

Liverpool Polytechnic

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from Liverpool polytechnic about it wrongly being on the United States Treasury list of blacklisted organisations; what action his Department has taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Salisbury *[holding answer 17 April 1991]:* Liverpool polytechnic has made a number of approaches to my Department. As a result, the British embassy in Washington has raised the matter of the inclusion of the polytechnic's name in the United States Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control list of "specially designated nationals".

WALES

Education (Laboratory Technicians)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many laboratory technicians are employed in each local education authority in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In September 1990 the number of laboratory technicians employed in secondary schools was as follows:

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
Clwyd	61	42	103
Dyfed	61	28	89
Gwent	81	22	103
Gwynedd	30	12	42
Mid Glamorgan	116	19	135
Powys	25	10	35
South Glamorgan	69	25	94
West Glamorgan	93	13	106

Schools (Absenteeism)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on absenteeism in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* high schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is important to tackle truancy more vigorously to ensure that the national curriculum and other education reforms benefit all pupils. My right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State of Wales have this week issued for consultation a draft circular on school attendance, together with draft regulations about pupil registration and the publication of information about rates of attendance. We expect schools to give the highest priority to maximising rates of attendance, and to work with parents, local education authorities and others to achieve that objective.

Rent Officers

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost of processing applications under section 121 of the Housing Act 1988 by the rent officer service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I estimate that the average cost of each application is about £25.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications the rent officer service in Wales is handling under section 121 of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: During the year ended February 1991 the rent officer service received an average of 2,670 cases per month under section 121 of the Housing Act 1988.

Single European Market

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiative he has taken, for each local education authority in Wales, individually, to enable them to prepare their educational systems for the single European market in 1992.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities to prepare programmes to meet changing needs and policies. I understand that the Welsh Joint Education Committee is offering active and specific assistance to LEAs in Wales and through them to all their education institutions to help them develop their responses to European Community initiatives. In addition, the Department is investigating the need for a unit to provide advice and guidance about European Community education programmes for further and higher education institutions in the Principality.

Teacher Recruitment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he plans for each of the local education authorities in Wales individually, to enable them to obtain more (i) foreign language teachers and (ii) Welsh teachers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have introduced a series of measures designed to improve the supply of modern foreign language teachers and teachers of Welsh. These include:

i. adding modern foreign languages and Welsh to the shortage subject Trainee Teacher Bursary Scheme for students entering eligible courses in the autumn of 1990. At the same time the value of the bursary was increased to £1,500;

ii. making £134,000 available under the Grants for Education Support and Training programme (GEST) to support Articled Teacher schemes. Clwyd is the one Local Education Authority in Wales to apply for support and the school-based training scheme will aim to attract graduates in shortage areas identified by the authority which include modern foreign languages and Welsh;

iii. approving, also under the GEST programme, local authority expenditure of some £228,000 in 1991-92 on recruitment measures which will seek to attract former teachers and mature entrants to teaching. Each scheme will seek to address local recruitment need including teachers of modern languages and Welsh where these are identified as shortage areas;

iv. investing heavily in in-service training to increase the supply of Welsh language teachers. In 1990-91 we made available £1 million to help existing teachers of other subjects to gain the necessary expertise to teach Welsh as well. For 1991-92, £1·8 million is to be spent on such training. In addition students at initial teacher training institutions in Wales will have the opportunity to learn the language while they are training to become primary school teachers.

Queensferry Bypass (Fencing)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the safety of the boundary fencing adjacent to the Brossley housing estate, Garden City and the A494 Queensferry bypass; and if he will inspect the fencing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is no trunk road boundary fencing adjacent to the Brossley housing estate. It was a condition of the planning consent imposed on the developer of the Brossley housing estate that a solid barrier not less than 4ft 6in. high must be erected along the existing trunk road frontage of the site. This fence has nver been erected. Fences exist at the top of the embankments on each side of the A494 trunk road. These have been inspected and temporary repairs effected.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will repair deficient fencing on the A494 Queensferry bypass where it borders the Garden City Brossley estate.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The agent authority, Clwyd county council, has effected temporary repairs to the fencing which lies within the highway at this location.

Fell Running

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he plans to take to ensure that safety is a first priority in all future organised fell-running events in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This is a matter for the organisers of future fell-running events.

ENVIRONMENT

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to issue his draft guidance to local authorities on renewable energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) on 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *543-44*.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to avoid smoke hampering aerial surveys in Kuwait.

Mr. Baldry: I am not aware of any action that would be open to my right hon. Friend.

Oil Well Fires

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the extent to which sulphur dioxide from oil wells after they are lit is less toxic than the hydrogen sulphide produced from the same wells before ignition.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 15 April 1991 at columns *65-66* and to the related documents which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Zoological Society of London

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has launched an internal investigation into the leaking of correspondence between his Department and the Zoological Society of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The correspondence was not leaked from my Department. We had never seen the zoo's internal memorandum quoted in the press.

Zoos

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what latest information he holds regarding figures for annual public subsidies to zoos by EC nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Such information is not collected by the Department.

Work on Government Offices

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet received the advice commissioned from Arup Associates on possible remedial work on Government offices at 2 Marsham street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Arup Associates has now provided its advice on possible remedial work on Government offices at 2 Marsham street. The report now needs to be studied in relation to the accommodation requirements of the two Departments which currently occupy the building and in the context of overall future demand for Government offices in central London. Until this further work has been carried out, it would not be sensible to attempt to take investment decisions in respect of the building at 2 Marsham street alone.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue the consultation paper, announced in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", Cm. 1200, on amendments to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Sir George Young: A consultation paper has been issued today, for circulation in England, Scotland and Wales. The document puts forward a number of suggested improvements, including clarifying the definition of damage to an ancient monument and making it an offence to remove objects from scheduled sites. Copies of the document have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses—consultees have two months within which to respond. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales will be consulting similarly.

Right to Buy

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings each local authority has sold under the right-to-buy legislation or voluntarily since April 1979; and what percentage of the total local authority stock they represent.

Mr. Yeo: I have placed in the Library a table giving available information on local authority sales up to December 1990. It shows year by year information for each authority since 1985-86 together with cumulative figures since April 1979 and the proportion of their stock sold since April 1979.

Drought Orders

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to modify his direction to water companies specifying the uses of water which may be restricted by means of drought orders made under section 131 of the Water Act 1989.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, have today given a fresh direction, the Drought Direction 1991, to water companies under section 131(4)(b) of the 1989 Act. The direction prescribes the uses of water which a company may be authorised to prohibit or limit under Drought Orders made by the Secretary of State.

The 1991 direction replaces the Drought Direction 1989, with the following modifications:

(a) the watering of all gardens (other than market gardens), together with landscaped areas such as road verges, may now be restricted (previously, only the watering of ornamental gardens or lawns was specified);

(b) the watering of all surfaces used for sport or recreation, including artificial surfaces, may now be restricted;

(c) the filling of privately owned pools designed for use in a medical treatment programme, or requiring to be filled during construction as a necessary part of the construction process, is now exempt from restrictions;

(d) the manual cleaning of windows is now exempt from restrictions.

Once a Drought Order has been made, its implementation and enforcement are the responsibility of the relevant water company. I am placing a copy of the Drought Direction 1991 in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table showing, for each financial year from 1978-79 to 1990-91 inclusive, in constant price terms *(a)* total grants from central Government to local government, *(b)* total housing benefit, or its predecessors, rent and rate rebates, *(c)* other social security benefits paid in respect of rates or the community charge and *(d)* the total of the above support.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 16 April 1991]:* The available information is as follows:

	Government grants at 1989-90 prices[1]	*Rent rebates at 1989-90 prices*	*Rent allowances at 1989-90 prices*	*Rate/ community charge rebates at 1989-90 prices*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
1984-85	20,409	2,208	755	1,545
1985-86	19,480	2,260	868	1,621
1986-87	20,315	2,289	1,006	1,725
1987-88	20,730	2,250	1,003	1,754
1988-89	19,189	2,150	949	1,368
1989-90	18,719	2,147	1,023	1,299
1990-91	19,603	2,178	1,262	1,785

[1] Government grants consisting of rate/revenue support grant, specific grants and capital grants. These include rent rebates, rent allowances and rate/community charge rebates.

Sources: The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93 (Cm. 1021).
Public Expenditure Analyses to 1993-94 (Cm. 1520).

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Food Production

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the third world countries receiving funding and technical co-operation from the United Kingdom in order to improve technologies in the production of safe and good quality food.

Mrs. Chalker: Third world countries currently receiving United Kingdom funding and technical co-operation for improving the safety and quality of the food they produce are listed below. The Natural Resources Institute at Chatham, through its ODA-funded food sciences and crop utilisation programmes, plays a leading role in this field of assistance. Many of the other research and development programmes on renewable natural resources funded by ODA, including its suppport for the international agricultural research centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, also contribute to the quality of food products.

Bangladesh
Bolivia
Brazil
Cote d'Ivoire
Dominica
Ecuador
Egypt
Ethiopia
Ghana
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Jamaica
Kenya
Madagascar
Mali
Malawi
Montserrat
Mozambique
Nigeria
Pakistan
Philippines
St. Helena
St. Kitts/Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Solomon Islands
Sri Lanka
Tanzania
Thailand
Uganda
Yemen
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution his Department is making to the preparations to the United Nations conference on the environment and development which is due to be held in Brazil in 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to work to make the conference a success. ODA and diplomatic wing officials

played a full part in the second meeting of the preparatory committee for the conference in Geneva in March and will continue to do so at future meetings. We have offered £32,000 to the voluntary fund established to finance participation by developing countries in the preparations for the conference. We are helping finance the preparation of national reports from Indonesia, Pakistan and Zimbabwe for the conference. Together with the Department of Trade and Industry we have financed a study on technology transfer to help developing countries address environmental problems, with a focus on global warming.

Development Aid

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much United Kingdom development aid was distributed to *(a)* the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, *(b)* Ethiopian church organisations and *(c)* the Ethiopian Red Cross (i) last year and (ii) in the current year; what proportion of total aid that represents for each; amd what are the reasons for the extent of the distribution to each.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the beginning of 1990 we have committed more than £30 million in humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia. Our assistance is channelled through international and British relief agencies, who work closely with Ethiopian non-governmental organisations, including churches and other bodies. Our bilateral Government-to-Government technical co-operation programme is worth about £3 million a year and is concentrated on education and training, agriculture, and disaster prevention and preparedness.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any communication with the Turkish Cypriots about the Cypriot Government's application for Cyprus to join the European Community; if he supports the application; and what progress has been made by this application.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Cyprus applied to join the EC in July 1990. The Commission is producing an opinion on the application, which will be submitted to the member states for their consideration.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Cypriot Government have accepted United Nations resolution 649 calling for a bizonal federal Cyprus; when the United Nations approved resolution 649; and if he will make a statement on political progress within the island of Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The UN Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the intercommunal dispute in Cyprus continue with our full support. The way forward is mapped out in UN Security Council resolution 649 of 12 March 1990, which both communities have accepted.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the United Kingdom Government have received as a guarantor power concerning the purchase of arms by the Government of Cyprus.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are aware of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot concern at the purchase of arms by the Government of Cyprus. It is our long-standing policy to sell weapons neither to the Greek Cypriot National Guard nor to the Turkish Cypriot armed forces.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Saudi Government about the volume of paperwork involved before equipment can be sent to fight fires in Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have had no discussions with the Saudi Government on this subject.

Antarctica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the Government of Argentina on the recent review of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Antarctica.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have put proposals arising from our review of United Kingdom policy to all Antarctic treaty consultative parties, including Argentina, for their consideration in advance of the special consultative meeting in Madrid, starting on 22 April.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with Norway on the recent review of Government policy towards Antarctica.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have put proposals arising from our review of policy to all Antarctic treaty consultative parties, including Norway, for their consideration in advance of the special consultative meeting in Madrid starting on 22 April.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources will be required to finance the measures necessary to enable Britain to conform to the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not anticipate that any extra resources will be required to meet the United Kingdom obligations under the convention.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes in legislation he proposes to enable Britain to conform to the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. With the reservations envisaged in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 21 March at column *192-3* we are satisfied that the United Kingdom mainland will be able to meet its obligations under the convention.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his

Department has yet held consultations on the manner in which it will monitor the requirements of the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. After ratification the Department of Health will co-ordinate the United Kingdom's initial report with other home Departments.

European Political Union

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on political union on 15 April.

Mr. Hurd: The ministerial meeting of the intergovernmental conference on political union on 15 April, attended by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, discussed Presidency proposals on a common foreign and security policy and the powers of the European Parliament.

In discussion of a common foreign and security policy my hon. Friend the Minister of State re-stated our arguments, as set out in my answer to the House on 6 March 1991 at column 203, for strengthening co-operation among the Twelve on foreign and security policy issues and for strengthening the Western European Union (WEU) as a bridge between NATO and the Twelve. There continues to be a range of views among other member states on this and related issues.

A range of views was expressed too on the Presidency proposals for strengthening the European Parliament's role in the legislative procedure through the introduction of "co-decision" procedures. Several members states, like the United Kingdom, were unable to accept the proposals.

Ministers will continue discussion of both these subjects at future meetings of special representatives and of Ministers. These meetings will also consider the composite text of all proposed Treaty amendments now circulated by the Presidency.

Foreign Affairs Council

Sir Peter Blaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 15 April.

Mr. Hurd: A meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council took place in Luxembourg on 15 April. My hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reviewed the progress of the EC/EFTA negotiations on a European economic area, which will extend the internal market to the EFTA countries. The Council instructed the Committee of Permanent Representatives to continue work on the detailed issues and agreed to propose to EFTA a joint EC/EFTA ministerial meeting on 13 May.

The Commission briefed the Council about the negotiations for association agreements between the European Community and Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Council declared its readiness to adopt a flexible approach in the negotiations, particularly on trade access, with a view to concluding them as soon as possible.

The Council discussed a draft EC/Japan declaration and agreed that further work was necessary before the draft could be passed to the Japanese. It also considered which countries should participate in the European energy charter and agreed to re-examine the issue on 15 May.

At the request of the United Kingdom, Ministers discussed a package of aid from the Community and member states to help those suffering famine in Africa. They agreed on the need for emergency aid and asked the Commission to make proposals urgently.

Ministers also discussed disbursement of the 150 mecu humanitarian assistance for Iraqi refugees agreed at the Special European Council of 8 April. They invited the President of the Council to discuss with the United Nations Secretary-General how Saddam Hussein could be held to account for his actions.

Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of all exports of ivory from Hong Kong to Argentina in the last two years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 March 1991]:* According to the Hong Kong authorities export licensing records, no commercial exports of ivory to Argentina have been authorised in the last two years.

THE ARTS

Library Books

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Minister for the Arts what average amount per head of population has been spent on library books in the county of Durham each year since 1987.

Mr. Renton: Expenditure in the county of Durham per head of population has risen over the past four years as follows:

	£
1986-87	0·69
1987-88	0·85
1988-89	0·90
1989-90	1·04

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) if he will list in full the organisations with which Ministers or officials in his Department have held meetings with regard to establishing the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the dates on which such meetings took place;

(2) if he will list in full the organisations with which Ministers or officials in his Department plan to hold meetings with regard to establishing the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the dates on which such meetings will take place.

Mr. Renton: I have been in touch with ministerial colleagues and others with an interest in the proposed foundation. My Department will continue to be closely involved in taking this forward.

HEALTH

Adoption

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his officials' recent visit to Romania concerning inter-country adoption.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 26 March at columns *763-64*. A team of Home Office and Department of Health officials visited Bucharest in November 1990 to discuss further how to co-ordinate help and facilitate procedures for British couples who wish to adopt Romanian children. We continue to be in regular contact with the Romanian authorities.

Sickle Cell Disorders

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to introduce universal screening of new-born babies for sickle cell disorders and to develop national policies on pain control hospital care and the prevention of crises in people having sickle cell disorders.

Mr. Dorrell: It is important that infants affected by sickle cell disease are identified at an early stage so that they can receive appropriate treatment. Screening services are generally offered to those members of the population most likely to be affected—those orginating from Africa, the Mediterranean or middle east. This disease is rare in the indigenous population. It would therefore be unreasonable to screen all new-born babies for the disorder.

In 1988 the Department introduced haemoglobinopathy cards which are given to patients with sickle cell disease or thalassaemia with the aim of ensuring that, in an emergency, their condition is identified and that they receive appropriate treatment. The decision on what measures are necessary to control pain and prevent crises is for the individual doctor to make, taking into account his knowledge of the patient and the particular circumstances of the episode. This is a matter of clinical judgment.

Prestwich Hospital, Salford

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the patients of Pinfold, Troy and Tottington wards at Prestwich hospital, Salford, will be evacuated, as advised by the health advisory service/social services inspectorate in its report dated October 1990, No. (90) MI/E.12.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on 15 April at column *80*.

Pharmacists (Advice)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish in the *Official Report* the written advice of his Department to retail pharmacists regarding the methods of disposal for unwanted medicines and poisons returned to them by their customers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Advice is given by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to community pharmacists on the disposal of returned medicines. The Department has not issued any written advice.

Medical Students

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to change the arrangements under which medical students have access to national health service patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Medical students have always undertaken clinical work in hospitals, and this forms an essential part of their training. There are also long-standing arrangements under which final year students may assist in hospitals when a house officer is on leave. Following consultation with health authorities, the General Medical Council, the medical profession and the universities, revised guidance has been issued clarifying the circumstances in which students may have access, under close supervision, to hospital patients. A copy of the guidance has been placed in the Library.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of his Department's negotiations to date with the tobacco industry on the control of tobacco advertising.

Mr. Waldegrave *[pursuant to the reply 11 March 1991]:* I am pleased to announce that the Health Departments and the industry have reached agreement in principle on a revised voluntary agreement for the next three years on the advertising and promotion of tobacco products. The new agreement will be published and come into force in the next few weeks when final drafting has been completed and the agreement has been approved under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976.

In a major addition to the voluntary agreement, the industry has agreed to remove 50 per cent. of shopfront advertising over five years. The change will start once the agreement has been concluded and will apply to all external permanent advertising material on shops. In making this reduction, the industry will act in consultation with the retail trade; it will seek to apply the reduction evenly over time by type of sign and by geographic location; priority will be given to reducing the number of those permanent advertising signs on shops clearly visible from schools; the reductions will be validated annually by independent audit; the results of the audit will be submitted to the monitoring committee and will appear in the committee's annual report.

A major change in the agreement is that from 1 July all external signs on shops will carry a health warning; under the existing agreement signs erected before 1983 have not been required to carry a health warning and this has caused confusion to the public and has been commented on in reports of the monitoring committee.

The new agreement will also extend the present ban on poster advertising which is visible from schools to children's playgrounds.

Other parts of the existing voluntary agreement will also be updated and anomalies, which have come to notice through the reports of the monitoring committee, will be removed.

I am also pleased to announce that, following the resignation of Sir Peter Lazarus as chairman of the monitoring committee, the Government with the agreement of the industry, have appointed Sir John Blelloch, formerly permanent secretary at the Northern Ireland Office, to be the new chairman of the committee.

The Government welcome these steps to maintain and develop the system of voluntary agreements, to which they remain committed.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Benefits

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the social security benefits available to carers, and what steps his Department is taking to publicise these benefits.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on 27 March 1991 at column *448*.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number and proportion of people claiming unemployment benefit who were disqualified or disallowed for availability or voluntary unemployment reaons and, because they were not eligible for income support, received no benefit, for May 1989 and the latest available date.

Mr. Jack: Information on the numbers of unemployed claimants and the decisions of adjudication officers where the question of availability or voluntary unemployment arises, is in "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants" and "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Decisions of Adjudication Officers", copies of which are in the Library. Figures as to the number and proportion of people disqualified or disallowed for receiving unemployment benefit who were not entitled to income support are not available.

Claimants

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people made claims for *(a)* income support only, *(b)* unemployment benefit only and *(c)* income support and unemployment benefit for each quarter since the beginning of 1987; and what were the proportions and numbers in each quarter whose claims were disallowed, disqualified or suspended for (i) non-availability, (ii) refusal of employment and neglect to avail, (iii) restricted availability, (iv) not actively seeking work and (v) other reasons.

Mr. Jack: Information on the numbers of unemployed people claiming benefit and the decisions of adjudication officers where those claims were disallowed, is in "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants" and "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Decisions of Adjudication Officers", copies of which are in the Library. No information is available on the total number of claims suspended or the proportion of income support claims which resulted in a disallowance.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for *(a)* unemployment benefit only; *((b)* income support only and *(c)* both income support and unemployment benefit were made by unemployed people for each quarter from the beginning of 1987 to date.

Mr. Jack: The information is in "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion and what number of claimants on the unemployment register are claiming income support as *(a)* incapable of work, *(b)* lone parents, *(c)* retired, *(d)* aged 60 years and over and *(e)* studying.

Mr. Jack: Claimants who are incapable of work or retired are not on the unemployed register. Information on those aged 60 and over who choose to register is in "Unemployment Benefit Statistics—Half-yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants", a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not available as to the number of lone parents or those who are studying.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the incorporation of attendance allowance into disability living allowance will result in any reduction of the number of people currently qualifying for attendance allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: There will be no reduction in the number of people receiving the existing rates of benefit. Recipients of attendance allowance who are over the age of 65 will continue to receive that benefit after April 1992, and those who are under 65 will be transferred automatically to the corresponding rate of the care component of the new disability living allowance.

Income Support

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether loans can be paid from the discretionary social fund to applicants claiming income support while they are waiting for seven days to receive payment of income support paid in arrears; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Yes. Crisis loans may be paid from the social fund to people who are awaiting their first payment of income support, and who are facing a serious risk to their health or safety. In 1989-90, a total of 191,000 such awards were made, at a total cost of £6·2 million. Over 90 per cent. of crisis loan applications are successful.

Source: Secretary of State's Annual Report on the Social Fund, 1989-90.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

River Severn

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take following the representations he has received on the problems of pollution and flooding along the River Severn.

Mr. Curry: Flood and tidal defences along the River Severn are kept under constant review by the National

Rivers Authority and the Department. As a result of flooding from the River Severn, the Severn Trent region of the NRA which is responsible for the promotion of flood defence work along the river, has instigated investigations in the form of mathematical and physical modelling, and have included defence works in their forward programme of work to be submitted to the Department for grant aid.

The Ministry is grant-aiding a comprehensive scheme to raise flood walls and embankments on the River Severn, below Gloucester. Following the tidal flooding in February 1990, and additional section of works is being added.

Matters relating to the problems of pollution along the River Severn are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of fishing vessels held in port by the eight consecutive day rule in February and March in South Shields, Seahouses, Bridlington, Scarborough, Grimsby and Fleetwood.

Mr. Curry: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

	February 1991	*March 1991*
South Shields	0	0
Seahouses	0	0
Bridlington	9	5
Scarborough	5	1
Grimsby	24	4
Fleetwood	1	1

The reduction in March reflects the Government's success in securing a gear option for restricted vessels.

Whale Conservation

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps the Government are taking to ensure that a policy of whale conservation is retained for the United Kingdom, other EC countries and other international bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government have long been in the lead in pressing for the conservation of whales. The moratorium achieved under the International Whaling Commission is still in place after its review last year and the number of whales taken for scientific whaling purposes during the moratorium has been greatly reduced by the pressures of the IWC. Further, the European Community has prohibited trade in whale products. The Government will continue to work for the conservation of whales through all possible means.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

12. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross earnings a married couple with one earner on average earnings, with two children, paid in all taxes and national insurance, including local taxes and treating child benefit as a negative income tax, in 1978-79, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Maples: About 35 per cent. in 1978-79 and about 36 per cent. in 1989-90. Estimates including local taxes are not yet available for 1990-91.

Corporation Tax

13. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from small businesses concerning reductions in corporation tax.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from small businesses and representative bodies. The overwhelming majority support the Budget measures.

21. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the level of corporation tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have received a number of representations.

23. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the rate of corporation tax in the United Kingdom; and what is the average rate in other European Community countries.

Mr. Maude: The main rate of corporation tax will be 34 per cent. for 1990 and 33 per cent. for 1991, down from 52 per cent. in 1979. The EC average, excluding the United Kingdom, for 1990 is 40·2 per cent. Germany's rate is 50 per cent.; Belgium's is 43 per cent. and France's is 34 per cent. Britain and Luxembourg now have the lowest main rate of corporation tax in the Community.

Inflation

15. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the inflation rate for the second, third and fourth quarters of 1991.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Retail price inflation is expected to fall sharply in April, and to decline further thereafter to 4 per cent. by the fourth quarter of 1991.

Child Benefit

16. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the current rate of child benefit if uprated in line with inflation since 1987.

Mr. Mellor: It would be £9·55. The increases this year in child benefit will raise the rate of the eldest eligible child by over 25 per cent.

Value Added Tax

17. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received over the increase in value added tax.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend has received many representations over the increase in the rate of VAT.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on companies charging value added tax at 17·5 per cent. on goods and services supplied between 1 January 1991 and the date of his Budget statement; and if he will bring forward proposals to prevent companies from back-dating the increase in value added tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The normal rules for working out the date for VAT purposes—the tax point—apply when there is a change of rate. This entitles traders to apply the old rate—15 per cent.—to goods or services supplied before 1 April—the date from which the rate was increased to 17·5 per cent. Moreover, even where the issue of a tax invoice after 1 April would have created a tax point at the new rate, there is in existence a concession to the normal rules which allows traders to apply the old rate, as long as the goods or services were supplied prior to 1 April. There is therefore no question of the Government forcing companies to backdate the increase in VAT.

Where companies do not take advantage of the concession available, perhaps because of administrative difficulties, this is a matter for their own commercial judgment, of course, taking account of relations with their customers.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised by charging value added tax at 17·5 per cent. on those goods and services which are at present exempt from value added tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The effect of applying VAT to the exempt sector cannot readily be determined, because some of the outputs such as financial services are difficult to value or tax. An estimate could be prepared only at disproportionate cost. Estimates of the cost of zero-rating are in table 4B.1 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross earnings value added tax took up for a family on average male earnings with two children in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1989-90.

Mr. Maude: Approximately 2·7 per cent. of gross earnings and 5·0 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had about value added tax misdeclaration penalties from the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am aware that my hon. Friend has made representations to Treasury Ministers expressing concern about the operation of the penalty regime.

In my Budget statement I acknowledged these concerns and announced the setting-up of a thorough review of the penalty regime with a view to legislation for changes in the 1992 Budget. The review will include full consultation with the accountancy profession and business interests and all constructive proposals will be carefully considered. Pending the outcome of the review the rate of penalty was reduced from 30 to 20 per cent. from 20 March 1991 and relaxations were introducted by Customs.

Local Government Finance

18. Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of local government expenditure in England he anticipates will be met from central Government in *(a)* 1991-92, *(b)* 1992-93, *(c)* 1993-94, *(d)* 1994-95 and *(e)* 1995-96.

Mr. Mellor: For 1991-92, around 83 per cent. of budgeted current expenditure. As my right hon. Friend said in his Budget statement, local taxation is now at a level that the Government believe should be sustainable in the longer term. Much depends however on the level of local authority expenditure in future years.

27. Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the percentage of local government expenditure paid for by central Government in 1991-92; what it was in 1986-87 and 1981-82; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Central Government support for local authorities in 1991-92 will account for around 83 per cent. of current expenditure in England, compared with 78 per cent. in 1986-87 and 81 per cent. in 1981-82. For consistency, the figures for past years include income from non-domestic rates.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis for the years 1984-85 to 1993-94, using the territories and economic categories of table 5.7 of Cm. 1520, of changes between total local authority expenditure *(a)* between table 21.4.11. of Cm. 1021 and table 5.11 of Cm. 1520 and *(b)* between table 5.11 of Cm. 1021 and the "Financial Report and Budget Statement" 1991-92.

Mr. Mellor: Information on differences between the figures for local authority expenditure given in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper—Cm. 1021—and the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement"—Cm. 1520—for the years up to 1989-90 are given in the table. They are on the same basis as the information on differences from Cm. 1021 presented in the supplement, that is, they exclude differences arising from changes in the way expenditure is recorded—classification changes—or from transfers between Departments or sectors, for example, switching responsibility for expenditure from central Government to local authorities. Corresponding analyses for 1990-91 and future years and on differences between the supplement and the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" are not available.

Differences[1] in local authority expenditure between the 1990 public expenditure White Paper and the statistical supplement to the Autumn statement

£ million

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
England					
Subsidies	—	—	—	−12	−23
Pay	64	86	225	93	623
Other current expenditure on goods and services	−106	−100	−127	−215	
Subsidies	—	—	—	−12	−23
Current grants to persons	38	56	−51	51	23
Net capital expenditure on assets	4	−21	−13	200	841
Capital grants	1	21	16	78	108

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Lending and other financial transactions	4	9	8	−2	−74
Total	6	50	57	192	1,498
Scotland					
Pay	—	—	—	−11	−14
Other current expenditure on goods and services	—	—	—	−7	
Subsidies	—	—	—	−5	−3
Current grants to persons	—	—	—	−4	−6
Net capital expenditure on assets	1	—	—	−24	−7
Capital grants	—	—	—	7	−1
Lending and other financial transactions	—	—	—	9	−4
Total	1	—	—	−35	−34
Wales					
Pay	—	—	—	12	81
Other current expenditure on goods and services	—	—	—	25	
Subsidies	—	—	—	−12	−12
Current grants to persons	3	7	3	11	9
Net capital expenditure on assets	—	−1	—	4	57
Capital grants	—	—	—	—	3
Lending and other financial transactions	—	1	—	4	−2
Total	3	7	3	44	136
Great Britain					
Pay	64	86	225	94	689
Other current expenditure on goods and services	−106	−100	−127	−197	
Current grants to persons	41	63	−48	57	26
Net capital expenditure on assets	4	−22	−13	180	892
Capital grants	1	21	16	85	110
Lending and other financial transactions	5	9	8	11	−80
Total	10	57	61	201	1,600
Northern Ireland					
Pay	—	—	—	—	6
Other current expenditure on goods and services	—	—	—	—	
Subsidies	—	—	—	—	—
Current grants to persons	—	—	—	—	—
Net capital expenditure on assets	—	—	—	—	−1
Capital grants	—	—	—	—	—
Lending and other financial transactions	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	—	—	—	6
United Kingdom					
Pay	64	86	225	94	695
Other current expenditure on goods and services	−106	−100	−127	−197	
Subsidies	—	—	—	−29	−38
Current grants to persons	41	63	−48	57	26
Net capital expenditure on assets	4	−22	−13	180	891
Capital grants	1	21	16	85	111
Lending and other financial transactions	5	9	8	11	−80
Total	10	57	61	201	1,605

[1] The differences shown are differences after adjustments for changes of classification and switches between departments and spending sectors.

Charities

19. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the proposals he announced in the Budget for assistance to charities in respect of value added tax.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend has received a large number of representations from charities since his Budget statement.

25. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from charities since his Budget statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend has received a large number of representations from charities since his Budget statement.

Manufacturing Output

20. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the change in manufacturing output has been in the last three months.

Mr. Mellor: In the three months December to February, manufacturing output was 2·1 per cent. lower than in the previous three months.

Growth

22. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how many consecutive quarters he forecasts growth will be negative after 1990.

Mr. Mellor: Forecasts of GDP are published for half-yearly periods. The Budget forecast shows a fall in GDP of 1½ per cent. between the second half of 1990 and the first half of 1991, and growth of ¾ per cent. between the first and second halves of 1991.

Interest Rates

24. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about current interest rates.

Mr. Maples: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

Exchange Rate Mechanism

26. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the position of the pound sterling within the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Maples: Sterling is currently trading a little above its central rate.

Foundation for Sport and Arts

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list in full the organisations with which Ministers or officials in his Department plan to hold meetings with regard to establishing the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts; and on what dates such meetings will take place;

(2) if he will list in full the organisations with which Ministers or officials in his Department have held meetings with regard to establishing the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts; and on what dates such meetings took place;

(3) how many meetings have taken place between Ministers and officials from his Department with representatives of the pools companies, to discuss the establishing of a new Foundation for Sport and the Arts, since 28 March; and what plans there are for further meetings;

(4) what progress has been made towards the setting up of the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Since 28 March, my officials have held one meeting—on 16 April—with representatives of Littlewoods, Vernons and Zetters, the three members of the Pools Promoters Association. Following that meeting, work is progressing towards the establishment of the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Further meetings with the promoters will be held as necessary.

Pay Increases (Statistics)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average increase in net weekly spending power of a man with two children of seven and 11 years and a non-working wife for each extra £1 he earns if he increases his pay from *(a)* £100 to £110, *(b)* £110 to £120, *(c)* £120 to £130, *d)* £130 to £140 and *(e)* £140 to £150, assuming he pays average rent and community charge.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

For the purposes of these examples it has been assumed that housing costs remain static irrespective of the level of gross earrnings. The information is set out in the tables, which show changes in net weekly spending power at the various levels of gross pay to which the hon. Member has referred. Total net income is the product of the interaction of income-related benefits and the tax system at any given level of gross earnings. All assumptions used are as those in the published tax benefit model tables. Each family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to its size and to pay estimated average rent and community charge. Average rents are provisional 1991-92 figures and community charge has been assessed at £250 per annum. Any relevant changes announced in the Budget including the October increase in child benefit, have also been incorporated. It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical rents so they do not reflect the full range of housing costs which people can pay.

Married couple with two children aged seven and 11—Rent: £25·60—Community charge: £9·62

Gross earnings	*Take home pay*	*Family credit*	*Child benefit*	*Rent rebate*	*Community charge benefit*	*Total net income*	*Net income after rent and community charge*
Earnings £100—£110							
100·00	91·94	43·32	16·75	1·25	2·08	155·34	120·12
101·00	92·60	42·86	16·75	1·12	2·05	155·38	120·16
102·00	93·26	42·39	16·75	1·00	2·02	155·42	120·20
103·00	93·92	41·93	16·75	0·87	1·99	155·46	120·24
104·00	94·58	41·47	16·75	0·74	1·96	155·50	120·28
105·00	95·24	41·01	16·75	0·61	1·93	155·54	120·32
106·00	95·90	40·55	16·75	0·00	1·90	155·10	119·88
107·00	96·56	40·08	16·75	0·00	1·87	155·26	120·04

Gross earnings	Take home pay	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent rebate	Community charge benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and community charge
108·00	97·22	39·62	16·75	0·00	1·84	155·43	120·21
109·00	97·88	39·16	16·75	0·00	1·81	155·60	120·38
110·00	98·54	38·70	16·75	0·00	1·78	155·77	120·55
Earnings £111—£120							
111·00	99·20	38·24	16·75	0·00	1·75	155·94	120·72
112·00	99·86	37·77	16·75	0·00	1·72	155·10	120·88
113·00	100·52	37·31	16·75	0·00	1·69	156·27	121·05
114·00	101·18	36·85	16·75	0·00	1·66	156·44	121·22
115·00	101·84	36·39	16·75	0·00	1·63	156·61	121·39
116·00	102·50	35·93	16·75	0·00	1·60	156·78	121·56
117·00	103·16	35·46	16·75	0·00	1·57	156·94	121·72
118·00	103·82	35·00	16·75	0·00	1·54	157·11	121·89
119·00	104·48	34·54	16·75	0·00	1·51	157·28	122·06
120·00	105·14	34·08	16·75	0·00	1·48	157·45	122·23
Earnings £121—£130							
121·00	105·80	33·62	16·75	0·00	1·45	157·62	122·40
122·00	106·46	33·15	16·75	0·00	1·42	157·78	122·56
123·00	107·12	32·69	16·75	0·00	1·39	157·95	122·73
124·00	107·78	32·23	16·75	0·00	1·36	158·12	122·90
125·00	108·44	31·77	16·75	0·00	1·34	158·30	123·08
126·00	109·10	31·31	16·75	0·00	1·31	158·47	123·25
127·00	109·76	30·84	16·75	0·00	1·28	158·63	123·41
128·00	110·42	30·38	16·75	0·00	1·25	158·80	123·58
129·00	111·08	29·92	16·75	0·00	1·22	158·97	123·75
130·00	111·74	29·46	16·75	0·00	1·19	159·14	123·92
Earnings £131—£140							
131·00	112·40	29·00	16·75	0·00	1·16	159·31	124·09
132·00	113·06	28·53	16·75	0·00	1·13	159·47	124·25
133·00	113·72	28·07	16·75	0·00	1·10	159·64	124·42
134·00	114·38	27·61	16·75	0·00	1·07	159·81	124·59
135·00	115·04	27·15	16·75	0·00	1·04	159·98	124·76
136·00	115·70	26·69	16·75	0·00	1·01	160·15	124·93
137·00	116·36	26·22	16·75	0·00	0·98	160·31	125·09
138·00	117·02	25·76	16·75	0·00	0·95	160·48	125·26
139·00	117·68	25·30	16·75	0·00	0·92	160·65	125·43
140·00	118·34	24·84	16·75	0·00	0·89	160·82	125·60
Earnings £141—£130							
141·00	119·00	24·38	16·75	0·00	0·86	160·99	125·77
142·00	119·66	23·91	16·75	0.00	0·83	161·15	125·93
143·00	120·32	23·45	16·75	0.00	0·80	161·32	126·10
144·00	120·98	22·99	16·75	0·00	0·77	161·49	126·27
145·00	121·64	22·53	16·75	0·00	0·74	161·66	126·44
146·00	122·30	22·07	16·75	0·00	0·71	161·83	126·61
147·00	122·96	21·60	16·75	0·00	0·68	161·99	126·77
148·00	123·62	21·14	16·75	0·00	0·65	162·16	126·94
149·00	124·28	20·68	16·75	0·00	0·62	162·33	127·11
150·00	124·94	20·22	16·75	0·00	0·59	162·50	127·28

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis for the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 showing for each regional, district and island council and for Scotland as a whole *(a)* grant-aided expenditure, *(b)* grant-aided expenditure expressed as pounds per head, pounds per adult and pounds per community charge unit, *(c)* the community charge required to be levied to finance grant-aided expenditure, *(e)* the long-run community charge required to be levied to finance expenditure 1 per cent., 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. below and 1 per cent., 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. above grant-aided expenditure; *(f)* Government grant as a percentage of local authority expenditure at each of the spending levels specified in (e) above, *(g)* that level of expenditure as a percentage of grant-aided expenditure which would require a zero community charge and *(h)* that level of expenditure as a percentage of grant-aided expenditure which would require a zero long-run community charge.

Mr. Lang: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Vacation Hardship Allowance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how vacation hardship allowance is calculated.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The vacation hardship allowance may be used to provide student maintenance outwith term time in certain defined circumstances. Its maximum value is broadly similar to the additional weeks allowance for students on courses with extended terms and in recent

years this has been increased to reflect the movement in student maintenance rates generally. The amount actually payable in any individual case depends on the circumstances of the applicant.

On 27 March, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science announced that, subject to the approval of the necessary regulations, the equivalent discretionary allowance would be discontinued in England and Wales. Those regulations come into force on 17 April and I can confirm that it is our intention to discontinue this allowance in Scotland also.

General Practitioners

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for budget-holding status have now been *(a)* received for general practitioners and *(b)* accepted by the boards, for each Scottish health board; and in respect of what starting date in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Five applications for recognition as a GP fundholder have been received by health boards to date. The further details requested are set out in the following table.

Health board	*Application received*	*Current status*
Argyll and Clyde	1	Commenced fundholding 1 April 1991
Greater Glasgow	1	Application received March 1991: currently under consideration
Lothian	1	Commenced fundholding 1 April 1991
Tayside	2	Recognition granted; date of commencement still to be set.

Practices in Scotland may submit applications at any time during the course of a year. It is for the health board to determine and agree in consultation with the individual practices concerned the date on which recognition takes effect, and the date of commencement.

Blood Products

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those blood products produced by the Scottish blood transfusion service, with the number used in the past 10 years in *(a)* NHS hospitals; *(b)* private hospitals and *(c)* sold to other bodies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not readily available in respect of the last 10 years but information relating to the four years to 31 March 1990 is set out in the following table.

Number of vials/bottles produced by the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service
Years ending 31 March—to NHS, private sector. No products were issued to other bodies in the period

Product	*Vials or bottles*	*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*		*1989-90*	
		NHS	*Private sector*	*NHS*	*Private sector*	*NHS*	*Private sector*	*NHS*	*Private sector*
Factor 8	Vials	37,243	—	52,204	—	41,335	—	42,798	—
Factor IX (DEFIX)	Vials	1,013	—	9,614	—	9,160	—	7,812	—
Intramuscular IgG									
Normal IgG	Vials	6,735	30	8,592	7	14,200	7	15,225	—
Anti-D IgG	Vials	12,870	54	16,693	44	16,935	22	16,637	36
Anti-tetanus IgG	Vials	4,934	—	4,555	—	4,175	—	3,904	—
Hepatitis (HBs) IgG	Vials	601	—	734	1	1,519	—	1,320	—
Varicella Zoster	Vials	393	—	400	—	490	—	550	—
Rubella IgG	Vials	170	—	120	—	20	—	315	—
Rabies IgG	Vials	40	—	195	—	53	—	30	—
Measles IgG	Vials	175	—	70	—	65	—	203	—
Intravenous IgG									
Normal IgG	Vials	4,970	—	7,919	—	8,485	—	10,854	—
CMV IgG	Vials	64	—	817	—	1,291	—	902	—
Measles IgG	Vials	20	—	65	—	46	—	—	—
Tetanus IgG	Vials	5	—	88	—	8	—	62	—
Albumin	Bottles	2,490	—	6,642	—	6,426	—	4,692	—
SPPS	Bottles	75,258	4	93,594	16	88,631	—	84,378	—

Note: Products are made available to the private sector only when all NHS needs are fully covered.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for the past 10 years, the number of units of blood used in *(a)* NHS hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not readily available in respect of each of the last 10 years but information relating to the four years ending 31 March 1990 is set out in the following table:

Units of whole blood (450 ml)

	NHS	Private
1986-87	26,092	315
1987-88	18,967	243
1988-89	22,243	211
1989-90	11,576	128

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for the past 10 years, the number of units of blood used for the extraction of other blood components.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not readily available in respect of the last 10 years but information relating to the four years ending 31 March 1990 is set out in the following table:

Years ending 31 March	Units used for extraction of other blood components
1986-87	259,144
1987-88	240,538
1988-89	243,594
1989-90	263,733

Purchaser/Provider Contracts

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps have been taken to ensure that Scottish general practitioners are aware of the terms of the purchaser/provider contracts being made on their behalf by health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Circulars to health boards issued by the Scottish Office have emphasised that one of the main objectives of the new NHS contracts system is to provide health boards and GPs with the opportunity to work more closely together for the benefit of patients. Boards have therefore been instructed to set up appropriate consultative arrangements for discussion with general practitioners on their present and intended referral patterns, and to liaise on the placement of contracts and on the introduction of changes to contracts once these are in place.

Health Board Staff

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number of regraded professional and technical category B staff who have appealed against their new grade; and how many of these appeals have been heard.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of appeals by PTB staff against their new grades and on those heard is not held centrally. At Scottish appeals committee level 2 appeals have been heard and 25 are awaiting a hearing.

Designated Place Provisions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public money, both capital and revenue, respectively, has been invested by his Department in designated place provisions under section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 in each year since 1980.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

	Capital (£)	Revenue (£)
1980-81	—	—
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	150,000	—
1983-84	—	119,000
1984-85	—	109,000
1985-86	—	109,500
1986-87	—	70,000
1987-88	—	—
1988-89	—	—
1989-90	—	—
1990-91	150,000	3,350

Care for the Elderly

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of private residential or nursing homes for the elderly in each local authority which have closed in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many NHS long-stay beds for the elderly have been closed in each health board in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally in the form requested.

Community Care

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take to monitor the effect on carers of the return of patients to the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government recognise the important role played by carers and their own need for support. Funding has been provided to establish a Scottish office for the Carers National Association. In preparing community care plans local authorities will take account of the views of organisations representing carers; and in assessing the needs of individuals for community care services local authorities will take account of the support being provided by any informal carers and their ability to continue offering it. The recently introduced complaints procedure will offer improved rights for uses of services to complain if the services they receive are inadequate. All these aspects of community care will be monitored by the Scottish Office.

Funding of Health Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for programmes for Scotland for funds for the development of medical audit by general practitioners, money for pilot projects in areas of deprivation and local initiatives in the delivery of primary health care services to members of ethnic minority groups, along the lines of those announced for England.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scottish arrangements for medical audit in general practice differ radically from those in England. In Scotland general practitioners and hospital doctors have equal access to a block of funds allocated to health boards for medical audit purposes, and to funding retained centrally for national projects.

By October 1990 there were 33 audit projects in hand or planned in general practice in Scotland covering 11 health boards. The project list includes four joint projects with other specialties and one national project. The total recurring resources for medical audit allocated to boards for 1991-92 amount to £2·3 million, a 50 per cent. increase over 1990-91.

Developing audit in general practice is a high priority for the Government, and from July this year an audit adviser with a national remit for facilitating the implementation process will be funded from central resources. Audit activity in general practice is expected to increase significantly as a result.

With regard to money for pilot projects in areas of deprivation and local initiatives in the delivery of primary health care to members of ethnic minorities, it is not clear to which announcement or announcements this refers. If the hon. Member cares to provide clarification of this I would be happy to provide a further response.

Health Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce an initiative in Scotland similar to that announced for England and Wales in February for the development of services through the integration of primary and secondary health care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The structure of the health service in Scotland already brings together all aspects of hospital, community health and family practitioner services within health board's responsibilities.

The health boards and NHS management executive in Scotland are working together to ensure that this integration works as well as possible at all levels, and thereby to improve the overall quality of service to patients.

Hospital Costs

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average annual cost of keeping an elderly person in a national health service long-stay hospital bed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average cost is £360 per week (£18,720 per annum) at 1989-90 prices. Details are published annually by the Common Services Agency, information and statastics division.

Education (Grants)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what current grants, within aggregate external finance, he is giving to education in 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1991-92, current grants within aggregate external finance will be available to support local authority activities in extending the use of Gaelic (£1·5 million) and to assist with the cost of in-service training of teachers and lecturers (£9·0 million).

Physiological Measurement Technicians

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number, in both absolute and percentage terms, of physiological measurement technicians in each of the new pay scale categories.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An agreement concluded by the Professional and Technical Staffs "B" Whitley Council in September 1989 introduced a new pay and grading structure for various groups of technicians in the NHS. Physiological measurement technicians were assigned to one of the eight medical technical officer (MTO) grades which are assistant, senior assistant, trainee and grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Health boards have stated that on 30 September 1990 the number of staff formerly graded as physiological measurement technicians in each of the MTO grades is as set out in the following tables.

Number

	Grade 5	*Grade 4*	*Grade 3*	*Grade 2*	*Grade 1*	*Trainee*	*Senior Assistant*	*Assistant*	*Total*
Scotland	5	18	57	125	62	35	1	3	306
Argyll and Clyde	0	1	1	4	2	0	0	1	9
Ayrshire and Arran	0	1	1	3	3	2	0	0	10
Borders	0	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	7
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
Fife	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forth Valley	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	9
Grampian	1	4	8	23	4	8	0	1	49
Greater Glasgow	0	6	13	37	22	8	0	0	86
Highland	0	0	3	2	6	0	0	0	11
Lanarkshire	0	1	3	11	11	2	0	0	28
Lothian	2	4	21	28	2	10	0	0	67
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Tayside	2	0	3	12	5	2	1	1	26
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Percentage of Total Number

	Grade 5	*Grade 4*	*Grade 3*	*Grade 2*	*Grade 1*	*Trainee*	*Senior Assistant*	*Assistant*
Scotland	1·6	5·9	18·6	40·8	20·3	11·4	0·3	1·0
Argyll and Clyde	0·0	11·1	11·1	44·4	22·2	0·0	0·0	11·1
Ayrshire and Arran	0·0	10·0	10·0	30·0	30·0	20·0	0·0	0·0
Borders	0·0	0·0	42·9	28·6	0·0	28·6	0·0	0·0
Dumfries and Galloway	0·0	0·0	33·3	0·0	33·3	33·3	0·0	0·0

	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 1	Trainee	Senior Assistant	Assistant
Fife	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Forth Valley	0·0	0·0	0·0	33·3	66·7	0·0	0·0	0·0
Grampian	2·0	8·2	16·3	46·9	8·2	16·3	0·0	2·0
Greater Glasgow	0·0	7·0	15·1	43·0	25·6	9·3	0·0	0·0
Highland	0·0	0·0	27·3	18·2	54·5	0.0	0·0	0·0
Lanarkshire	0·0	3·6	10·7	39·3	39·3	7·1	0·0	0·0
Lothian	3·0	6·0	31·3	41·8	3·0	14·9	0·0	0·0
Orkney	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Shetland	0·0	100·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Tayside	7·7	0·0	11·5	46·2	19·2	7·7	3·8	3·8
Western Isles	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to encourage or to assist Scottish companies to contribute to the rebuilding of the infrastructure in Kuwait; and with what response.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Department of Trade and Industry has the lead role for ensuring that all United Kingdom companies are fully informed about, and assisted to participate in, the rebuilding and re-equipping of Kuwait.

Within the overall United Kingdom effort the Scottish Office Industry Department and Scottish Enterprise are working together to ensure that companies in Scotland can take full advantage of any opportunities which arise. Details of the names and capabilities of over 300 companies have been passed to DTI for inclusion in their Kuwait database and these companies will be informed about developments and opportunities as they arise. Both bodies, together with DTI, were instrumental in organising an extremely successful business briefing on rebuilding Kuwait in Edinburgh on 4 April. The Department also ensured that Scottish interests were represented in a delegation of United Kingdom businessmen, led by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, which visited Kuwait from 8 to 11 April.

Primary Testing (Leaflet)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost to his Department in respect of air freight charges to convey the leaflet, "Primary Testing: A Guide for Parents" to Shetland and subsequently distribute the leaflet to schools in Shetland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A single contract for distribution throughout Scotland was negotiated on the basis of competitive tender. The information requested is therefore not available.

Orkney Children's Panel

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to announce his decision on whether or not he consents to the removal from office of the reporter to the Orkney children's panel.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend expects to announce his decision shortly.

Fire Service

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many operational *(a)* men and *(b)* women firefighters are employed in each fire authority or fire and civil defence authority in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information, as at 31 December 1990, is as follows:

Fire Authority	Male			Female		
	Whole time	Retained	Volunteer	Whole time	Retained	Volunteer
Central	239	160	12	—	2	—
Dumfries & Galloway	97	189	13	—	—	1
Fife	377	94	—	1	—	—
Grampian	308	445	28	—	2	6
Highland & Islands	95	376	982	—	1	10
Lothian & Borders	687	285	—	—	2	—
Strathclyde	2,231	617	232	2	4	3
Tayside	401	245	44	1	—	—
Totals	4,435	2,411	1,311	4	11	20

Oban Hospital

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many hospital beds were available in Oban for *(a)* medical, *(b)* surgical, *(c)* maternity, *(d)* geriatric and *(e)* other health care during each year since 1987; how many are currently available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many beds will be available in the proposed new Oban hospital for (a) medical, (b) surgical, *(c)* maternity, *(d)* geriatric and *(e)* other health care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest centrally available information on staffed beds in Oban hospitals for the last four years is set out in the attached table. Current available staffed beds are as at year ending 31 December 1990.

The new Oban hospital will provide 138 beds. The board's present intention is to designate 70 for acute, 62 elderly and elderly with mental disability and six for obstetrics. In addition a full range of support services will be available including out-patients, accident and emergency, operating facilities and an X-ray unit.

Hospital activity statistics for Oban hospitals—average available staffed beds; by specialty group: years ending 31 March 1987 to 1990 and year ending 31 December 1990[1]

Specialty	Year ending 31 March 1987	1988	1989	1990	Year ending 31 December[1] 1990
All specialties	163	162	163	162	159
Medical specialties	41	41	41	41	41
Surgical specialties	33	33	33	33	33
Maternity specialties	10	9	10	9	6
Geriatric specialties	62	62	62	62	62
Other specialties	17	17	17	17	17

[1] Provisional.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made regarding the building of the new Oban hospital; what was the closing date for tenders; which bid was successful; when building will begin; when completion is expected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Tenders have been issued by Strathclyde regional council in respect of the enabling work to access the new Oban hospital site. This work will involve the realignment of the existing trunk road and creation of spur road to give site access, and is programmed to start in June this year.

Tenders for the main hospital building contract are planned for issue before the end of April. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded in November, and on this timetable the hospital will be completed towards the end of 1994.

Community Charge

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when Scottish local authorities are to be compensated in respect of the statutory reduction of community charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A new grant—community charge grant—is to be paid to local authorities to reimburse them for the loss of community charge income arising from the provisions of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991. Payment of this grant will be made to Scottish authorities in 49 weekly instalments each totalling £8·921 million commencing later this month on the basis of an estimate of the charge income forgone by each authority. Final grant entitlement will be calculated after the end of the financial year 1991-92. Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the relevant vote (class XV vote 22). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure (estimated at £26·762 million for the grant payments to be made in April and the early part of May) will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

With the consent of the Treasury, I also plan to front-load payments of revenue support grant to Scottish authorities for the current year. Through a combination of community charge grant and revenue support grant, Scottish authorities will receive grant totalling nearly £955 million by the end of June which is over £280 million more than would have been the case under the normal arrangements for the payment of revenue support grant.

It is obviously desirable that levying authorities should issue revised bills as quickly as possible, but I am satisfied that this additional grant will compensate all authorities for the loss of charge income which they are likely to face while rebilling takes place.

Educational Spending

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, at 1990-91 prices, what was the capital allocation for educational spending for each of the regional and islands councils in every year since 1978-79.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* This is a matter for the educational authorities.

DEFENCE

Hydrocarbons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *556*, to the hon. Member for Newport West (Mr. Flynn), on protection against hydrocarbons, what are the interim results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of longer-term effects of hydrocarbons released, undertaken in liaison with United States and Saudi environmental health officials.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Work is continuing on the analysis of the long-term effects of polyaromatic hydrocarbons. However, they are not expected to cause skin problems, provided exposure is intermittent and short. The current consensus also suggests that there is no risk of ill-effects to the lungs arising from short-term exposure and only small risks as a result of long-term exposure. Commercially available protective masks have now been issued to British service personnel to reduce inhalation of hydrocarbons.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason he specifically asked Mr. David Calcutt QC not to prepare a report, but simply to state his conclusions, on the Colin Wallace affair.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The terms of reference for Mr. Calcutt's investigation were set out in my statement to the House on 30 January last year at column *112*. I undertook that his conclusions and recommendations would be made public, without publishing any classified matters or material. This is what has been done.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking in Kuwait to deal with *(a)* land mines on approach roads to oil fires and *(b)* mines hidden in lakes of oil.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces are not involved in such work at present. However, we are considering the ways in which British forces might support the civil rehabilitation and reconstruction programme in Kuwait.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis for the years 1984-85 to 1993-94, using the support types of table 5.1 of Cm. 1520 supplemented by the categories of grant of table 5.2, of changes in central Government support for local authorities in the United Kingdom as a whole and by territory, *(a)* between table 21.4.1. of Cm. 1021 and table 5.1 of Cm. 1520 and *(b)* between table 5.1 of Cm. 1520 and the "Financial Report and Budget Statement" 1991-92.

Mr. Mellor: Information on differences between the figures for central Government support for local authorities given in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper—Cm. 1021—and the "Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement"—Cm. 1520—are given in the table. They are on the same basis as the information on differences from Cm. 1021 presented in the supplement, that is, they exclude differences arising from changes in the way expenditure is recorded—classification changes—or from transfers between departments or sectors, for example, switching responsibility for expenditure from central Government to local authorities. Corresponding analyses of differences between the supplement and the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" are not available. Details of changes since the supplement arising from the introduction of the community charge grant and the measures announced on 17 January to reduce the levels of community charges are set out in table 5.2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Differences[1] in Central Government Support for Local Authorities between the 1990 Public Expenditure White Paper and the Statistical Supplement to the 1990 Autumn Statement

£ million

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[2]1992-93*
England								
Revenue support grant[3]	—	—	—	−70	−27	—	1,617	1,990
Non-domestic rate payments[3]	—	—	31	108	115	—		
Current grants within AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	−4	191	259	410
of which:								
Low rateable value area/area protection grants	—	—	—	—	—	2	10	40
Inner London education grants	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Current grants outside AEF[4]	—	—	—	−3	−79	761	1,353	1,400
of which:								
Transitional relief	—	—	—	—	—	−94	260	260
Credit approvals	—	—	—	−3	—	148	199	220
Capital grants	1	—	1	−9	39	−162	68	80
Total	1	—	32	23	43	938	3,496	4,100
Scotland								
Revenue support grant	—	—	—	—	9	16	268	260
Non-domestic rate payments	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Current grants within AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	1	−17	14	10
of which:								
Area protection grant	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Current grants outside AEF[4]	—	—	−3	−1	−42	−19	5	—
of which:								
Transitional relief	—	—	—	—	—	—	−3	13
Credit approvals	−1	−1	−1	−9	−11	15	−4	10
Net capital allocations	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	40
Total	−1	−1	−4	−10	−43	−5	313	400
Wales								
Revenue support grant	—	—	—	—	—	—	268	260
Non-domestic rate payments	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Current grants within AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	−3	7	12	20
Current grants outside AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	−6	30	75	100
of which:								
Transitional relief	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	10
Credit approvals	—	—	—	—	—	−16	21	60
Capital grants	—	—	—	—	−1	11	−8	−10
Total	—	—	—	—	−10	33	238	200
Great Britain								
Revenue support grant	—	—	—	−70	−18	16	2,023	2,330
Non-domestic rate payments	—	—	31	108	115	—		
Current grants within AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	−6	181	285	440
of which:								
Low rateable value area/area protection grants	—	—	—	—	—	2	10	40
Inner London education grants	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Current grants outside AEF[4]	—	—	−3	−4	−127	772	1,433	1,500
of which:								
Transitional relief	—	—	—	—	—	−94	264	300
Credit approvals	−1	−1	−1	−12	−12	147	215	300

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	[3]*1992-93*
Capital grants	1	—	1	−9	38	−150	91	110
Total	—	−1	28	14	−9	966	4,047	4,770
Northern Ireland								
Current grants outside AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	−1	−2	−1	—
Capital grants	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Total	—	—	—	—	−1	−1	—	—
United Kingdom								
Revenue support grant	—	—	—	−70	−18	16	2,023	2,330
Non-domestic rate payments	—	—	31	108	115	—		
Current grants within AEF[4]	—	—	—	—	−6	181	285	440
of which:								
Low rateable value area/area protection grant	—	—	—	—	—	2	10	40
Inner London education grant	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
Current grants outside AEF[4]	—	—	−3	−4	−128	771	1,432	1,500
of which:								
Transitional relief	—	—	—	—	—	−94	264	300
Credit approvals	−1	−1	−1	−12	−12	147	215	300
Capital grants	1	—	1	−9	38	−149	92	110
Total	—	−1	28	14	−10	965	4,047	4,700

[1] The differences shown are differences after adjustments for changes of classification and switches between departments and spending sectors.

[2] Figures are rounded to the nearest £10 million or, in the case of totals for current grants outside AEF and totals including these grants, to the nearest £100 million.

[3] The differences shown for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are higher than the corresponding differences shown in the 1990 Autumn Statement (table 1.3) because they take account of a switch between revenue support grant and capital grants/credit approvals. This switch was below the threshold for which differences were adjusted in the Autumn Statement.

[4] Aggregate external finance.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 19 April 1991

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research Bodies

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many publicly funded research centres or institutes are planned to *(a)* close, *(b)* merge and *(c)* open in the next five years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not available. Publicly funded research establishments vary from small units in higher education institutions to large institutes on a number of sites, and are run by a range of bodies including the research councils and universities.

Nuclear Structure Facility

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received since 8 February about the decision of the SERC to close the nuclear structure facility, Daresbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Since 8 February, my right hon. and learned Friend and I have received 350 representations about the nuclear structure facility at the SERC's Daresbury laboratory.

Teacher Grading

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women teachers are on grades A, B, C, D and E allowances for each local education authority in England currently and for the last five years that figures are available for (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools.

Mr. Fallon *[holding answer 18 April 1991]:* I am arranging to place in the Library a copy of the relevant tables for March 1988, the first year following the introduction of incentive allowances in October 1987. Corresponding information for later years is not yet available.

Head Teachers

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women head teachers and deputy head teachers are in place for each local education authority in England now and for the last five years that figures are available for (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools.

Mr. Fallon *[holding answer 18 April 1991]:* I am arranging to place in the Library a copy of the relevant tables for the years 1986 to 1988. Comparable figures for other years are not readily available.

Student Awards

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what parental contributions will be payable towards mandatory student awards in the academic year 1991-92.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[pursuant to his reply, 28 February 1991, col. 554]:* I regret that the illustrative parental contribution scales which accompanied my previous reply contained some minor arithmetical errors. These errors would not have affected the assessments to be made in the summer by local education authorities, which will be based on the formulae quoted at the end of my previous reply. The formulae remain correct and will generally still keep the assessed contribution for 1991-92 at the same cash level as in 1990-91, as intended for a parent whose residual income has risen in line with average earnings.

For the avoidance of doubt, the corrected illustrative scales are shown below.

Illustrative parental contribution scales for 1991-92

Residual income £	*Scale 1 contribution* £	*Scale 2 contribution* £
12,650	60	45
13,000	105	79
14,000	235	176
15,000	365	274
16,000	495	371
16,170	517	388
17,000	667	501
18,000	849	638
19,000	1,031	775
20,000	1,213	912
21,000	1,395	1,049
22,000	1,577	1,186
23,000	1,758	1,323
23,760	1,897	1,427
24,000	1,951	1,468
25,000	2,178	1,638
26,000	2,406	1,809
27,000	2,633	1,980
28,000	2,860	2,151
29,000	3,087	2,322
30,000	3,315	2,493
31,000	3,542	2,664
32,000	3,769	2,835
33,000	3,997	3,006
34,000	4,224	3,177
35,000	4,451	3,348
36,000	4,678	3,519
37,000	4,906	3,690
38,000	5,133	3,861
39,000	5,360	4,032
40,000	5,587	4,203
40,934	5,800	—
41,000	—	4,374
42,000	—	4,544
43,000	—	4,715
44,000	—	4,886
45,000	—	5,057
46,000	—	5,228
47,000	—	5,399
48,000	—	5,570
49,000	—	5,741
49,343	—	5,800

ENVIRONMENT

New Palace Yard (Lamps)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the gas lamps in New Palace Yard have been converted to electricity.

Mr. Yeo: The gas lamps in New Palace Yard have been temporarily replaced by electric lamps following the discovery of damage to the mains supply. As substantial excavation work will be required to lay a new main, the work has been deferred to the summer recess to minimise disruption. It is expected that the gas lamps will be back in use in September.

Community Charge (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much community charge has now been paid for the financial year ended 31 March in Lambeth.

Mr. Key: Local authorities are currently sending returns to my Department giving their community charge receipts up to 31 March 1991; no return has yet been received from Lambeth. To 31 December 1990 Lambeth had collected £24·3 million.

Rhododendrons

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in his Department in limiting the spread of rhododendrons as a threat to woodlands and wild landscapes.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has not carried out specific work on this subject, but the Forestry Commission is continuing research into methods of controlling rhododendron, and results are promising. Bulletin 73, Field Book 8 and Research Information Note 186, issued by the Commission, provide more detailed information about control on forest sites. I am arranging for a copy of each document to be placed in the Library of the House.

Advice Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent local authorities are making use of section 38 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has no information on the extent to which local authorities are using this new power to help advice and assistance agencies.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has issued any advice to local authorities on section 38 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Portillo: A joint circular (Department of the Environment 23/90; Welsh Office 62/90) explained the impact of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 on parish, community and town councils. This drew attention to the new power for these authorities under section 38 to help advice and assistance agencies. Similar action seemed unnecessary for principal councils.

Housing Corporation Expenditure

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been spent by the Housing Corporation in *(a)* Stockton, *(b)* Middlesbrough and *(c)* Hartlepool; and how many dwellings have been improved or created in each of the last four years.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to my hon. Friend direct. The subsequent reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list all those areas in England and Wales for which planning permission has been granted for opencast mining.

Mr. Yeo: Information on the areas in England and Wales where planning permission has been granted for opencast mining is not held centrally. According to statistics published by the County Planning Officers Society 41 sites in England and Wales received approval in 1989-90 (including on appeal) as follows:

	Number
Durham	10
Northumberland	1
Tyne and Wear	1
Cumbria	1
Leicestershire	2
Staffordshire	1
Shropshire	4
West Midlands	2
Derbyshire	6
South Yorkshire	3
West Yorkshire	3
Merseyside	3
Mid Glamorgan	2
West Glamorgan	1
Gwent	1

Rose Theatre Trust

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Rose Theatre Trust to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Sir George Young: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 3 June to 7 June.

TRANSPORT

Railway Property (Child Trespassers)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured in each of the past 10 years for which figures are available in consequence of electrocution or being struck by a train while trespassing on railway property.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for the period 1980-89 are given in the table; 1989 is the latest year for which figures are available.

Year	Electrocution Fatal	Electrocution Seriously injured	Struck by trains Fatal	Struck by trains Seriously injured
1980	7	9	6	1
1981	10	10	8	2
1982	3	13	4	2
1983	5	18	9	3
1984	10	17	6	4
1985	3	14	9	3
1986	6	12	4	5
1987	6	6	9	5
1988	4	6	12	7
1989	3	8	5	2

SCOTLAND

Local Authority Spending

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much is spent by each local authority per person on *(a)* the mentally ill and *(b)* the elderly.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information for the elderly derived from the local authority financial returns is set out in the table. It is not possible to provide meaningful information for the mentally ill since the expenditure is not always separately identified.

Local authority expenditure per head on the elderly: 1988-89

Region	Elderly £
Borders	37·0
Central	33·5
Dumfries and Galloway	28·1
Fife	41·7
Grampian	32·2
Highland	31·1
Lothian	34·6
Strathclyde	37·1
Tayside	40·7
Orkney	68·2
Shetland	78·0
Western Isles	94·1

Note: This expenditure information relates to services paid for by social work authorities and used in the main by the elderly. It does not include administration and casework expenditure by these authorities in relation to the elderly since that is difficult to identify. Expenditure by housing authorities on services of benefit to the elderly is not included.

Cancer

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list for each year from 1986 onwards the number of cancer-related deaths in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Forth Valley health board area, *(c)* Falkirk district, *(d)* the postal district FK4, *(e)* the postal district FK5 and *(f)* the postal district FK6.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of deaths attributed to cancer (ICD* numbers 140-208) as the underlying cause of death is shown in the table.

Deaths from malignant neoplasms, 1986-89

Area	1986	1987	1988	1989
Scotland	14,534	14,650	14,720	14,917
Forth Valley health board	784	765	803	721
Falkirk local government district	412	407	420	397
Postal district:				
FK4	32	42	24	27
FK5	50	44	43	41
FK6	33	23	32	31

* International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.

Place of Safety Orders (Orkney)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will hold an inquiry into the events surrounding the place of stafety orders recently taken in respect of nine children in Orkney.

Mr. Lang: Once the legal proceedings in relation to this case are completed, it is my intention to hold a full judicial inquiry. At that stage I will make an announcement about the terms of reference and who will lead it.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kurdish Refugees

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all United Kingdom emergency relief for refugees from Iraq; from which ODA budget the aid is paid; and whether the ODA's budget for 1991-92 has been increased to cover the cost of emergency aid for Iraqi refugees.

Mrs. Chalker: Total commitments for relief operations for refugees from Iraq in 1990-91 are estimated at £18·37 million. £3·25 million has been paid from the ODA's humanitarian aid subhead A3(9), and £2·5 million for ICRC from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office vote, clases II, vote 5. The remainder is our estimated share of EC budgetary expenditure and will be attributed to the aid programme in the usual way. The £18·37 million was allocated as follows:

August 1990:—£2 million to the International Organisation for Migration.

August 1990:—£0·5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross and Jordanian Red Crescent.

August 1990:—£0·25 million relief supplies from the United Kingdom.

August 1990:—£8·25 million through the European Community

January 1991:—US$1 million to United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation.

February 1991:—£2·5 million to International Committee of the Red Cross Gulf Appeal

January-March 1991:—£4·37 million through the European Community.

Commitments so far in this financial year total £21·65 million, excluding the cost of RAF airdrops and airlift operations.

Specific allocations are:

April 1991—£0·5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

April 1991—£336,000 for relief supply flights to Turkey on 5 April.

April 1991—£350,000 for relief supply flights to Iran on 9 April and 10 April.

April 1991—£30,000 grants each to Save the Children Fund and CARE (UK) for food purchases via the Turkish Red Crescent Society.

April 1991—£50,000 grant to OXFAM for relief supply flights.

April 1991—£650,000 through the European Community.

Our initial assistance of over £1 million in April 1991 is being met from funds earmarked for disaster relief in the ODA's contingency reserve, provision for which is in subhead A3(7). Of the £20 million announced by the Prime Minister on 5 April, £8 million is being drawn from the aid programme contingency reserve. The balance of £12 million is our estimated share of EC budgetary expenditure and will be attributed to the aid programme.

The United Kingdom is also providing daily relief supply flights to Turkey. Supplies are being distributed by Hercules aircraft and Chinook helicopters based at Dyarbakir. The costs of these airlift and helicopter operations are estimated at £1·5 million per week. Two further relief supply flights will leave for Iran on 18 April and 19 April. More will follow. The costs of these operations are also being met from the aid programme contingency reserve.

ODA's budget for 1991-92 has not been increased further to meet the costs of these relief operations. But, as I made clear to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 17 April, the Government will look sympathetically at the case for extra money.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Children

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision is made for the welfare and care of children in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Belgium, *(c)* Denmark, *(d)* Luxembourg, *(e)* the Netherlands, *(f)* Germany and *(g)* France.

Mr. Jack: This Department makes provision for the welfare and care of children to the extent that it provides cash benefits to families with children, principally through the child benefit, family credit and income support schemes.

Tables giving details of child benefit and equivalent schemes in the countries listed by the hon. Member, as at 1 July 1990, are set out in "Social Protection in the Member States of the Community", published by the Commission for the European Communities, a copy of which is in the Library. The current publication does not cover income-related benefits such as family credit (a benefit which has no direct equivalent in the other countries) but the United Kingdom has proposed to the Commission that next year and in following years the tables should be extended to cover these benefits. Until this can be done a systematic comparison of this type of benefit is not possible.

Disability Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will conduct a comprehensive review of disability benefits arising from the OPCS surveys on disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The reports produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys provided us with an unprecedented volume of information about the financial circumstances of people with disabilities. We invited and received comments on these reports from large numbers of organisations and took their views into account before publishing our proposals in "The Way Ahead" (Cm. 917). We have since invited further comments on the documents we published last year outlining our more detailed proposals for both the new benefits. We received more than 70 replies.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those organisations which have made representations to him requesting that the disability living allowance be available to those who become disabled after the age of 85 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No such representations have been received.

Social Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the amount spent on the social fund relative to the amount paid in single payments for the last year in which the single payment scheme operated, expressed in comparable prices and as a percentage reduction.

Mr. Scott: Direct comparisons between single payments expenditure in 1987-88 and social fund expenditure in 1990-91 are misleading because of the differing scope of the two schemes. Funeral and maternity payments were not part of the single payments scheme in 1987-88 but have been included in the table in order to make the comparison with social fund expenditure in 1990-91 more meaningful.

	Cash £ *million*	*At 1990-91 prices* £ *million*
Single payments 1987-88	[1]243	[2]299
Social fund 1990-91[3]	—	282
		5½ per cent. reduction

[1] Includes £29 million spent on maternity and funeral payments.
[2] Calculated using the estimated gross domestic product deflator.
[3] Provisional.

PRIME MINISTER

Computers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are being taken to ensure that no Government Department makes use of any pirated copies of Inslaw case-tracking Promis software.

The Prime Minister: All Government Departments operate their information technology systems within the law. To reinforce this, Departments have issued internal notices warning of the consequences of using unlicensed software.

Iraq

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards ensuring that the leaders of the regime in Iraq are tried for crimes against humanity; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Saddam Hussein bears personal responsibility under international law for his crimes and is responsible for those of his subordinates acting under his orders. In the case of both war crimes and genocide Saddam Hussein can, in law, be brought to trial before a national court or international tribunal. We and our EC partners have asked the United Nations Secretary-General to investigate how this might be achieved.

Interception Commissioner

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Prime Minister when the Commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will present his annual report; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of Lord Justice Lloyd's fifth annual report for 1990 has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 8(7) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 8(8) of the 1985 Act. I am grateful to the Commissioner for his work in reviewing the issue of warrants and note that he remains satisfied that the Secretaries of State continue to exercise scrupulous care in the issue of warrants. Careful consideration is being given to both parts of the Commissioner's report.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alphachloralose

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances Alphachloralose can be used as a rodenticide.

Mr. Maclean: As from 1 March, Alphachloralose may be used as a rodenticide only when contained in a product approved under the Control of Pesticide Regulations for that purpose, of which there are currently seven. Use of these is governed by specified conditions which must be listed on labels, and which include the restriction that they are for use only as rodenticides.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single Market

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the short title of each of the European Community directives to implement the single market which should be on the statute book of each of the European Community member states; and what progress each such state had made by 31 December 1990 to enact into their domestic law such legislation.

Mr. Sainsbury: The latest information giving a detailed breakdown of the situation on implementation of the individual measures in the Commission White Paper programme which were due to enter into force by the end of 1990 are given in annex 1 to document 9258/90 dated 5 October 1990, a copy of which is deposited in the Library. This confirms the United Kingdom's good record with only 18 out of 107 measures not implemented. A comparative table for all member states, together with more recent figures provided by the Commission are given in the table.

	Unimplemented measures[1]	*Unofficial assessment*[2]
Denmark	15	20
United Kingdom	18	28
Germany (F.R.)	20	32
Portugal	20	31
Spain	27	38
France	28	38
Ireland	31	43
Belgium	32	37
Netherlands	33	35
Luxembourg	35	46
Greece	44	44
Italy	62	73

[1] Figures for unimplemented measures in the 5 zoctober 1990 report; out of 107 provisions required to have been transposed by 31 December 1990.

[2] Latest commission unofficial assessment (dated 9 March) of measures not implemented: out of 120 individual provisions required to have been transposed by that date.

Somalia (Tobacco Imports)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the £3,436,000 beverages and tobacco exports to Somalia in 1990 was tobacco.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is published in *Business Monitor* MM20 Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom for December 1990, table v, page 17, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sheffield Forgemaster

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the chemical specification of the steel ordered for the manufacture by Sheffield Forgemaster of the so-called super gun.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 April 1991]:* I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend on 12 December 1990 at cols. *412-13.*

NATIONAL FINANCE

Petroleum Duty

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on European Commission proposals for minimum rates and target rates of petrol duty.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The European Commission proposed minimum rates for mineral oils, including leaded and unleaded petrol, in December 1989. An explanatory memorandum on this proposal was submitted on 19 February 1990 (document 9777/89 COM (89) 526 final).

On 19 February 1991 the Commission issued a further duty rates proposal (document 4822/91 COM (91) 43 final) which, for leaded and unleaded petrol, complemented the

1989 proposals by setting target rates. An explanatory memorandum on the proposal was submitted on 17 April 1991.

Copies of the explanatory memoranda are in the Library.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Bellott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that second-hand goods retain zero rate of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The only zero rate of value added tax on goods solely because they are second-hand applies to donated goods sold by charity shops. There are, however, special schemes for accounting for tax on some second-hand goods. I have no plans to change either system.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of value added tax is payable on work done or services provided in the period up to 31 March 1991.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Traders are entitled to charge the old rate (15 per cent.) on goods or services supplied up to 31 March. This applies even where a tax invoice is issued after that date in respect of such goods and services. Normally, this would create a tax point at the new rate, but the law includes a concession which allows traders to apply the old rate.

Baby Yarns

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will zero-rate baby yarns for the purpose of VAT.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. Although under the EC VAT sixth directive member states are able to retain zero rates which were in force on 31 December 1975, subject to their being for clearly defined social reasons and for the benefit of the final consumer, they may neither widen the scope of existing zero rates nor introduce new ones.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Cats and Dogs (Experimentation)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action is taken to ensure that the cats and dogs supplied by suppliers given temporary licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to supply non purpose-bred cats and dogs to designated establishments are not strays or were not originally stolen;

(2) on what grounds temporary suppliers' licences are granted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to suppliers of non purpose-bred dogs, including ex-racing greyhounds.

Mrs. Rumbold: Certificates of designation issued under secton 7 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to breeding and supplying establishments are not granted on a temporary basis. Exemptions may be granted to the standard condition applying to such certificates, which requires that animals must be obtained from designated breeding and supplying establishments. Breeding establishments have been granted exemptions to obtain dogs from non-designated sources only for use as breeding stock.

Exemptions may also be granted to the requirement in section 10(3) of the Act applying to project licences that only those cats and dogs specially bred for and obtained from designated sources may be used in scientific procedures. No exemptions have been granted to allow the use of cats obtained from non-designated sources at designated user establishments.

Where there is a shortage of certain types of purpose-bred dogs for use in research, it is necessary to grant some exemptions. Care is taken to ensure that greyhounds obtained from non-designated sources are neither pets nor ex-racing greyhounds which have been supplied to charitable bodies as pets.

The conditions applied to licences and certificates ensure that stray or stolen cats or dogs cannot be legitimately supplied for use in regulated procedures.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will identify the National Greyhound Racing Club licensed trainer who has been licensed to supply ex-racing greyhounds to the Royal Postgraduate Medical School for use in animal procedures:

(2) if he will identify all sources of greyhounds and other dogs supplied to the Royal Postgraduate Medical School for use in animal procedures.

Mrs. Rumbold: No certificate of designation has been granted under section 7 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 for the supply of ex-racing greyhounds to the Royal Postgraduate Medical School for use in scientific procedures. Exemptions have been granted at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School to obtain a limited number of greyhounds from non-designated sources for a limited period.

It is not our practice to give details of the sources of animals supplied for use in scientific procedures. The RPMS intends to use specially bred greyhounds which are expected to become available during the summer. In the meantime, we understand that the RPMS has agreed with the NGRC not to use greyhounds which have raced on licensed tracks.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suppliers to establishments licensed to carry out procedures under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are licensed to supply non purpose-bred cats and dogs; what numbers of such animals were supplied to British laboratories last year; and if he will publish details in the annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals.

Mrs. Rumbold: Exemptions for project licence-holders to acquire dogs from non-designated suppliers have been granted in only a very small number of cases. No exemptions have been granted for cats.

Statistics on the total number of animals supplied are not available centrally and there are no plans to collect them for publication in the annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inspections of suppliers given temporary licences under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to supply non purpose-bred cats and dogs to designated establishments are made each year by the Home Office inspectorate.

Mrs. Rumbold: Inspectors have powers to inspect only designated establishments. Exemptions have been granted

to enable project licence-holders at scientific procedure establishments to obtain animals from non-designated sources. If questions were to arise about the health or quality of the animals, exemptions would not be granted or would be withdrawn.

Police Operations

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been killed in police pursuits *(a)* excluding and *(b)* including police officers in each of the last five years in England and Wales, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information for 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 is contained in the reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for those years, copies of which are in the Library. This information was not recorded centrally in 1986 and earlier years and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Drinking Water (Lead Pollution)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of houses in Wales that have drinking water containing lead levels above those permitted by EC standards; and if he will indicate the location of those properties.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is not centrally available.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of houses in Wales that would be required to remove lead plumbing if the permitted level of lead in drinking water is changed from 0·05 mg per litre to 0·01 mg per litre.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information is held by his Department on the number of houses in Wales having lead plumbing.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Welsh House Condition Survey for 1981 estimated that 188,400 houses in Wales had lead plumbing.

Public Registers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish all those locations in Wales where the public can examine the public registers held by *(a)* the National Rivers Authority and *(b)* the Welsh Water Company.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The locations are as follows:

(a) Caernarfon, Cardiff, Haverfordwest, Lampeter, Mold, Monmouth, Swansea.

(b) Aberaeron, Bangor, Brecon, Haverfordwest, Mold, Nelson, Swansea.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of decontaminating all contaminated land in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what discussions he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority concerning the completion of treatment as in-patients for those presently undergoing treatment at the children's ward, Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar, near Cardiff, on or shortly after its announced closure date of 30 April;

(2) if he will issue guidelines to health authorities to which he has granted consent to close wards or hospitals not to implement those closures until the in-patients in situ have completed their in-patient treatment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As the implementation of approved service changes is a matter for health authorities, I have not discussed the timing of the transfer of the children's orthopaedic service in South Glamorgan with the chairman of the district health authority. Nor do I have plans to issue any general guidance on this particular aspect of service planning.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take to alleviate short-term cash flow difficulties experienced by local authorities in Wales as a result of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: I announced on 19 March my intention to pay community charge grant to Welsh local authorities in accordance with the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991. Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate on the rate rebates, Wales vote, class XVI, vote 11.

Pending that approval, urgent expenditure is being met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund. An advance of £45 million has already been made to cover

DEFENCE

Aldermaston

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the welding fault problems in the A90 and A91 buildings at Aldermaston.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The work to rectify problems associated with welds in A90 was completed in April 1990. Further details may be found in the evidence given by my Department to the Select Committee on Defence and published in the reports "The progress of the Trident Programme", 5th of Session 1988-89 and 9th of Session 1989-90 (HC 374 and HC 237). During the commissioning of the A91 facility a different problem has been identified associated with corrosion in pipework and vessels. The problem is being investigated and solutions identified.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the A90 building is to be closed either fully or partially; and what will happen to staff at Aldermaston.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The problem associated with corrosion in pipework and vessels is in the A91 facility and

not A90. As a result the training schedules of a small number of the future operators of A91 are being revised whilst the problem is investigated.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the present problems at Aldermaston will affect the timetable for the Trident warhead production.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We do not expect any adverse effect on the Trident warhead production programme.

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the cost of rectifying the problems on the A90 and A91 buildings at Aldermaston.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The work to rectify the problems in A90 was completed in April 1990. It is not the practice to disclose details of individual contract costs for reasons of commercial confidentiality. Further details may be found in the evidence given by my Department to the Select Committee on Defence and published in the reports "The progress of the Trident Programme", 5th of Session 1988-89 and 9th of Session 1989-90 (HC 374 and HC 237). The investigations into the problems with A91 are at an early stage and it is not yet possible to estimate the cost of any corrective action that may be necessary.

Main Battle Tank

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) of 19 March, *Official Report* column *90*, if he is now in a position to say when he expects to announce which company has been chosen to provide main battle tanks to replace the Chieftain tank.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 19 March at column *90*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average time between *(a)* a request for a hearing date and *(b)* a hearing date being set for immigration appeals in Leeds.

The Attorney-General: The average time between a request for a hearing date and a hearing date being set for immigration appeals in Leeds is estimated to be five to six months.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what action is being taken to reduce delays in hearing immigration appeals in Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department is actively considering increasing the number of hearing rooms available at Coronet house, Leeds for hearing immigration appeals, and has since 1989 increased the number of staff and adjudicators at Leeds. It is also planned to establish a permanent centre in Scotland for processing Scottish immigration appeals which will reduce the workload and pressure at the Leeds centre, which currently processess Scottish appeals. The Lord Chancellor's Department is also keeping under review facilities and staffing levels at all hearing centres in light of the increasing number of appeals.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General what action is being taken to reduce delays in immigration appeal papers, received in London from British overseas posts, being forwarded to the representatives of the parties; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities have recently introduced streamlined procedures for the initial collation and dispatch of appeal papers received at Thanat house from posts overseas, and now aim to dispatch them to the parties representatives in this country within three weeks of their receipt. This is a significant improvement on the previous position of eight to 12 weeks.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when the appeal of Mr. Mohammed Ashraf (TH/13446190) against refusal to grant him entry clearance to the United Kingdom is to be heard in Leeds; when he first applied to enter the United Kingdom; when he was interviewed by the British high commission in Islamabad; when his appeal was received by the post; when his papers were received in London; when papers were sent to Mr. Ashraf's representative; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities (IAA) expect the appeal of Mr. Mohammed Ashraf to be heard in Leeds in September 1991. Mr. Ashraf applied to enter the United Kingdom on 28 November 1988, and was interviewed by the entry clearance officer at Islamabad on 14 December 1989 and 3 May 1990. The entry clearance officer refused Mr. Ashraf's application on 24 May 1990 and on 4 July 1990 the high commission at Islamabad received Mr. Ashraf's appeal. The IAA in London received Mr. Ashraf's appeal papers on 16 August 1990 and after collating them the IAA sent the case papers to Mr. Ashraf's representatives in this country on 13 November 1990. On 1 March 1991 Mr. Ashraf's representatives indicated to the IAA that they are ready to proceed to hearing.

The delay in the listing of this case at Leeds is regrettable and the Lord Chancellor's Department is currently taking steps to increase the hearing room capacity of the Leeds centre in order to reduce delays there.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General how many *(a)* staff and *(b)* adjudicators are retained in Leeds concerned with immigration appeals; and if he will give figures for the comparable period of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is as follows:

April	*Staff in post*	*Adjudicators*	
		Full-time	*Part-time*
1988	6	1	9
1989	6½	1	9
1990	6½	1	13
1991	8	1	13

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General how many immigration appeals in Leeds were in the past three years, to date, *(a)* heard and *(b)* adjourned at the request of the parties or for other reasons; and what is the average delay between a hearing and determination being issued.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities (IAA) do not record details of the number of appeals adjourned.

The number of immigration appeals heard in Leeds in the past three calendar years is as follows:

	Number
1988	[1]926
1989	1,513
1990	1,276

[1] The figure for 1988 includes cases heard in Scotland.

Adjudicators at Leeds are on average able to prepare their determination within four weeks of the hearing. Thereafter, it takes on average two or three weeks for the determination to be typed and issued to the parties.

EMPLOYMENT

Mining (Hazardous Substances)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will bring forward legislation to enable the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 to be applied to mining in deep mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Commission has made no proposals to my right hon. and learned Friend concerning the application of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 underground in mines. However, the Health and Safety Executive is currently reviewing mining legislation. In the course of the review it will consider whether it is now appropriate to apply these regulations below ground.

Dock Accidents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents were reported to the Health and Safety Executive in *(a)* Grimsby and Immingham docks, *(b)* Hull docks and *(c)* London docks in each year for 1979 and 1990 inclusive.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The following table shows the number of injuries occurring in the sea transport, port and inland water transport industries in *(a)* Grimsby and Immingham *(b)* Hull and *(c)* London reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates between 1986/87 and 1989/90 (provisional) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

Number of Injuries

Area	[1]*1986-87*	[1]*1987-88*	[1]*1988-89*	[1][5]*1989-90*
Grimsby and Immingham[2]	71	60	54	39
Hull[3]	53	57	52	34
London[4]	13	16	16	9

[1] Years beginning 1 April.
[2] Grimsby and Cleethorpes Local Authority District.
[3] Kingston-upon-Hull Local Authority District.
[4] Greater London Local Authority District.
[5] Provisional.

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage change in unit labour costs in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Germany in the last 12 months.

Mr. Jackson: Unit wage costs in mining and manufacturing in the former Federal Republic of Germany rose by 1·9 per cent. in the year to the third quarter of 1990, which is the latest available information. In the same period unit wage costs in manufacturing in the United Kingdom rose by 9·3 per cent.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the qualifications that were achieved by clients for each six-month period of employment training since its inception.

Mr. Jackson: The following table gives the percentage breakdown of the qualifications gained by trainees leaving employment training between July 1989 and September 1990.

Employment training
Breakdown of the qualifications gained by leavers between July 1989 to September 1990

Qualification	*July 1989 to December 1989 (per cent.)*	*January 1990 to June 1990 (per cent.)*	*July 1990 to September 1990 (per cent.)*
City and Guilds	39	38	37
RSA	28	32	30
Pitmans	12	10	10
SCOTVEC	11	12	11
BTEC-TEC	2	2	3
GCSE	2	1	2
London Chamber of Commerce & Industry	1	2	4
Other	20	20	21

Note: Percentage totals add up to more than 100 per cent. because trainees may obtain more than one type of qualification.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of employment training trainees had employer placements in each month since the scheme's inception.

Mr. Jackson: The information is not available in the precise format requested.

However, information is available quarterly as shown in the table.

Employment training (Great Britain totals)
Percentage of trainees on training placements with employers for each quarter September 1989 to September 1990

	Great Britain
September 1989	23
December 1989	24
March 1990	25
June 1990	27
September 1990	25

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what matters he has discussed with the group of 10 TEC chairmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have discussed a number of issues relating to training and enterprise and the framework within which TECs operate with the group of 10 TEC chairmen. I find these meetings particularly useful as a way of hearing views directly from TEC chairmen.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many non-seconded staff are directly employed by TECs.

Mr. Jackson: As at 10 April 1991, 216 staff were employed by training and enterprise councils, in publicly funded posts. TECs are also able to employ other directly recruited staff using their own resources.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people under 18 years in the London borough of Newham who are not employed have not had a youth training opportunity offered to them.

Mr. Jackson: The London borough of Newham is part of the area covered by the London East training and enterprise council. LETEC has a clear contractual duty to ensure that every young person under 18 not in school or a job who is seeking YT entry should have the offer, and if necessary re-offers of a suitable training place. LETEC has approached the local careers service seeking further information on the position in Newham. LETEC and the Employment Department are jointly committed to maintaining the YT guarantee.

Employment Service

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of unemployed claimants receive caseload treatment by the Employment Service.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage increase in funding the Employment Service has received to cope with increased unemployment.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 20 March that the Employment Service was to receive £55 million in extra resources for 1991-92 to help unemployed people back to work. This represents an increase of some 8 per cent. in the Employment Service's running costs.

Training Programmes (Expenditure)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level at 1991 prices of Government expenditure on special employment and training programmes in 1988-89.

Mr. Jackson: Government expenditure on special employment and training programmes in 1988-89 was £3,091·6 million at 1991-92 prices.

Payment of Accounts

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to assist the self-employed small business person to obtain timely payment of legitimate accounts rendered to large companies.

Mr. Jackson: Cash flow is a vital factor in the efficient running of all businesses, and any delays in obtaining payment for work done are particularly damaging for self-employed people and small businesses. It is vital that large companies recognise their responsibilities to small suppliers by settling accounts promptly.

The Government are therefore taking action to strengthen their encouragement of the voluntary adoption of good payment practice and to foster closer co-operation betweeen buyers and sellers.

As part of this initiative, my Department will shortly be issuing a revised booklet on credit management for small firms, and is sponsoring a new guide on good payment practice by the Institute of Credit Management which will be specifically aimed at larger companies. These publications will be widely distributed and publicised.

The Government themselves are giving a further lead. Each of the major spending Departments will be monitoring its own payment performance this year, and the results will be published.

HEALTH

Cholesterol

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to launch a national education programme, similar to those in the United States, relating to consumer awareness of cholesterol levels;

(2) what guidance his Department gives on the issue of whether, independently of lowering dietary fat intake, increased consumption of oat bran can reduce blood cholesterol; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information his Department holds on a causal link between high blood cholesterol levels and coronary heart disease;

(4) if he has evaluated the relative cost-effectiveness of *(a)* treatment and *(b)* public health programmes designed to lower blood cholesterol.

Mr. Dorrell: The Standing Medical Advisory Committee reported last year on the cost-effectiveness of opportunistic cholesterol testing, a copy of which is available in the Library. Annex 1 to the report details evidence from a large number of studies showing

"a direct and consistent association between blood cholesterol levels and the incidence of coronary heart disease. This association has all the characteristics of a causal relationship".

Because the committee identified divergent medical opinion in this area, it was decided to issue the report for widespread consultation. A large number of responses has been received and these are now being analysed. We expect to be in a position to reach conclusions on the findings soon.

Recommendations in the report have implications for a national education programme. In considering the results of the consultation exercise we will have regard to the need for public education specifically about cholesterol levels.

The Government already give advice on healthy eating which encourages the adoption of a balanced overall diet. Oat bran, like any other food, can form part of a healthy diet. There is insufficient evidence at present to give specific advice about the role of oat bran in reducing blood cholesterol.

Passive Smoking

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received the Health Education Authority's report on passive smoking; and what response he will make to its findings and recommendations.

Mr. Dorrell: We welcome the publication of this report.

The Government have for some time publicised the dangers of passive smoking and encouraged the introduction of smoking policies in the workplace and in public places. By providing clear and up-to-date information, the booklet serves to keep the issue in the public eye and to maintain the progress which is being made.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the review of inter-country adoption will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The first consultative document of the adoption law review, "The nature and effect of adoption—discussion paper No. 1", a copy of which is available in the Library, has been issued and the responses are being considered. Further consultative documents will follow including one on inter-country adoption.

Issue of this paper has been deferred until after the meeting of the special commission of the Hague conference on private international law which begins on 22 April so that a preliminary report of the outcome of the meeting can be included in the law review paper and comments sought.

Kidney Disease

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of renal dialysis units and nephrologists within *(a)* Wessex regional health authority and *(b)* other regional health authorities within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the number of NHS dialysis and transplant units and nephrologists employed by region in England, and the totals for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Region	*Number of Renal Dialysis/ Transplant Units*	*Number of Nephrologists (and Whole time equiv's)*	
Wessex	1	7	(6·6)
Northern	3	22	(19·1)
Yorkshire	3	13	(12·6)
Trent	5	22	(22·0)
East Anglia	4	4	(4·0)
NW Thames	6	15	(14·0)
NE Thames	7	27	(24·3)
SE Thames	6	38	(34·1)
SW Thames	2	4	(4·0)
Oxford	3	11	(9·6)
South Western	4	12	(11·0)
West Midlands	8	6	(4·9)
Mersey	5	10	(10·0)
Northern Western	5	16	(15·4)
Wales	5	2	(1·1)
Scotland	13	17	(17·0)
Northern Ireland	1	11	(11·0)

Manpower figures include permanent paid and honorary staff.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of surviving renal transplant patients per million population within Wessex regional health authority; and what is the United Kingdom average per million.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available in the form requested. According to the latest information provided by the United Kingdom transplant support services, the patient survival rate one year after transplantation in 1987-88 was 88 per cent. for Wessex and 92 per cent. for the United Kingdom.

This information is based on a follow-up study of 1,750 patients, including 74 in Wessex, receiving first cadaveric kidney transplants.

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the demand for renal services within Wessex regional health authority; and what is the relative rate of treatment per million population for end-stage renal failure in Wessex and other regional health authorities within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: No assessment specific to Wessex has been undertaken. The need for renal services will be reviewed as part of the purchasing process in 1991-92. These services have expanded steadily in Wessex over the last few years, and no patient whom consultants believe to require treatment has knowingly been turned away.

According to information provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of new patients per million population accepted for treatment of end-stage renal failure during 1988, the last year for which complete data are available, by regional health authority is as follows:

Region	*Treatment for end stage renal failure in 1988 (pmp)*
Wessex	44·8
Northern	58·4
Yorkshire	44·2
Trent	49·1
East Anglia	65·0
North West Thames	49·7
North East Thames	61·1
South East Thames	76·1
South West Thames	23·3
Oxford	50·4
South Western	51·2
West Midlands	52·0
Mersey	34·6
North Western	83·8
Wales	66·4
Scotland	62·8
Northern Ireland	42·5

British Fluoridation Society

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the benefit accruing from the annual grant made to the British Fluoridation Society.

Mr. Dorrell: The British Fluoridation Society receives a grant under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 for its work in providing support by means of information, advice, materials and other assistance to regional health authorities considering the implementation of water fluoridation in their areas. We are satisfied that the grant represents good value for money.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hostages

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards the release of John McCarthy, Terry Waite and other hostages held in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to make every effort in our contacts with the Iranian authorities, who we believe to have a decisive influence, to secure the release of the hostages. We have also contacted other countries, and the EC troika, to reinforce the point in their own dealings with Iran.

Kuwait

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning abuses of human rights and rapes of Palestinian and Filipino women in Kuwait; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has on the number of settlers going into northern Cyprus from Turkey in each of the last five years;

(2) what discussions he has had with the Turkish Government as to their policy of allowing Turkish nationals to settle in northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There is no reliable information on the number of Turkish settlers in northern Cyprus.

All parties to the intercommunal dispute are aware that this issue will have to be addressed in the context of the comprehensive, just and lasting settlement for which the UN Secretary-General is working, with our full support.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had discussions with the Government of Cyprus about the build-up of arms in that country.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is our long-standing policy to sell weapons neither to the Greek Cypriot National Guard nor to the Turkish Cypriot armed forces. The Cyprus Government are aware of our view that the continuation of arms purchases does not assist the UN Secretary-General's search for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the involved parties in Cyprus as to the rights of ownership of land and property in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The issue of property and land ownership rights is a key element in the current efforts by the UN Secretary-General to resolve the intercommunal dispute in Cyprus. We have been in close touch with the parties to the dispute on this and other issues.

Kurds

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to call for a middle east peace conference to discuss the creation of a national home for the Kurds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made clear our desire to see the political and human rights of the Kurdish people fully respected within existing international boundaries. It is evident from our discussions with Iraqi Kurdish leaders that they seek genuine autonomy within Iraq, not the creation of a separate Kurdish state.

East Timor

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the United Nations Human Rights Commission the treatment of East Timorese citizens by the Indonesian Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can confirm that this matter was raised by the EC Presidency statement during the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Commission, which included a reference to the situation in East Timor.

Mauritius

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for entry into the United Kingdom have been refused by the British high commission in Mauritius in each of the last five years.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The number of applications for entry into the United Kingdom refused by the high commission in Mauritius in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Total*
1986	202
1987	237
1988	195
1989	183
1990	206

South Atlantic (Oil Exploration)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has of any interest shown in oil exploration in the south Atlantic.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A number of seismic survey companies have shown interest over the years in carrying out oil exploration in the south Atlantic.

Commonwealth

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the aims and objectives of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Commonwealth.

Mrs. Chalker: Our aim is to maintain and foster the special relationship we share with Commonwealth partners. The Commonwealth can play an increasingly constructive and moderating role in world affairs. We hope that Commonwealth partners will work to strengthen the global trend towards pluralist democratic and accountable government.

Nigel Bramble

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking or will be taking to assist Nigel Bramble, aged 14 years and severely handicapped, from the British dependency of Montserrat, to complete his schooling in the United Kingdom before returning with his mother to the dependency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Nigel Bramble is currently studying at a state school which has the facilities to cater for his special educational and medical needs. His mother has applied to regularise their immigration status. We have been in touch with the Home Office. Given the circumstances surrounding the case, they have given an assurance that we would not seek to remove Nigel Bramble and his mother from the United Kingdom. I have asked my officials to discuss this with officials of the Home Office, the Department of Education and the Department of Health.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if appropriate provision is available for Nigel Bramble, aged 14 years and severely handicapped, born in the British dependency of Montserrat, to complete his schooling in the dependency if he is forced to return there from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is a school for children with special needs in Montserrat, which Nigel Bramble attended until June 1990. It is, however, the view of local and visiting British medical consultants that the school has nothing further to offer Nigel, given its limited resources.

Dependent Territories

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken in regard to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child as it applies to educational provision in Britain's dependent territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Neither the United Kingdom nor the Dependent Territories have yet ratified the convention.

Brazil

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has *(a)* received and *(b)* made to the Brazilian Government in connection with human rights concerns regarding protection by federal police of rural workers facing death threats.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in regular touch with the Brazilian authorities and with NGOs in UK regarding the human rights situation in Brazil. No specific representations have been made to the Brazilian Government on the circumstances of rural workers.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Brazilian Government in connection with human rights concerns about federal police protection for Fr. Ricardo Figuera, Carlos Cabral Pereira, Sebastiao Vieira da Silva, Roberto Neto da Silva, Fr. Vardario Lopes Costa and Orlando Canuto Pereira, who are involved with representation of Rio Maria rural workers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's embassy in Brasilia is looking into the cases of those mentioned and I look forward to receiving their report.

Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, column *112*, of 15 April, if he will estimate the number of sharks represented by the import of 3,838 tonnes of shark fins into Hong Kong in 1990.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the number of sharks represented by the weight of shark fins imported into Hong Kong in 1990 since

(a) the imported fins are obtained from sharks of different species and different maturity; and

(b) the fins vary widely in size and weight.

Iraq

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions Her Majesty's Government laid down prior to 15 April for Iraq's compliance with basic human rights law in dealing with the insurrection in the north and south; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We expect Iraq to live up to its international obligations under the Geneva conventions, the international convention on civil and political rights and the genocide convention. In addition, SCR 688, adopted on 5 April, demands that the Iraqi Government stop their repression of their own people.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 22 April 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

36. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last discussed the Birmingham pub bombings case with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

Lord Chief Justice

34. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the salary of the Lord Chief Justice in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* January 1991 in current prices.

The Attorney-General: The salary of the Lord Chief Justice in January 1987 was £77,400, and in January 1991 £95,750. Had it kept pace with prices, it would now be £102,454·38.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General from what area appeals to the social security commissioners are heard at the Cardiff Docks venue; and whether he is satisfied that it is suitable for disabled claimants.

The Attorney-General: The social security commissioners hear appeals from the whole of Wales at the Crown Court in Cardiff which is situated at Williams way, Curran embankment on Penarth road, although claimants in north Wales may opt for the hearing of their cases in Liverpool. The Cardiff venue has been used since March 1987 and is considered well suited to the needs of disabled claimants.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General how many appeals were made to the social security commissioners in each year from 1980 to 1990 in England, Scotland and Wales, respectively.

The Attorney-General: This information is available only from 1985. The number of appeals made to the social security commissioners for each year from 1985 to 1990 in England, Scotland and Wales is given in the table.

Social Security Commissioners

Year	*Number of Appeals*			*Total*
	England	*Scotland*	*Wales*	
1985	1,982	590	104	2,676
1986	[1]1,860	406	—	2,266
1987	2,878	654	76	3,608
1988	4,015	779	55	4,849
1989	4,435	716	38	5,189
1990	2,356	394	20	2,770

[1] Including Wales.

Mr. Usman Khalid

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when the appeal of Mr. Usman Khalid (TH 9455/90) against refusal to grant entry clearance to the United Kingdom will be heard in Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Once Mr. Khalid's representatives in this country have indicated to the immigration appellate authorities—IAA—that they are ready to proceed to a hearing, the IAA will aim to list the case at Leeds within five months.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Atlantic (Oil Exploration)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Governments of the Falkland Islands and Argentina regarding oil exploration in the South Atlantic.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Falkland Islands Government have passed a draft of their revised minerals legislation to us. My right hon. Friend has not held discussions with either the Government of the Falkland Islands or that of Argentina regarding oil exploration in the south Atlantic.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards informing the International Atomic Energy Agency of any information his Department has regarding possible breaches of the non-proliferation treaty by other state parties.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We would draw the attention of the IAEA to any such information as appropriate.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what powers are vested in the International Atomic Energy Agency to prevent the diversion of nuclear materials from civil to military use in the time between its regular inspections.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: If there were reason to believe that materials were being diverted from civil to military uses, the IAEA could request a special inspection.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications took place between Her Majesty's Government and the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding Iraqi efforts to operate a covert nuclear weapons programme prior to 15 January 1991.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made known on a number of occasions in various ways our concerns that Iraq appeared to be pursuing a covert nuclear weapons programme in contravention of its obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions took place at the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding the movement of Iraqi safeguarded materials away from Tuwaila.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any formal discussion of this matter would have to take place in the IAEA board of governors. There has been no discussion of this kind.

Iraq (Uranium)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment as to the quantity of highly-enriched uranium that is still in Iraqi hands.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is a matter for verification by the IAEA and the special commission to be established in accordance with Security Council resolution 687.

Turkey (Human Rights)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning abuse of human rights in Turkey.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Since the return to civilian rule in 1983, the Turkish Government have taken a number of steps to improve their human rights record. We support those efforts and continue to encourage the Turkish Government to respect and abide by the international human rights conventions to which they are a party.

United Nations

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will initiate a study of the evolution or development of the United Nations organisation to enable it better to attain the objectives of its charter in conditions of east-west rapprochement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The end of the cold war has enhanced the prospects of having the United Nations function as its founding fathers intended. We are considering ways in which it might do so.

Israel

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government are making to the Israeli Government to reopen educational institutions in the occupied territories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Israelis are well aware of our belief that the continuing closure of educational institutions, and in particular four universities, in the occupied territories is damaging—whether to Israel's reputation, the Palestinian community or the prospects for peace. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs urged the Israeli Foreign Minister to look again at this problem the last time he saw him, in London on 5 March.

Visa Arrangements

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reciprocal arrangements exist for British citizens to have two-year working visas and in which Commonwealth countries; and whether he has any proposals for renegotiating these arrangements.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There are no reciprocal arrangements between the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries on two-year working visas. There are no plans to negotiate such arrangements.

Gulf War

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the latest figures for the total contributions to Her Majesty's Government, and from which countries, to the cost of the United Kingdom's involvement in the Gulf war.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Cash contributions paid and pledged so far include about £660 million from Kuwait, £565 million from Saudi Arabia, £275 million from Germany, £250 million from the UAE, £183 million from Japan, £15 million from Belgium, £15 million from Hong Kong and £8 million from Denmark. We have also received assistance in kind worth about £250 million from some 16 countries.

United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his oral answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column 35, what refugee movements were anticipated by the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation, what requests were made to member states, and on what specific dates.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 11 January the office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator launched a regional plan of action in anticipation that a large number of people would be displaced by a conflict in the Gulf. This plan was based on 100,000 refugees arriving in each of Jordan, Turkey, Iran and Syria. UNDRO, on behalf of the United Nations humanitarian agencies and the International Organisation for Migration, made an urgent appeal for United States $38 million, 25 per cent. of their anticipated costs. Pledges from the international community quickly totalled some United States $58 million. The United Kingdom donated United States $1 million.

On 5 April UNDRO asked donors for the remaining 75 per cent. of its 11 January appeal. On 9 April, as the full scale of the exodus in the north of Iraq became clear, UNDRO launched an updated plan covering assistance to 1·5 million refugees in Turkey and Iran. UNDRO estimated the cost of its programme at United States $400 million, subsuming its original appeal for United States $152 million. UNDRO is appealing to donors for United States $300 million immediately.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 5 April, the United Kingdom will be contributing up to £20 million to the appeals by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

Bombs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for new international protocols on the use of fuel air explosive weapons and daisy cutter bombs in warfare.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest estimate of humanitarian assistance given to Kuwaitis and Iraqis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 19 April.

I understand that since the launch of their appeals, the international donor community has given at least US$86 million to the UNDRO/UNHCR appeals and at least £33 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross appeal. I am not able to provide complete information on the many other humanitarian agencies and NGOs who are providing assistance to the Kuwaitis and Iraqis either financially or at the practical level.

Incendiary Weapons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to ratify the United Nations weaponry convention; and what is his policy towards accepting the optional protocol No. III, on the use of incendiary weapons in certain circumstances.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are still considering ratification of the UN weaponry convention. When we have reached a decision, we shall make clear our policy towards protocol No. III.

Kuwait

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence Her Majesty's ambassador in Kuwait has concerning the allegations about the carrying out of reprisals against Palestinians in Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of Palestinians have approached Her Majesty's embassy in Kuwait about relatives who had been detained. The embassy is also in touch with international humanitarian agencies and human rights organisations monitoring the position of vulnerable groups.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, columns *106-7*, to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what response he has had to his repeated expressions of concern about ill-treatment of Palestinians in Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Crown Prince of Kuwait has assured my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that Palestinians will be dealt with in accordance with the law.

German Reunification

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the reunification of Germany has cost the EC budget.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The gross additional cost on the EC budget during 1991 as a result of German unification will be about 1,915 mecu. That will be partly offset by higher German contributions which will total 1,230 mecu, making the net additional cost some 685 mecu.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list by Government Department those subject areas that were previously open to answer via parliamentary questions, but which since June 1979 have been excluded as a consequence of legislation and changes in administrative arrangements.

The Prime Minister: Legislation and changes in administrative arrangements do not generally change the accountability of Ministers to Parliament except where the Government's successful programme of privatisation has removed a particular function from the public sector. In respect of "next steps" agencies, ministerial accountability is unchanged and parliamentary questions relating to executive agencies remain in order, although Ministers may arrange for chief executives to write to Members on matters which have been delegated to an agency in its framework document. I would encourage members to approach chief executives direct in the first instance on such matters, their aim is to provide a response which is as full and as helpful as possible on a timescale similar to that for a ministerial response to a parliamentary question.

HOME DEPARTMENT

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities he has made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No request for assistance with this appeal has, to my knowledge, been received, but arrangements could be made to draw it to the attention of Home Office staff.

Emergency Planning College

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost of running the Emergency Planning college in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: Expenditure on the Emergency Planning college was not separately identified in the Appropriation Accounts prior to 1984 and details could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. For 1984-85 onwards the information requested is as follows:

	£
1984-85	1,058,000
1985-86	1,159,000
1986-87	1,516,000
1987-88	1,368,000
1988-89	1,468,000
1989-90	1,685,000
1990-91[1]	1,517,000

[1] Estimated.

In addition, £226,000 and £670,000 were spent in 1989-90 and 1990-91 respectively on various capital projects in relation to the college buildings.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the last independent evaluation of the Emergency Planning college; and when the next such inquiry will take place.

Mr. John Patten: A study was carried out by management consultants between March 1990 and January this year into the ways in which the Emergency

Planning college might best discharge its wider remit to address questions of peacetime emergency planning, irrespective of any wartime connections, which was announced by the then Home Secretary in June 1989. There are no plans at present for any further external reviews.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to whom the management of the Emergency Planning college is accountable.

Mr. John Patten: The Emergency Planning college is part of my right hon. Friend's fire and emergency planning department and, as such is accountable through the normal management structure to him.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increase has taken place in the staff of the Emergency Planning college since the expansion of its title and role.

Mr. John Patten: Since June 1989 when the Emergency Planning college's change of name and expansion of its role were announced an increase in staff amounting to 2·5 additional posts has been approved. These have not yet been filled. In addition, two posts on the college's original complement have been regraded at a higher level.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the percentage of crimes in the London borough of Wandsworth that have not been cleared up in each of the last five years;

(2) how many sexual offences were reported in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last three years;

(3) how many burglary offences were recorded as committed in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last three years;

(4) how many crimes were recorded in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last three years;

(5) how many cases of physical assault against a person were reported in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information is contained in the Metropolitan police district annual borough tables, copies of which are available in the Library.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many car thefts were reported in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is for all thefts and is placed in the Library quarterly. Separate information for car thefts is not available centrally.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the percentage of increase or decrease in crimes in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table. Tables giving numbers of offences recorded by the police in each borough of the Metropolitan police district are placed in the Library quarterly.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in the borough of Wandsworth

Year	*Number of offences*	*Percentage change from previous year*
1986	28,030	−2
1987	27,423	−2
1988	25,308	−8
1989	27,955	+10
1990	32,679	+17

Policing Costs

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list those sporting activities which are required to pay for policing costs;

(2) if he will make it his policy for fox-hunts to pay for the costs of policing their activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Police functions are carried out at public expense under the Police Act 1964; where special policy services—outside their normal functions—are provided, a charge may be made under section 15 of the Act, but this is at the discretion of the police authority concerned. Eligibility for charging depends on the nature of the police function, not the sport or other activity concerned.

Mauritius

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from the island of Mauritius have been deported from the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of Mauritian citizens removed from the United Kingdom in each year since 1986 under the deportation process is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1986	14
1987	6
1988	6
1989	12
1990	8

Stockton Borough Council

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations have been made to him by Stockton borough council concerning the extension of a ban on drinking in public places to Yarm and Thornaby.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In March, Stockton-on-Tees borough council applied to renew its existing byelaws for prohibiting the consumption of intoxicating liquor in the same areas which were designated during the two-year experimental period. Officials wrote to the council on 26 March, giving provisional approval to the byelaws. We have not received any proposals to extend the byelaws to additional areas, but we understand that the council is considering making such an application at a later date.

Prison Education Budgets

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on why the budgets for education in prison establishments for 1991-92

were not allocated on a full-year basis; and what plans are being made for the future budgeting of education, establishment by establishment.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following the reorganisation of the prison service, prison establishments were advised in February of an interim allocation of funds for education purposes to cover their first quarter's expenditure in 1991-92. This was to enable the new area managers to obtain further specialist advice to ensure that full year's budgets, to be notified to establishments in June, make the most effective use of overall educational provision for the prison service. In future, area managers will be involved at an earlier stage in the budget-setting process and the agreed overall provision will be allocated between establishments by area managers at the beginning of the financial year, following consultation with governors and the relevant specialists.

Prison Education

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the future of the financing of education in prison establishments currently funded through local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science on 21 March at columns 432-34. Future arrangements for the funding of education in prison establishments will be determined in the light of the Government plans for the reorganisation of further education as a whole, on which a White Paper is to be published shortly.

Kurds

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to make special provision to grant Kurds political asylum in United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not consider that the large-scale resettlement of Iraqi Kurds in Western countries is an answer to the current problem. All asylum applications made in the United Kingdom are considered in accordance with the United Nations convention on refugees.

Lewes Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the maximum security alert at Lewes prison on 27 March; and if he will list for the last 12 months the number of times Lewes prison has been put on maximum security alert; and for what reasons.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following the discovery of live ammunition at Lewes prison, the governor made arrangements for a full scale search of the prison buildings and grounds. This search took place on 26 and 27 March. Investigations are in progress. There were full alerts called to carry out extensive searching at Lewes on the following occasions during the last 12 months: 22 November 1990; 2 to 6 December 1990.

Royal Prerogative of Mercy

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list separately for each year from 1980 to 1990 the number of cases in which the royal prerogative of mercy was exercised to grant *(a)* a free pardon, *(b)* a remission of imprisonment, *(c)* remission of Borstal training, youth custody and detention in a young offenders' institution, *(d)* remission of detention and *(e)* remission of fine, on grounds affecting the original conviction, in cases other than those involving road traffic offences.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 18 April 1991]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	*(a) Free Pardons*	*(b) Remission of imprisonment*	*(c) Remission of Borstal training, Youth custody, detention in a Young Offender Institution*	*(d) Remission of detention*	*(e) Remission of fine*
1980	13	2	—	—	2
1981	12	1	—	—	1
1982	9	—	—	—	1
1983	8	—	—	—	—
1984	14	—	—	—	—
1985	6	—	—	—	2
1986	5	—	—	—	—
1987	11	—	—	—	4
1988	8	—	—	—	2
1989	9	—	—	—	—
1990	16	—	—	—	—

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria and Ghana

41. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance in commerce and in education is being provided for Nigeria and Ghana.

Mrs. Chalker: Assistance to education in Nigeria in 1990-91 covered nine separate projects at a total cost last year of some £1·37 million. There is no aid currently specifically to commerce. In Ghana total education costs amounted to about £0·9 million in 1990-91, including training in Britain. In commerce, a United Kingdom training award is available in 1991 to the Ghana Export Promotion Council. These figures do not include our wide-ranging programmes of United Kingdom training in

other sectors amounting to a further £2·5 million for Nigeria and £1·4 million for Ghana. Both countries have better developed education systems than many others in Africa.

Famine, Africa

42. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department is currently giving to relieve famine in Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have committed £152 million in emergency assistance to Africa since the beginning of 1989. On 15 April, I announced a new pledge of assistance worth £33 million. Most of this will go to the Horn of Africa, where the famine is most acute. It will be in addition to the £33 million we have already provided to the region since last September.

The Gulf

43. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial assistance the Government are providing for Jordan and other neighbouring states affected by the Gulf war.

Mrs. Chalker: As our share of the EC special allocation to countries affected by the Gulf crisis we are providing £20 million to Jordan, £23 million each to Egypt and Turkey, £8 million to the occupied territories and £21 million to Israel. Since the invasion of Kuwait the United Kingdom has provided £18·65 million in humanitarian assistance through bilateral and EC channels. In addition we have committed £21·7 million to alleviate the plight of the Iraqi refugees. In the current financial year we expect our normal bilateral assistance to amount to £5·25 million for Jordan, £11 million for Egypt, £5 million for Turkey and some £1·5 million for the occupied territories.

Alternative Crops

44. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approaches have been made to the Overseas Development Administration in respect of alternative commercial crops in Commonwealth countries whose economies rely significantly on the export of sugar and bananas, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: We are helping the eastern Caribbean countries—Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent —whose economies rely heavily on banana exports, with a number of agricultural diversification projects.

Environment Conference, Brazil

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial support will be made available by Her Majesty's Government to *(a)* delegations from less-developed nations and *(b)* non-governmental organisations based in the United Kingdom, to assist their attendance at the United Nations conference on environment and development, to be held in Rio De Janeiro in June 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: We have offered £32,000 to the voluntary fund established to help finance participation by developing countries in the conference and its preparatory process. The United Nations General Assembly has not yet decided on the participation of non-governmental organisations in the conference.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Victoria Tower

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is his most recent estimate of the cost of the scaffolding erected at the Victoria Tower.

Mr. MacGregor: £1·5 million.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* the building societies which will not be repaid and *(b)* the amounts of tax involved, under the proposals referred to in paragraph 4.22 of the 1991 Financial Statement.

Mr. Maude: It would not be appropriate to provide information about the tax affairs of individual taxpayers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) to what extent the view of Inland Revenue that the disputed extra tax paid by building societies does not in fact involve the payment of extra tax, is based on the ground that building societies account on an accruals basis while government accounts on a cash basis;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Eltham of 15 April *Official Report*, columns 9-*11*, about the way building societies account for tax, whether his answer was based on the premise that the Inland Revenue would not receive extra tax or that building societies would not pay extra tax.

Mr. Maude: The 1986 change from the old basis on which building societies accounted for tax annually on interest accruing in their accounting year to the present system under which they account quarterly for tax on interest and dividends paid does not mean societies have paid extra tax. The change affected the time of payments, not their amounts. Interest and dividends paid during transitional periods have been subjected to a single charge to tax.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the occasions on which the Government publicly acknowledged the effect that a judgment adverse to the Inland Revenue in the Woolwich Equitable building society case might have on other building societies; and what the likely effect was judged to be on each such occasion.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to this matter in this year's Budget statement. There has been no previous occasion of a similar Government statement on this matter.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of where the £250 million for 1986 transitional provisions: building societies, shown in table 4.1 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1991-92, comes from.

Mr. Maude: The figure is the estimated amount, net of corporation tax, which will not be repaid to various building societies following my right hon. Friend's Budget proposal contained in clause 50 of the Finance Bill.

Separate Taxation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it is a requirement for the tax affairs of a wife and a husband to be dealt with by separate tax offices when one does not earn money outside the home.

Mr. Maude: The tax offices dealing with the tax affairs of a wife and a husband are, following the introduction of independent taxation, determined separately by reference to the nature of their respective incomes.

Interest Rates

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on reduced interest rates in European Community countries which discriminate in favour of *(a)* small businesses and *(b)* farming businesses; whether such arrangements will be permitted in the single European market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Information on state aids in the Community, including in the small firms and agricultural sectors, is published in the European Commission's reviews of state aids in the Community. All state aid schemes are notifiable by member states to the Commission; the Commission then decides whether they are compatible with the treaty of Rome.

Judicial Review

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many times in the last three years the Inland Revenue has experienced judicial review; how often it lost; and how often building society tax was involved;

(2) whether he has decided that all future potential gainers from judicial reviews of Inland Revenue decisions must make their own applications concurrently.

Mr. Maude: There have been 15 applications for judicial review involving the Inland Revenue in the last three years, of which four have been granted. Only one application involved building society interest. It is for individual taxpayers to decide whether or not to apply for judicial review of an Inland Revenue decision.

Foundation for Sport and the Arts

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the £40 million to be collected by the Pools Promoters Association for the proposed Foundation for Sport and the Arts will be taken from the total money now allocated to the payment of prizes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This is a matter for the pools promoters, but I understand that the proposal is that a proportion of the total remittance submitted by clients will be held in trust for the foundation.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the European Community total gross domestic product was, at the latest available date, accounted for by *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany and *(d)* Italy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Data for GDP in the European Community are published by the OECD in "Main Economic Indicators".

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product was accounted for by interest expenses in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany, respectively, in the last three years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Data for interest payments for these countries are not available. Data for receipts and payments of investment income are published by the IMF in "Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook".

Value Added Tax

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the rates of value added tax charged in *(a)* France and *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The value added tax rates charged are:

	France *Per cent.*	*Germany* *Per cent.*
Standard	18·6	14·0
Increased	22·0	—
Reduced	2·1, 5·5	7·0

Earnings

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many full-time, part-time, male and female workers earn below the PAYE threshold in the northern region and in each of the counties within the region.

Mr. Maude: The information requested is not available.

Services Sector

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the total amount of the wages and salaries of the economies of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany is accounted for by the wages and salaries of the services sector, respectively, in the latest available year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest available figures for these countries analysed by industry of employment are shown under the heading "Compensation of employees" in the annual OECD publication "National Accounts Detailed Tables Volume II (1976-1988)" of which copies are available in the Library of the House—see pages *(a)* 534 *(b)* 232 *(c)* 259.

DEFENCE

Aldermaston and Burghfield Housing

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what refurbishments and repairs are being carried out to Ministry of Defence houses at the AWE, Aldermaston and

Burghfield common estate; and when he anticipates these houses to be up to the standards set down for council and housing association properties.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The current ongoing maintenance programme at AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield covers both refurbishment and repair. The cost of maintaining the stock of the 775 civilian houses and flats at these locations will be £1,400,000 in the financial year 1991-92.

On the matter of standards, the Ministry of Defence is not a housing authority and not in consequence bound by the standards of the authorities referred to. Housing is provided at AWE for both essential Ministry of Defence police staff and to facilitate recruitment and retention of other staff. The houses are all maintained to an acceptable standard.

Main Battle Tanks

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many new main battle tanks he will be ordering to replace Chieftain tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: No decision on numbers of equipment for our future main battle tank fleet has yet been taken.

MV Antares

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he received the draft report on the sinking of the Antares; for what reasons he has not yet been able to publish the findings; when he expects to publish the report or its findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The report of the Royal Navy board of inquiry is being considered as a matter of priority. However, the report is very comprehensive and we have an obligation to all those concerned to ensure that the full legal and other implications of its findings are thoroughly studied. A summary of the findings will be released as soon as this process has been completed.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Clothing Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he intends to take to assist the clothing manufacturing industry in the Easington constituency during the present recession.

Mr. Leigh: There are no plans to introduce assistance measures for the clothing manufacturing industry in the Easington constituency. Firms in the constituency are eligible for assistance under the regional selective assistance scheme as well as the Department's R and D and enterprise initiative consultancy measures.

Trade Descriptions Act

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will bring forward proposals to implement the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading concerning bringing under the Trade Descriptions Act the claims made in letters from timeshare companies.

Mr. Leigh: The amendments to the Trade Descriptions Act proposed as a result of the current review, including those arising from the Director General of Fair Trading's report on timeshare will be implemented as soon as parliamentary time is available.

Tootal Group

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Office of Fair Trading is considering the practice of companies capitalising pension fund surpluses in order to establish a higher rating or obtain higher funding on its consideration of the takeover bid for the Tootal Group plc; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: In reaching his decision on whether to refer the proposed acquisition by Coats Viyella of Tootal Group to the MMC my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take into consideration the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. The director general's advice takes all relevant issues into account.

Iraq

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he was asked to approve British entries on the list of specially designated nationals of Iraq issued by the United States Government on 1 April.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what ways he has monitored and encouraged the progress of the refrigeration industry to move away from CFCs; and what study he has made of acoustic refrigeration.

Mr. Leigh: My Department regularly meets producers and users of chlorofluorocarbons and other ozone-depleting substances to discuss alternative options for when production of these substances is phased out over the next few years. These contacts include the development and use of substitutes in refrigeration. My Department participates in relevant United Kingdom conferences and international fora and last year published through HMSO a study commissioned from independent consultants "CFCs and Halons: Alternatives and the Scope for Recovery for Recycling and Destruction".

The Department offers support to industry for development of environmentally cleaner technologies, for example through the enterprise initiative and the environmental technology innovation scheme, the environmental management options scheme and Euroenviron. It has made no formal study nor received any project proposal relating to acoustic refrigeration. However, I understand that while this technique may be being developed for use in space, the view of the refrigeration industry is that the high engineering standards it requires currently render it economically unviable for more general application.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the total output of manufactured goods of the EC was, at the latest available date, accounted for by *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany and *(d)* Italy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is in the table.

EC output[1] of manufacturing[2] products in 1987

	Output (ecus million)	Percentage of total EC output
United Kingdom	135,306	15·3
France	153,449	17·4
Federal Republic of Germany[3]	287,196	32·5
Italy	152,287	17·2

[1] Output is defined as gross value added at market prices.
[2] NACE classification—section 3.
[3] Federal Republic of Germany as in 1987.
Data source: EUROSTAT.

Environment Conferences

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department was represented at the expert seminar on packaging and the environment held in Sweden on 7 to 8 February.

Mr. Leigh: Yes, my Department was represented and presented a paper to the seminar which was arranged in the framework of the United Nations Environment Programme/International Energy Office cleaner production programme.

Clean Production Technologies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Her Majesty's Government will undertake a collaborative initiative with the Industry and Environment Office of the United Nations environment programme on clean technologies for production.

Mr. Leigh: Her Majesty's Government are already participating in the United Nations Environment Programme/International Energy Office's cleaner production programme. In September 1990, the Government hosted a United Nations Environment Programme seminar at Canterbury on the subject of "Cleaner Production". The seminar was opened by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment; officials both from my Department and the Department of the Environment also participated.

Foundries

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what complaints he has received since the beginning of 1990 about state subsidies to companies in the foundry industry in other European Community countries and in Japan; and what action has been taken in connection therewith.

Mr. Sainsbury: One complaint has been received from a British company about alleged state subsidies to the iron foundry industries in France, Italy and Spain. My Department raised the matter with the European Commission which is responsible for monitoring state aids in the Community. I understand the Commission is pursuing the matter and is in contact with the company concerned.

Cornish Tin Mining

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department had any discussions with Carnon Holdings about the effect of the withdrawal of his Department's funds for tin mining on the holding of a 90-day consultation period between the company and the work force employed in the tin mines.

Mr. Leigh: The content of the numerous discussions with Carnon Holdings Limited is confidential. The terms and conditions of employment in Carnon, including redundancy payments and pension rights, are a matter for the company.

Petroleum Coke

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints he has received about the use of petroleum coke in domestic fireplaces; whether the sulphur emissions of this fuel conform to the recommended levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 April 1991]:* My Department has received representations from 13 organisations seeking controls on the supply of petroleum coke for domestic use. We have received very few complaints from users of this fuel.

The maximum sulphur content of fuels authorised for use in smoke control areas is 2 per cent. I understand that some varieties of petroleum coke have a higher sulphur content.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Evening Standard

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will obtain for his Department's library a copy of the *Evening Standard* "London Life" article by Keith Dovkants and Bruce Kemble of 16 April.

Mr. Eggar: The Department regularly purchases the *Evening Standard*, including the edition referred to. Relevant articles are placed in the Library.

Special Education

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list for each of the years from 1984 to 1990 the number of special classes or units in *(a)* primary schools in each local education authority and express this as a proportion of all primary schools in the local education authority and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority and express this as a proportion of all secondary schools in the local education authority;

(2) if he will list for each of the years from 1984 to 1990 the number of pupils with statements on the register of special classes in each local education authority *(a)* spending at least 70 per cent. of their time there and *(b)* spending less than 70 per cent. of their time in special classes, and express these figures as percentages of children registered in special classes in the local education authority;

(3) if he will detail for each year from 1984 to 1990 the number of children in each local education authority in England newly receiving special educational provision under a statement in ordinary schools and express this *(a)* as a percentage of all new statements made by the local education authority in that year and *(b)* as a percentage of all current statements maintained by the local education authority;

(4) if he will detail for each of the years from 1984 to 1990 the number of children under the age of five years with a statement of special educational need in each local education authority in England and express this as a percentage of all children of pre-school age in the local education authority;

(5) if he will detail for each local education authority in England the number of pupils with statements of special educational need recorded as attending maintained and non-maintained special schools and express this *(a)* as a percentage of all school children in the local education authority and *(b)* as a percentage of children with a statement in the local education authority, for each of the years from 1983 to 1989;

(6) if he will list for each year from 1984 to 1990 the number of children with statements of special educational needs newly placed in special or independent schools by each local education authority in England and express this as a proportion of the total number of new statements made by each local education authority;

(7) if he will list for each year from 1984 to 1990 the number of children in each local education authority in England transferred from special schools to mainstream schools and express this *(a)* as a proportion of the special school population in each local education authority and *(b)* as a proportion of children with statements in the local education authority;

(8) if he will detail for each of the years from 1984 to 1990 the number of children with statements on the register of ordinary classes in each local education authority in England and express this *(a)* as a percentage of all children with statements in the local education authority and *(b)* as a percentage of all pupils in the local education authority;

(9) if he will list for each year from 1984 to 1990 the number of children in each local education authority in England awaiting the provision specified in their statement and express this *(a)* as a percentage of all new statements made in that year by the local education authority and *(b)* as a percentage of all statements maintained by the local education authority.

Mr. Fallon: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

School Heads

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on the appointment of school heads without the use of inspectors' reports.

Mr. Eggar: The selection of head teachers is a matter for local education authorities and governing bodies in schools without delegated budgets, and for governing bodies, after considering any advice from the chief education officer, in schools with delegated budgets. In reaching decisions the Government would expect LEAs and schools to take account of all relevant considerations.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* pupil-teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Fallon: The pupil-teacher ratios within maintained primary and secondary schools in England in January 1990 were 22·0 and 15·3 respectively. Similar information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Adult Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list figures for *(a)* recurrent and *(b)* capital spending by the Government on adult education for each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Eggar: Central Government expenditure in respect of adult education bodies, REPLAN and PICKUP, is given in the tables. It is not possible to express expenditure in real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100. Instead the figures are given in cash terms and at 1978-79 prices.

Recurrent expenditure—£ million

Year	*Cash terms*	*1978-79 prices*
1978-79	[1]—	[1]—
1979-80	[1]—	[1]—
1980-81	[1]—	[1]—
1981-82	[1]—	[1]—
1982-83	11·207	6·909
1983-84	13·458	7·930
1984-85	14·635	8·208
1985-86	18·079	9·616
1986-87	23·470	12·67
1987-88	23·614	11·530
1988-89	27·612	12·551
1989-90	22·485	9·605
1990-91[2]	25·357	10·050

[1] Expenditure on adult education not separately identified.
[2] Provisional.

Notes:

1. From 1986-87 onwards, the figures include grants allocated for continuing education related to the development of PICKUP-type provision by the UGC/UFC and the NAB/PCFC.
2. Expenditure on REPLAN and PICKUP includes grants to the FEU.
3. From 1989-90 onwards, responsibility for payment of grants to English universities' extra-mural departments was transferred from the Department to the UFC.
4. The expenditure in 1990-91 takes account of the transfer from the Department to local education authorities of some of the responsibility for funding the English districts of the WEA.

Capital expenditure

£ million

	Cash terms	*1978-79 prices*
1978-79	[1]—	[1]—
1979-80	[1]—	[1]—
1980-81	[1]—	[1]—
1981-82	[1]—	[1]—
1982-83	0·029	0·018
1983-84	0·015	0·009
1984-85	0·052	0·029
1985-86	0·074	0·039
1986-87	0·044	0·023
1987-88	0·014	0·007
1988-89	0·041	0·019
1989-90	0·043	0·018
1990-91	0·018	0·007

[1] Capital expenditure not separately identified.

	Expenditure supported through education support grants £ million		Expenditure supported through local education authority training grants scheme £ million	
	Cash terms	1978-79 prices	Cash terms	1978-79 prices
1978-79	—	—	—	—
1979-80	—	—	—	—
1980-81	—	—	—	—
1981-82	—	—	—	—
1982-83	—	—	—	—
1983-84	—	—	—	—
1984-85	—	—	—	—
1985-86	3·011	1·602	1·224	0·651
1986-87	5·512	2·834	1·224	0·629
1987-88	4·878	2·382	2·030	0·991
1988-89	2·646	1·203	2·155	0·980
1989-90	5·078	2·169	3·300	1·410
[1]1990-91	3·917	1·553	2·682	1·063

[1] Provisional.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were staff-student ratios at *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of higher education in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data are not available in the form requested for 1978-79. Student-staff ratios are given in the table for universities, polytechnics and other establishments. Data are given for higher education (HE) and further education (FE) separately and together (ALL) for polytechnics and other establishments.

Student: Staff ratios
England
Academic years 1978-79 to 1988-89

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Polytechnics										
Higher education	8·4	8·9	9·7	10·3	11·1	11·5	12·0	12·4	12·9	13·7
Further education	8·3	7·6	9·1	10·7	11·1	13·0	11·6	12·2	12·8	12·3
All	8·4	8·3	9·7	10·3	11·1	11·6	12·0	12·4	12·9	13·6
Other establishments (Note 1)										
Higher education	7·3	7·6	8·4	8·7	9·0	9·6	9·7	10·2	10·5	12·3
Further education	9·4	9·1	9·2	9·6	9·5	9·8	10·3	10·6	10·8	11·3
All	8·8	8·8	9·0	9·3	9·4	9·8	10·2	10·6	10·8	11·4
Universities (Great Britain)	9·3	9·4	9·6	10·1	10·2	10·3	10·3	10·5	10·7	11·4

Notes:
1. Excludes voluntary and direct grant colleges in all years up to and including 1987-88. 1988-89 includes those former voluntary and direct grant colleges now funded by the PCFC.
2. *Source:* Annual Monitoring Survey for polytechnics and other establishments, University Statistical Record for universities.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what number of higher education academic and non-academic staff have *(a)* taken early retirement and *(b)* accepted redundancy in each year since 1978-79; and what was the total cost to the Government for higher education academic and non-academic staff taking early retirement or accepting redundancy for each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Available information for universities is shown in the table. This relates to claims met by the University Grants Committee and the Universities Funding Council for reimbursement of premature retirement and redundancy compensation since 1978-79. Information is not collected centrally about premature retirements and redundancies funded from universities' own resources.

Academic year	Academic and related staff			Non-academic staff		
	Number	Cost £ million	Index	Number	Cost £ million	Index
1981-82	1,600	35	100	—	—	—
1982-83	1,100	31	83	1,800	19	100
1983-84	1,000	30	77	400	6	30
1984-85	700	23	56	550	9	43
1986-87	335	10	22	385	4	18
1987-88	775	29	61	370	6	25
1988-89	1,225	49	97	360	8	31
[1]1989-90	1,080	25	46	295	3	11
[1,2]1990-91	815	15	26	65	1	3

[1] Figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are at 50 per cent. reimbursement rate.
[2] Figures for 1990-91 are for year to date.

Information on the numbers of staff in polytechnics and higher education colleges who took early retirement before the creation of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council is not collected centrally.

Costs of early retirement and redundancy in polytechnics and higher education colleges were met, up to 1988-89, from the redundancies/premature retirement

compensation schemes advanced further education open pool. Available information for the years 1982-83 to 1987-88 is as follows:

Academic year	Cost £ million	Index
1982-83	3	100
1983-84	6	191
1984-85	6	182
1985-86	8	230
1986-87	10	278
1987-88	9	238

From 1989-90, claims met by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council have been as follows:

	Academic year	
	1989-90	1990-91
Academic staff	271	41[illegible]
Non-academic staff	272	34[illegible]
Cost (£ million)	3	[illegible]4
Index	100	124

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list figures for the average salary of full-time lecturers at *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of higher education for each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100;

(2) if he will list figures for the average rise in salary of full-time lecturers at *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of adult and continuing education for each year since 1978-79 in (i) absolute cash terms, (ii) real terms and (iii) in terms of the rise in average earnings indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100;

(3) what was the cost of salaries to *(a)* academic staff and *(b)* non-academic staff at (1) universities, (2) polytechnics and (3) colleges of higher education each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100;

(4) if he will list figures for the average rise in salary of full-time lecturers at *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of higher education for each year since 1978-79 in relation to the rise in average professional earnings.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is not available in the form requested, but the following tables should be useful. In each case, the real-terms series for average salaries are derived on the basis of movements in all items RPI, and those for salary bills on the basis of movements in the GDP deflator. The figures for academic staff pay shown do not include any non-salary earnings: comparable information is not available on such earnings. The university figures relate to Great Britain and those for local authority maintained institutions to England and Wales.

Table 1: University salary bills[1] in cash and real terms
(£ thousands)

	Academic staff		Non-academic staff	
	Cash	Real terms	Cash	Real terms
1978-79	330,615	100·0	103,474	100·0
1979-80	409,159	105·5	122,936	101·3
1980-81	522,157	117·0	164,227	117·6
1981-82	546,235	112·5	170,144	112·0
1982-83	557,383	108·1	171,480	106·2
1983-84	592,988	109·7	179,808	106·3
1984-85	622,885	109·6	185,756	104·4
1985-86	677,611	113·8	193,933	104·1
1986-87	734,848	118·5	202,416	104·3
1987-88	801,421	121·9	210,798	102·4
1988-89	861,820	122·4	222,754	101·1

Year: August to July.
[1] *Source:* Universities' Statistical Record. The figures used relate to staff in academic departments.

Table 2: polytechnic and adult education institutions salary bills[1] in cash and real terms (£ thousands)

	Polytechnics				Adult education institutions			
Year: April to March	Academic staff		Non-academic staff		Academic staff		Non-academic staff	
	cash	real terms	cash	real terms	cash	real terms	cash	real terms
1978-79	153,926	100·0	67,442	100·0	36,986	100·0	8,186	100·0
1979-80	174,988	97·4	81,002	102·9	43,256	100·2	10,208	106·9
1980-81	221,217	104·1	94,543	101·5	52,680	103·2	11,632	102·9
1981-82	242,479	104·0	106,096	103·9	60,829	108·6	13,363	107·8
1982-83	256,406	102·7	114,534	104·7	68,971	115·0	14,365	108·2
1983-84	267,821	102·6	118,963	104·0	77,089	122·9	16,058	115·6
1984-85	276,787	100·9	126,915	105·6	82,231	124·7	17,152	117·5
1985-86	292,421	101·1	132,840	104·8	88,159	126·8	18,236	118·5
1986-87	309,669	103·5	144,724	110·3	94,308	131·1	20,875	131·1
1987-88	336,601	106·8	155,058	112·2	100,986	133·3	23,218	138·5
1988-89	362,987	107·1	168,748	113·7	105,878	130·1	22,457	124·6

[1] *Source:* Handbook of Education Unit Costs.

Table 3: University Full-time Lecturer: Average Salary Comparisons

	Cash	Percentage change	Real terms	Percentage change	Index relative to average earnings	Percentage change	Index relative to average professional earnings	Percentage change
1978	7,253	—	100·0	—	100·0	—	100·0	—
1979	8,486	17·0	99·8	−0·2	103·2	3·2	106·7	6·7
1980	10,012	18·0	102·3	2·5	99·1	−4·0	99·9	−6·4
1981	11,224	12·1	102·3	0·1	98·0	−1·1	94·9	−5·0
1982	11,962	6·6	103·5	1·1	95·5	−2·5	93·8	−1·1
1983	12,579	5·2	103·3	−0·2	92·5	−3·2	91·0	−2·9
1984	13,392	6·5	105·2	1·8	91·1	−1·5	90·7	−0·4

	Cash	Percentage change	Real terms	Percentage change	Index relative to average earnings	Percentage change	Index relative to average professional earnings	Percentage change
1985	14,005	4·6	104·1	−1·1	88·8	−2·6	88·8	−2·1
1986	14,294	2·1	102·4	−1·6	83·9	−5·5	82·6	−6·9
1987	16,643	16·4	115·0	12·3	90·7	8·1	88·7	7·4
1988	17,656	6·1	114·2	−0·7	87·6	−3·4	84·6	−4·6

Average salaries as at December. Taken from Universities' Statistical Record.
Average earnings and average professional earnings drawn from the New earnings Survey and relate to April of same calendar year.

Table 4: Local authority F&HE maintained sector full-time academic staff: average salary comparisons

	Cash	Percentage change	Real terms	Percentage change	Index relative to average earnings	Percentage change	Index relative to average professional earnings	Percentage change
1979	7,020	—	100·0	—	100·0	—	100·0	—
1980	7,573	7·9	90·1	−9·9	87·8	−12·2	85·6	−14·4
1981	9,806	29·5	103·6	15·0	100·3	14·3	93·9	9·7
1982	10,541	7·5	100·9	−2·6	98·6	−1·7	93·6	−0·3
1983	11,189	6·1	102·4	1·5	96·3	−2·3	91·7	−2·0
1984	11,728	4·8	102·0	−0·4	93·4	−3·0	90·0	−1·9
1985	12,317	5·0	100·9	−1·0	91·4	−2·2	88·5	−1·7
1986	13,212	7·3	103·9	2·9	90·8	−0·7	86·5	−2·2
1987	13,966	5·7	105·6	1·6	89·1	−1·8	84·4	−2·5
1988	15,346	9·9	112·1	6·2	89·2	0·1	83·3	−1·2
1989	16,340	6·5	110·6	−1·3	86·5	−3·0	79·4	−4·7

Average salaries as at March. Provided by Local Government Management Board.
Average earnings and average professional earnings drawn from the New Earnings Survey and relate to April of same calendar year.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many students aged *(a)* over 25 years, *(b)* 30 years and *(c)* 40 years were enrolled in (i) undergraduate and (ii) graduate higher education in the United Kingdom in each year since 1978-79; and what proportion these represented of the total;

(2) what number of *(a)* academic staff and *(b)* non-academic staff were employed at (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of higher education in each year since 1978-79;

(3) what number of *(a)* full-time students and *(b)* part-time students attended (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of higher education in each year since 1978-79;

(4) what proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds secured *(a)* a non-degree place and *(b)* a degree place in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of higher education in each year since 1978-79;

(5) what number of women students *(a)* attended (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of higher education and *(b)* attended (1) undergraduate and (2) graduate higher education in the United Kingdom in each year since 1978-79; and what proportion these represented of the total;

(6) how many *(a)* overseas students, *(b)* Commonwealth students, *(c)* non-Commonwealth third world students and *(d)* European Community students were enrolled in (i) undergraduate and (ii) graduate higher education in the United Kingdom in each year since 1978-79; and what proportion these represented of the total.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information is contained in the Department's statistical publications.

Data on mature students are given in Statistical Bulletin 2/91—"Mature Students in Higher Education". Numbers of academic staff are shown in table 9 of "Education Statistics for the United Kingdom"; details of non-academic staff are not available centrally. Statistical Bulletin 11/90—"Student Numbers in Higher Education" contains details of full and part-time students, by sector, level of study, age and sex. Statistical Bulletin 11/89—"Students from Abroad in Great Britain" and table 30 of "Education Statistics for the United Kingdom" give details of students from abroad, by country and sector.

All those publications are available in the Library.

The total numbers of young home initial entrants in full-time higher education expressed as a percentage of the averaged 18 to 19-year-old Great Britain population—the Age Participation Index (API)—were:

Academic year beginning	per cent.
1979	12·3
1980	12·6
1981	13·1
1982	13·4
1983	13·2
1984	13·7
1985	13·9
1986	14·0
1987	14·6
1988	15·1
1989	17·1

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent on discretionary awards to higher education students in each year since 1978-79 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The table shows expenditure on discretionary awards made by local education authorities in England and Wales using their powers under section 1(6) of the Education Act 1962.

Academic Year	Cash expenditure £ million	At 1978-79 Prices £ million	Index
1978-79	8·3	8·3	100
1979-80	8·5	7·3	88
1980-81	8·7	6·4	77
1981-82	9·4	6·3	76
1982-83	9·3	5·8	70
1983-84	9·9	5·8	70
1984-85	10·1	5·7	69
1985-86	10·7	5·7	69
1986-87	11·1	5·7	69
1987-88	12·7	6·3	76
1988-89	11·4	5·3	64

Awards made under section 1(6) are made at LEA's discretion to students attending courses designated for mandatory awards purposes who are personally ineligible for a mandatory award. The cash expenditure includes both fees and maintenance paid as part of the award. The constant price and index figures have been calculated using the retail price index. The reduction in expenditure in 1982-83 reflected a change in the level of fees payable as part of the award.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list figures for *(a)* recurrent spending and *(b)* capital spending by the Government on (1) universities and (2) polytechnics and colleges of higher education for each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data from 1985-86 to 1990-91 are available from the departmental report (CM1511) available in the House Library. Grants distributed on the advice of the Universities Grants Committee (UGC) for 1978-79 through to 1988-89 are given in the table along with central Government expenditure on other higher education.

Included under other higher education are those voluntary and direct grant colleges that became the responsibility of the PCFC from 1989-90, the Open university, Cranfield Institute of Technology, the Royal College of Art, British Academy postgraduate state studentships and other higher education grants.

Central Government's own expenditure

£ million

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
UNIVERSITIES FUNDING COUNCIL (formerly UGC)											
Current											
Cash	602	728	943	968	1,176	1,222	1,253	1,283	1,320	1,468	1,585
Real terms	1,409	1,461	1,599	1,497	1,698	1,686	1,646	1,598	1,589	1,678	1,686
Index (1978-79 = 100)	100·0	103·7	113·5	106·2	120·5	119·7	116·8	113·4	112·8	119·1	119·7
Capital											
Cash	70	88	98	103	107	103	107	118	130	129	141
Real terms	164	177	166	159	154	142	141	147	157	147	150
Index (1978-79 = (100)	100·0	107·9	101·2	97·0	93·9	86·6	86·0	89·6	95·7	89·6	91·5
OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION											
Current											
Cash	98	123	156	165	171	172	174	177	181	194	197
Real terms	229	247	265	255	247	237	229	220	218	222	210
Index (1978-79 = 100)	100·0	107·9	115·7	111·4	107·9	103·5	100·0	96·1	95·2	96·9	91·7
Capital											
Cash	12	20	18	18	17	19	19	20	22	22	25
Real terms	28	40	31	28	25	26	25	25	26	25	27
Index (1978-79 = 100)	100·0	142·9	110·7	100·0	89·3	92·9	89·3	89·3	92·9	89·3	96·4

Libraries

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list figures for *(a)* recurrent and *(b)* capital spending by the Government on (i) university libraries and (ii) polytechnic libraries and colleges of further education libraries, for each year since 1978-79 in (1) cash terms and (2) real terms indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There is no earmarked public funding for book provision through either the higher education funding councils or specific grants for further education. It is for individual institutions to determine their expenditure within the total resources at their disposal.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost of increasing the level of student grants by *(a)* 1 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* 10 per cent.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I have already announced the intention for 1991-92 to hold the main rates of grant payable under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations steady in cash terms at their current values. Increases in student support are now provided primarily by increases in the student loan facility. Total full-year support from grant and loan combined in the current academic year is 25 per cent. higher than grant alone last year.

The cost in the 1992-93 financial year of raising the main rates of grant, assuming that parental contributions would continue to be held steady in cash terms, would be as follows:

raise by 1 per cent.—£13 million
raise by 5 per cent.—£58 million
raise by 10 per cent.—£116 million.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of students have been assessed for the maximum parental contribution student maintenance grant; and what proportion of students in receipt of awards have received the maximum grant in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data are not available in the form requested. The maximum parental contribution was introduced for the 1985-86 academic year and applies in aggregate if the parent has more than one child who holds an award. The maximum parental contribution has been set as follows:

	£
1985-86	4,000
1986-87	4,300
1987-88	4,600
1988-89	4,900
1989-90	5,300
1990-91	5,800

The maximum parental contribution will be held steady in cash terms for 1991-92 in line with our new arrangements for student support.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average parental contribution of those assessed for a contribution for each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is not possible to give the average parental contribution only for those parents assessed as being liable for a contribution. The table shows the average parental contribution assessed under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations for all award holders, including those whose contribution was assessed at nil.

Academic year	*Contribution cash (£)*	*At 1978-79 prices* £	*Index*
1978-79	275	275	100
1979-80	256	220	80
1980-81	288	213	78
1981-82	352	234	85
1982-83	414	257	93
1983-84	437	258	94
1984-85	587	331	120
1985-86	720	383	139
1986-87	764	394	143
1987-88	817	405	147
1988-89	860	403	146

The constant price and index figures have been calculated using the retail prices index.

Postgraduate Awards

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the level of postgraduate awards for each year since 1978-79 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The levels of postgraduate awards, as at October each year, since 1978-79 in cash and real terms are given in the table:

DES/Research Council/British Academy studentships
Value of basic maintenance allowances 1978-88

	Elsewhere	*At 1978-79 prices*		*London*	*At 1978-79 prices*	
AC year	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*
1978-79	1,610	1,610	100	1,990	1,990	100
1979-80	1,820	1,553	96	2,250	1,921	97
1980-81	2,090	1,546	96	2,570	1,901	96
1981-82	2,245	1,487	92	2,770	1,834	92
1982-83	2,335	1,447	90	2,880	1,785	90
1983-84	2,430	1,434	89	2,995	1,768	89
1984-85	2,585	1,453	90	3,170	1,782	90
1985-86	2,665	1,421	88	3,265	1,741	87
1986-87	2,756	1,427	89	3,366	1,743	88
1987-88	2,859	1,416	88	3,492	1,730	87
1988-89	2,975	1,385	86	3,630	1,690	85

Research Council studentships 1989-90

	Elsewhere	*At 1978-79 prices*		*London*	*At 1978-79 prices*	
AC year	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*
1989-90	3,725	1,616	100	4,690	2,035	102
1990-91	3,725	1,457	90	4,690	1,835	92

DES/British Academy studentships 1989-90

	Elsewhere	*At 1978-79 prices*		*London*	*At 1978-79 prices*	
AC year	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*
1989-90	3,125	1,356	84	3,970	1,722	87
1990-91	3,725	1,457	90	4,690	1,835	92

DES state bursaries
Value of basic maintenance allowances 1978-90

	Elsewhere	*At 1978-79 prices*		*London*	*At 1978-79 prices*	
AC year	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*	*cash* £	*cash* £	*Index*
1978-79	1,100	1,100	100	1,315	1,315	100
1979-80	1,245	1,063	97	1,485	1,268	96
1980-81	1,430	1,058	96	1,695	1,254	95
1981-82	1,535	1,016	92	1,825	1,208	92
1982-83	1,595	988	90	1,900	1,177	90
1983-84	1,660	980	89	1,975	1,166	89
1984-85	1,725	970	88	2,050	1,153	88
1985-86	1,775	947	86	2,110	1,125	86
1986-87	1,846	956	87	2,191	1,134	86
1987-88	1,915	949	86	2,273	1,126	86
1988-89	1,990	926	84	2,365	1,101	84
1989-90	2,090	907	82	2,585	1,122	85
1990-91	2,195	859	78	2,775	1,086	83

Open University

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the Government have spent in grants for *(a)* current expenditure and *(b)* capital expenditure to the Open university in each year since 1978-79 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The tables give recurrent and capital grants to the Open university since 1978-79 in cash terms and also expressed as an index[1] using 100 as a base for the financial year 1978-79. The figures for capital grant reflect a decline in the number of capital projects after the initial development of the Walton Hall site.

(a) Recurrent grant:

	Cash terms £ million	Index
1978-79	29·96	100
1979-80	36·71	105
1980-81	47·13	114
1981-82	51·27	113
1982-83	55·21	114
1983-84	56·42	111
1984-85	59·05	111
1985-86	60·93	108
1986-87	60·39	104
1987-88	64·25	105
1988-89	66·39	101
1989-90	72·77	104
1990-91	80·94	107
1991-92	87·98	109

(b) Capital grant:

	Cash terms £ million	Index
1978-79	2·9	100
1979-80	4·7	139
1980-81	4·63	116
1981-82	3·69	84
1982-83	2·03	43
1983-84	0·7	14
1984-85	1·4	27
1985-86	0·87	16
1986-87	2·08	37
1987-88	1·43	24
1988-89	2·37	37
1989-90	2·41	36
1990-91	2·13	29
1991-92	2·13	27

[1] Indexed figures result from adjusting the cash outturn figures for past years using the deflator for gross domestic product at market prices.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was total Government spending on higher education student support in each year since 1978-79 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100; and what was expenditure per student over the same period.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The table shows the expenditure made by local education authorities in England and Wales in bestowing mandatory awards under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations:

Academic Year	Expenditure Cash £ million	At 1978-79 Prices £ million	Index	Expenditure per student cash £
1978-79	468·9	468·9	100	1,466
1979-80	550·0	472·1	101	1,705
1980-81	679·3	503·0	107	2,031
1981-82	783·4	520·9	111	2,210
1982-83	680·6	421·9	90	1,837
1983-84	719·1	424·0	90	1,870
1984-85	706·6	397·9	85	1,788
1985-86	696·1	370·1	79	1,783
1986-87	724·7	374·1	80	1,838
1987-88	765·4	379·3	81	1,893
1988-89	825·7	386·4	82	1,988

The cash expenditure includes both fees and maintenance paid as part of the mandatory award. The constant price and index figures have been calculated using the retail prices index. The reduction in expenditure per student in 1982-83 reflected a change in the level of fees payable as part of the mandatory award.

Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the Government have allocated to the National Advisory Body, and subsequently for the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, each year since 1982 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, indexed so that 1982 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth: With the creation of the PCFC sector in 1989-90, direct comparisons with earlier years are not possible. Funds allocated to the PCFC amounted to £1,114 million in 1989-90 and an estimated £1,108 million in 1990-91.

Prior to 1989-90, funding of colleges now in the PCFC sector was not directly through NAB. Figures from 1982-83 through to 1988-89 therefore cover not only those institutions currently in the PCFC sector but the other higher education establishments maintained by the local authority sector. Total allocations to these establishments for higher education plus capital expenditure by LEAs amounted to:

	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Cash figures (£ million)	614	634	657	703	748	810	887
Real terms (£ million—1989-90 Prices)	886	875	863	876	900	926	944
Index	100	98·7	97·3	98·8	101·6	104·4	106·4

Oxford Polytechnic

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the subject areas at Oxford polytechnic for which Her Majesty's inspectors were not able to give advise on the quality of provision to the programme advisory groups of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council when they were considering bids for 1991-92.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Oxford polytechnic claimed outstanding quality in eight of the nine Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council programme areas as part of its bid for funds in 1991-92. Her Majesty's inspectorate had sufficient recent inspection evidence to offer advice to the appropriate PCFC programme advisory group on the majority of these claims. The exceptions were some aspects of programme area 2 (built environment) and programme area 9b (in-service education).

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd : To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 18 January regarding a funding matter concerning the Falmouth school of art and design.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 19 April.

Haberdashers' Aske's Schools

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applicants and how many acceptances there were for places for the Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Wood boys and girls schools for the years beginning September 1990 and September 1989, respectively; and what is the ethnic breakdown of these figures for boys and girls, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: The recorded intake for the boys' and girls' schools were, for the boys, 96 and 99 and, for the girls, 96 and 97 in 1989 and 1990 respectively. Intake statistics by ethnic background are not held centrally for these years. However, I understand that the girls' school has produced such statistics for its own purposes for 1990.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, *Official Report*, 28 March, columns *485-86*, if he will give the ethnic breakdown for applications and acceptances by the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology colleges for the year beginning September 1991 for boys and girls, respectively.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to her on 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *485-86*. It is not possible to identify the sex of all initial applicants (830); of those interviewed 302 were boys and 265 girls.

Global Youth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department will make available resources to assist the attendance of British young environmentalists at the Global Youth Summit planned to be held in Rio De Janeiro from 2 to 8 June 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has no plans to do so.

Cambridge Regional College

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes that the existing sites on which Cambridge regional college is located, to be vacated on completion of the college capital project, should be transferred back to the local education authority or whether they should be regarded as the property of the college.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend made clear in his statement to the House on 21 March, *Official Report*, columns. *432-48*, that he intends to vest colleges with the land, buildings and plants which they currently use. The disposal of such assets will require his specific consent. Each case will be considered on its merits and he will listen to any reasonable proposals that LEAs wish to make. My right hon. and learned Friend looks forward to receiving details of Cambridgeshire LEA's proposals for the transfer of assets currently used by Cambridge regional college.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will provide the necessary assurances to enable tendering to be completed and work to begin as scheduled on the capital project to provide new purpose-built accommodation for the Cambridge regional college;

(2) what evaluation he has made of the effects of his statement on the future of further education on the tendering process for phase one of the capital project to provide new accommodation for Cambridge regional college.

Mr. Eggar: LEAs are required to gain the consent of college governing bodies for all contracts that endure beyond 31 March 1993 and will, additionally, require the Secretary of State's consent for contracts valued in excess of £50,000. My right hon. and learned Friend intends that these requirements should not unnecessarily impede the tendering process. He looks forward to receiving details of Cambridgeshire LEA's contract proposals for phase 1 of the regional college's building project.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to provide a guarantee that the debt charges on capital expenditure to provide new accommodation for Cambridge regional college will not remain the responsibility of the local education authority should the college be accorded corporate status.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the treatment of debt charges arising after 31 March 1993 from capital spending on colleges and will announce his intentions shortly.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from Cambridgeshire county council about the impact of his statement on the future of further education on the project for new purpose-built accommodation for the Cambridge regional college.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a representation about the impact of his statement on Cambridge regional college about debt charges and capital funding after 31 March 1993 for the building project at Cambridge regional college. Officers of the authority have also been in touch with DES officials.

Environmental Research Database

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the role of the global environmental research office and database established at the Science and Engineering Research Council headquarters in Swindon.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The United Kingdom global environmental research office, which is jointly funded by the five research councils and housed by the Natural Environment Research Council in Swindon, acts as a focal point for the provision and dissemination of information on United Kingdom and international GER science and policy developments, and as a contact point for equivalent offices in other countries. It provides the secretariat for the

United Kingdom inter-agency committee on global environment change and maintains a database of United Kingdom GER research activities.

Female Circumcision

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide guidance for teachers on female circumcision and the symptoms of children at risk and recent victims.

Mr. Fallon: Where teachers are concerned about the health and welfare of pupils, they should make their concerns known to the relevant agencies under the arrangements for inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children. There is existing central guidance on these arrangements, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is planning to issue revised guidance later this year, which will draw attention to the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985.

Schools (Local Management)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce his plans for further delegation and increased independence for schools under schemes of local management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Today we are publishing departmental circular 7/91, which sets out new guidance for local education authorities on the local management of schools. The measures contained in the circular reflect our determination to ensure that schools become more independent of their LEAs.

Local management of schools will be extended as follows:

any school may apply for delegated management from April 1992;

all schools must have delegated management by April 1994;

by April 1993, 85 per cent. of the potential schools budget must be delegated to the school level which, on 1990-91 figures, will release a further £140 million to our schools;

by April 1993, 80 per cent. of those delegated funds must be linked directly to pupil numbers, weighted for age and special needs;

special schools will be able to apply for delegated management from April 1994, by which time local authorities must have introduced formula funding for all special schools.

To ensure that schools have the necessary flexibility efficiently to manage their budgets, we intend to require local education authorities to allow all secondary schools to operate their own bank accounts.

Copies of the circular are today being placed in the Library of the House.

WALES

Prehistoric Sites

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends any initiatives to vary the extent of excavations on prehistoric sites in Gwent and Glamorgan.

Mr. David Hunt: No. The extent of archaeological excavations funded by my Department and the particular approach for specific sites is kept under constant review. This ensures the most effective archaeological response to threatened sites.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of local authority nursery school places provided by every Welsh education authority, expressed as a percentage of the eligible children in each area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The proportion of three and four-year-olds in nursery schools in September 1990 is shown in the following table. Data on the number of places in nursery schools are not held centrally.

Percentage of 3 and 4 year old population[1]

	Per cent.
Clwyd	1·4
Dyfed	2·5
Gwent	8·8
Mid Glamorgan	7·4
South Glamorgan	6·9
West Glamorgan	2·3

[1] There are no nursery schools in Gwynedd or Powys, although, as in all counties, a significant number of other 3 and 4-year-olds attend schools either in nursery classes or in ordinary classes.

New House Building

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total of new house and flat construction by Welsh local authorities in each of the past 12 years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Annual data from 1975 to 1989 was published in table 2·3 of Welsh Housing Statistics No. 10, 1990, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. In 1990, 551 dwellings were completed by local authorities.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage of total unemployment in *(a)* the area covered by the valleys initiative and *(b)* Wales during each of the past 24 months for which details are available.

Mr. David Hunt: Unemployment rates for Wales and the valleys area are given in the following table:

Unemployment rate percentage

	Wales	*Programme for the valleys area*
1989		
April	7·9	11·3
May	7·5	10·8
June	7·1	10·4
July	7·1	10·4
August	7·0	10·2
September	6·9	10·3
October	6·6	9·5
November	6·5	9·2
December	6·7	9·4
1990		
January	7·0	9·8
February	6·8	9·6
March	6·7	9·4
April	6·5	9·3
May	6·3	9·1
June	6·1	8·9
July	6·4	9·2
August	6·5	9·2
September	6·6	9·4
October	6·6	9·3
November	6·9	9·5
December	7·4	10·1

	Wales	Programme for the valleys area
1991		
January	7·8	10·7
February	8·1	11·0
March	8·3	11·5

Note:
The rates are calculated by expressing the unadjusted number of unemployed claimants as a percentage of the estimated total work force (the sum of unemployed claimants, employees in employment, self-employed, HM forces and participants on work-related Government training programmes). Mid-year estimates of the relevant total work force are used in calculating the unemployment rates. The Welsh figures for 1989 use 1989 mid-year estimates of the total work force in Wales; the Welsh figures for 1990 and the first three months of 1991 use mid-1990 estimates of the total work force. Unemployment rates calculated for the programme for the valleys area use mid-1989 estimates of the total work force in the area throughout.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Security

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the main rate of supplementary benefit or income support available in Northern Ireland in 1979 for (i) a single person and (ii) a couple with two children; and what the value would be today if it had been raised in line with *(a)* the RPI and *(b)* average industrial wages.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The available information is as follows:

	Single[1] householder	Couple[1] with two children under 5
	£	£
Supplementary benefit		
Scale rate—November 1979	18·30	40·10
Value if raised in line with:		
(a) RPI[2]	37·99	83·26
(b) average earnings[3]	46·86	102·68

The figures are not comparable with any current income support rates; supplementary benefit was structured and assessed in a completely different manner.
[1] Under pension age and unemployed.
[2] To April 1990.
[3] New Series Index (Whole Economy) seasonally adjusted to April 1990.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Offices

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving family credit in the areas covered by the Poplar, Stepney and Shoreditch DSS offices, respectively; and how many people in Tower Hamlets as a whole are receiving family credit.

Mr. Jack: The number of families receiving family credit who were living in the areas covered by the local social security offices in Tower Hamlets at the time their award was made is as follows:

	Number
Poplar	568
Stepney	1,156
Shoreditch	282
TOTAL	2,006

Note: Number of awards actually in payment on 8 February 1991 i.e. excludes awards on claims made before that date but not decided at that stage.

Poll Tax Rebates

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many poll tax payers in the Easington district council area will lose rebate arising out of the proposed reduction in the poll tax.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not available.

Adjudication Regulations

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a detailed estimate of the annual savings that would be made by the abolition of regulation 72 of the Adjudication Regulations in relation to supplementary benefit and national assistance.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates of the impact of amending the regulation to exclude supplementary benefit and national assistance are uncertain and no estimate of savings is therefore possible.

Child Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the age distribution of the first children for whom £2 a week extra child benefit will be payable from next October, distinguishing between children aged 0 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years and 16 years or over.

Mr. Jack: The latest available estimates are based on June 1990 figures. They show that the number of children for whom the higher child benefit rate of £9·25 a week will be payable from October 1991 will be:

	Million
Aged 0 to 4 years	1·7
Aged 5 to 10 years	2·0
Aged 11 to 15 years	2·2
Aged 16 years or over	0·9
TOTAL	6·8

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will tabulate figures showing the annual costs of each extra £1 a week child benefit for *(a)* first children, *(b)* second children, *(c)* third children and *(d)* fourth and subsequent children.

Mr. Jack: We estimate that the costs in 1991-92 would be *(a)* £355 million, *(b)* £205 million, *(c)* £60 million, and *(d)* £20 million.

If such increases were offset in national insurance and income-related benefits, the net costs would be *(a)* £250 million, *(b)* £150 million, *(c)* £40 million, and *(d)* £10 million.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual cost *(a)* gross and *(b)* after

deduction of income support of uprating child benefit from its present level (i) by £1 a week for the first child only, (ii) by a further £1 a week for the first child plus 25 pence a week for the second and subsequent children and (iii) by £2·30 a week for each child; and what would be the comparable figures for uprating child benefit from its proposed October 1991 level by an extra 30 pence a week for the first child and an extra £2·05 a week for second and subsequent children.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* On the basis of our latest estimates, the gross full year costs in 1991-92 of uprating child benefit from the 1990-91 rate of £7·25 per week would be (i) £355 million, (ii) £425 million, and (iii) £1,475 million.

The equivalent net costs, after the normal adjustments to national insurance and income-related benefits, are (i) £250 million, (ii) £300 million and (iii) £1,045 million.

The full year costs in 1991-92 of increasing child benefit by 30p per week for the eldest eligible child in the family and by £2·05 for each other child are estimated to be £695 million gross and £490 million net.

National Insurance Pension

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the April 1991 value of the category A national insurance pension, at uprating dates each year since 1978, using the general index of retail prices, including housing costs.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the real value of the state retirement pension in previous years at April 1991 prices will not be available until the RPI figure for that month is known. Figures on the value of the state retirement pension at April 1990 prices are set out in table 5 1(a) of the October 1990 edition of the DSS "Abstract of Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Pensioner Couples

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those benefits and their average value which are available to pensioner couples on basic pensions who are in receipt of income support.

Miss Widdecombe: The benefits listed in the table are available to pensioner couples on income support with basic pensions. They are also available to pensioner couples who do not receive income support.

Housing benefit
Community charge benefit
Mobility allowance[1]
Invalid care allowance[2]
Severe disability allowance
Invalidity benefit[3]
Sickness benefit[3]
Industrial injury benefit
War disablement pension
Attendance allowance
Help with NHS charges and payments from the social fund[4]

Notes:

[1] Mobility allowance continues to age 80 but cannot be claimed after age 66 (but mobility conditions must have been met before age 65).

[2] Invalid care allowance continues but cannot be claimed after age 60 for women and 65 for men.

[3] Invalidity benefit and sickness benefit can be paid up to five years beyond pension age.

[4] Crisis loans and payments for certain specific items are possible if customers are not on income support.

Whether or not any of these would actually be payable to any one couple would depend on their particular circumstances.

Information on the average amount of each benefit in payment to pensioner couples is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the financial allocation to the social fund for each local office in Scotland and the actual sum spent in each case for the financial year ended 31 March 1991.

Mr. Scott: Information on allocations for 1991-92 and monthly expenditure up to February 1991 are available in the Library. The March 1991 figures will be available shortly.

Long-stay Patients

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the costs incurred by his Department from the discharge of patients from long-stay hospital beds to private nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: No such assessment has been made as information about a claimant's previous place of residence is not collected.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of new claims for family credit were unsuccessful in each of last 24 months for which records are available; and what was the spending on advertising family credit during those months.

Mr. Jack: Of the new claims for family credit cleared during each of these months the percentage which was unsuccessful was as follows:

	Per cent.
April 1989	46·2
May 1989	64·6
June 1989	60·0
July 1989	52·2
August 1989	48·6
September 1989	48·4
October 1989	47·0
November 1989	48·4
December 1989	52·8
January 1990	53·4
February 1990	49·1
March 1990	49·5
April 1990	47·8
May 1990	45·0
June 1990	46·2
July 1990	47·0
August 1990	47·5
September 1990	49·5
October 1990	46·6
November 1990	45·1
December 1990	45·5
January 1991	49·4
February 1991	47·6
March 1991	48·4

During the same period the percentage of renewal claims which were unsuccessful ranged from 11·6 per cent. to 18·6 per cent.

Notes

1. The figures are for the four or five weeks ending on the last Friday of each month.
2. Unsuccessful claims includes those which were withdrawn or were invalid, as well as those where it was decided there was no entitlement to benefit.

It is not possible to express the spending on advertising on a month by month basis. The spending on each of the advertising campaigns during the period was as follows:

Advertising campaign	*Expenditure (£)*
April-June 1989	3,635,000
October 1989-January 1990	2,200,000
June-August 1990	2,394,000
February-March 1991	1,500,000

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of income support in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe *[pursuant to the answer, 15 April, c. 89]:* I regret that the hon. Member's question was incorrectly linked for answer. It should have received the following answer.

In May 1989, the latest date for which information is available, some 486,000 people in Scotland were in receipt of income support. This information is drawn from the May 1989 Annual Statistical Enquiry, a copy of which is in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Industrial Premises

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has of the trends in investment by the private sector in new industrial and warehousing premises in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There is no clear statistical evidence from which trends in the volume of private sector industrial investment can be drawn. There are, however, encouraging signs of increased activity in this area.

During 1990, consistent with the Government's policy of encouraging the private sector to take a greater role in the development and management of industrial property in Scotland, the Scottish Development Agency disposed of property holdings valued at almost £140 million. The disposals included sites with development potential and we are aware that the new private sector owners have undertaken or plan to undertake industrial developments on a number of these.

It seems likely that owner-occupiers whose businesses are prospering will continue to invest in new units and extensions and that other businesses will follow as the economy recovers. Interest in speculative building, which has been constrained by low rents and recent high interest rates, is expected to revive as interest rates fall and rents increase to match building costs.

Household Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many adults over 18 years of age there are in Scotland at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The population of Scotland aged 18 years and over at 30 June 1990 is provisionally estimated to have been 3,940,000.

Training Organisations

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many approved training organisations there are in Scotland; and what are their names.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There were 305 approved training organisations in Scotland as at 31 March 1991.

Information about the names of these approved training organisations is set out in the table.

Information about additions or deletions from this list after 31 March 1991 is a matter for Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and local enterprise companies.

Employment training

Workstart Ltd.
Grampian Regional Council
Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Board
JHP Training Ltd.
Aberdeen Enterprise Trust
Angus Training Group
Tayside Training Services
Balloch Trust Enterprise Ltd.
Highland Perth Development Co.
St. Andrew's Business Association Ltd.
Grampian Regional Council
Moray District Council
Voluntary Services Aberdeen
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce
Hotel and Catering Training Board
Mid Grampian Employment Training Ltd.
Sullivan Ltd.
Adult Community Training (Dundee) Ltd.
Dundee Skill Centre
Dundee and Tayside Chamber of Commerce Industry
Hotel and Catering Training Board
Agricultural Training Board
Tayside Training Company
Workstart Ltd.
Angus District Council
Dundee Cyrenians Wishart Centre
Dundee Enterprise Trust
Heat Development (Dundee) Ltd.
Wigtown District Council
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council Education Department
Garnock Workspace Ltd.
Best Ltd.
Radix Training Ltd.
Training Service Ayrshire Ltd.
Care Ayrshire Training Ltd.
Employment Training Sponsors (Scotland) Ltd.
Dumfries and Galloway R.C. Consortium
Galloway Training Organisation
Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Stevenston Enterprise Trust
Scottish Maritime Museum Trust
Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council
May-Tag Ltd.
Phoenix Employment Training Agency Ltd.
Skills Training Agency Irvine Skill Centre
Lanarkshire Training Agency Ltd.
RDL Professional Services Ltd.
East Kilbride Energy Project Ltd.
OSCC Training Services
Midscot Training Services
LAGDT Ltd.
Lanarkshire Enterprise Training Ltd.
Anne Rodger Training Salon
Springboard Lanarkshire Trust
Grand Metropolitan Commission Service Trust
RRW Association (Hamilton) Ltd.
Clydesdale District Council
Hamilton District Council
East Kilbride District Council

Scottish National Council of YMCA's
VAMW (VAMW) Training Ltd.
Bellshill Skill Centre (Astra Training Service)
Queens College Glasgow Enterprise Ltd.
Employment Training Scotland Ltd.
Hillington Skill Centre
Cobalt (UK) Ltd.
Strathclyde Training Agency (Grand Metropolitan)
Mill Training Ltd.
East End Management Agency Co. Ltd.
Henry Boot Training Ltd.
Glasgow Training Group (Motor Trade) Ltd.
MDS Management Services Ltd.
RRW Associates Ltd.
John Lawrence (Glasgow) Ltd.
Whiteleys College
Scottish Society Mentally Handicapped
University of Glasgow
Epilepsy Association of Scotland
Glasgow Zoo
Glasgow College Enterprise Ltd.
MI Technologies Ltd.
GRTA Training Ltd.
Poldrait Community Development
Sumlock Business Service (JHP Sumlock)
Fife Regional Council
Central Training
Oriel Training Services
Fife Chamber of Commerce
Fife Transport Training
Gangforth
JHP Training Ltd.
Skills Training Agency (ASTRA)
North East Fife District Council
Dunfermline District Council
Hotel and Catering Training Board
Central Scotland Chamber of Commerce
Agriculture Training Board
Kirkcaldy District Council
Newstart (Dunfermline) Ltd.
Training Craft Ltd.
Metcom Training Ltd.
Falkirk AT Enterprises (FATE) Ltd.
Tektra Management Agency Ltd.
Stirling Heatsave (Prospects)
Scottish Training Foundation
In Training Ltd.
Strathkelvin Enterprise Trust
RDL Professional Services
Tell Training Ltd.
Cumbernauld Development Corporation (TEC)
Prospects (Strathclyde) Ltd.
Intec (Inverclyde) Ltd.
RRW Associates (RDA) Ltd.
Business and Employment Skills Training (BEST)
Argyll and Bute District Council
Microcomputer Training Centre
The Training Agency Ltd.
Greater Edinburgh Training Association
Borders Regional Council
Grand Metropolitan Community Services Trust
Edinburgh District Engineering Training Association
Ness Training Ltd.
Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures
Training and Development (Edinburgh) Ltd.
Community and Business Training Ltd.
South of Scotland Group Training (Edinburgh) Ltd.
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
Scottish Centres
Instand Muscle (Scotland) Ltd.
Reid Consultants Ltd.
Trust Training
Apex Scotland
Borders Training Services
Livingston Development Corporation
University of Edinburgh
Wester Hailes Management Agency
Craigmillar Festival Society
Scottish Council for Spastics
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Cobalt (UK) Ltd.
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Community Industry
Orkney Islands Council
Support Training
Highland Training and Development
Caithness District Council
Westwood Training Services
McDermott Scotland Ltd.
Moray Firth Group Training Association
Simpson Dalgarno Partners
Support Training
Highland Training Ltd.
Ross and Cromarty District Council
Orkney Island Council
Highland Regional Council
Youth Training
Royal Bank of Scotland
Strathkelvin District Council
Stakis Hotels and Inns
Scottish Fish Merchants Joint GTA
University of Glasgow
Dunvegan Equestrian Training
Grampian Health Board
Cumbernauld College
Stanley Stores (Strathclyde) Ltd.
Grampian Pig Industry Training Group
Argyll and Bute District Council
BP Chemicals
Greater Glasgow Health Board School of Chiropody
Co-operative Wholesale Society Scottish Retail Group
Mackays Stores Ltd.
Cheynes
Renfrew District Council
Western Scottish Omnibuses
Eastern Scottish Omnibuses
Bluebird Northern
Lothian Health Board
Grampian Meat Processors Training Association
Legal Staff Training Centre
Angus District Council
Dumbarton District Council
Bearsden and Milngavie District Council
R. D. Locke
Suliven Ltd.
Angus Training Group
IBM (UK) Ltd.
Robson Associates
St. Andrews College
Glenrothes Development Corporation
Highland Youth Training
Huntly Rotary Club
Atholl Palace Hotel
Dundee Football Club plc
Agricultural Training Board
Radix Training (Scotland) Ltd.
Burr Brown Ltd.
Ethicon Ltd.
Lothian Regional Council
Edinburgh District Engineering Training Association
West Lothian ITEC
North East Fishermens Joint Group Training Association
Dundee College of Technology
TEKTRA
Bonnybridge Co-operative Society
Jaegar Tailoring Ltd.
Kenmore Riding School
Edinburgh District Council
Livingston Development Corporation
Scottish Business Services
Strathclyde Regional Council
Kilmarnock and Loudoun District Council
Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council
Victor Harris (Gentswear) Ltd.
Mackay Wilson Ltd.
Reid Consultants
NEI International Combustion
D. and M. Clark Ltd.
LETA Ltd.
West Lothian District Council

Safeline (Scotland) Ltd.
Napier College
Belford Travel Ltd.
S. M. Bayne and Co.
Buckhaven Parish Church
Marconi Instruments
Drumbrae Riding Centre
Ashbank Veterinary Centre
Anderson Strathclyde plc
City of Dundee District Council
Holms Greenock Ltd.
St. Brycedale Church
Aberdeen ITEC
GMCST Strathclyde Training Agency
Cumbernauld YMCA/YWCA
Heriot Watt University
Mentor Management Agency
Lander Alarms (Scotland) Ltd.
John McCormick and Co. Ltd.
Glasgow Retailers Training Association
Leyland Vehicles Ltd.
Charles McCrea
Irvine Development Corporation
G. and J. Johnston (Wemyss) Ltd.
J. Howden
The Post Office—Royal Mail Letters
Highland Association of Training Groups
Brown and Root—Wimpey Highland Fabricators
Motherwell District Council
Jack and Irving Professional Hair Design
Post Office (Aberdeen Letters District Office)
Post Office (Counters) Ltd.
North Lanarkshire ITEC
Monklands Personnel Services
British Aerospace plc
Kyle and Carrick District Council
Westwood Training Services
Digital Equipment (Scotland) Ltd.
Safe Group Training Ltd.
University of Edinburgh
Highland Health Board
Edinburgh Young Mans Christian Association
Canonmills Community Care
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc
Hamilton District Council
Hughes Microelectronics Ltd.
Cumming (Leven) Ltd.
Wm. Stephen (Bakers) Ltd.
Kirkcaldy and District Chamber of Commerce
John Brown Engineering Ltd.
Cumbernauld ITEC
Lomonside Stud
Mugdock Nursery School
Polaroid UK Ltd.
Eastwood District Council
SCOTMID Co-Op
Pasolds (Sunchild) Ltd.
Economic Forestry Ltd.
Link Scotland Ltd.
Forth Valley Health Board
Imperial Chemical Industries plc
Rolls Royce plc
John Smith and Son (Glasgow) Ltd.
Pointer Alarms Ltd.
Ferranti plc
Sterling Cars (Glasgow) Ltd.
City of Glasgow District Council
Strathclyde Catering Agency
Speyside Management Agency
Scottish Development Agency
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Tayside Road Transport Group Training
Shell Expro Technician Training
Link (Scotland) Ltd.
Roche Products Ltd.
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board
Tayside Training Services
Golfing and Outdoor Sports Training Association
Ayrshire Road Transport Group Training Association
Jaeger Tailoring
Ayrshire ITEC Ltd.
Nobels Explosives Company Ltd.
Haxton and Lang Ltd.
Cunninghame District Council
Kirkwood and Co.
Kramer Managing Agency
John M. Petson
McLellan Rubber Ltd.

TVEI

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland at 1990-91 prices, what is the expenditure on technical and vocational education initiative per school pupil in every year from 1985-86 to 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: TVEI can extend to every 14 to 18-year-old undergoing full-time education; it therefore includes students aged 16 to 18 attending colleges as well as school pupils in this age group. The education authorities have entered into and extended their participation in TVEI at varying rates over the years. Expenditure on a per school pupil basis would be available only at disproportionate cost. But spending is not necessarily geared to the number of students and any unit costs derived would not be meaningful. Total expenditure in Scotland on TVEI at 1990-91 prices is as follows:

Financial year	*£ at constant (1990-91) prices*
1985-86	3,087,131
1986-87	3,642,028
1987-88	7,624,724
1988-89	11,437,628
1989-90	12,631,256
1990-91	12,052,557
[1]1991-92	13,018,868

[1] Budget.

Employment Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of employment training trainees gained qualifications in Scotland in each year since employment training started.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not available in the form requested. Information about leavers is obtained through a survey which started in July 1990. Returns from leavers are incomplete. Data provided by this survey about the percentage of employment training trainees gaining a qualification or a credit toward one is set out in the table:

	Percentage of leavers between July 1980 to March 1990	*Percentage of leavers between April 1990 to October 1990*
Obtained qualification or credit	22	30
Awaiting results at time of survey	5	4

Public Drunkenness

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in respect of the decriminalisation of public drunkenness.

Mr. Lang: The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 gave the police power to take a drunken offender to a

designated place, as an alternative to arrest. The Government remain prepared to designate places as suitable for the care of drunken persons if the local statutory bodies so wish, and will in addition consider assisting with the capital costs of such projects. We have no proposals for further change to the criminal law in this regard.

Electoral Statistics

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland further to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *335*, when he expects to be able to publish the total electorate for each parliamentary constituency in Scotland, as at 16 February 1991; and when he intends to write to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total electorate for each parliamentary constituency in Scotland, as at 16 February 1991, is as follows:

Parliamentary Constituencies
Number of electors as at 16 February 1991

	Number
Scotland	3,914,590
Aberdeen North	60,219
Aberdeen South	58,681
Angus East	62,769
Argyll and Bute	48,068
Ayr	66,126
Banff and Buchan	64,136
Caithness and Sutherland	31,120
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	55,999
Central Fife	56,307
Clackmannan	49,140
Clydebank and Milngavie	47,861
Clydesdale	62,325
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	46,895
Cunninghame North	55,390
Cunninghame South	49,728
Dumbarton	57,730
Dumfries	61,235
Dundee East	58,935
Dundee West	60,218
Dunfermline East	50,369
Dunfermline West	51,186
East Kilbride	64,365
East Lothian	67,223
Eastwood	64,276
Edinburgh Central	56,048
Edinburgh East	46,800
Edinburgh Leith	57,415
Edinburgh Pentlands	56,453
Edinburgh South	61,682
Edinburgh West	60,556
Falkirk East	52,307
Falkirk West	50,479
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	54,855
Glasgow Cathcart	45,835
Glasgow Central	48,862
Glasgow Garscadden	42,270
Glasgow Govan	46,720
Glasgow Hillhead	56,003
Glasgow Maryhill	48,393
Glasgow Pollok	47,206
Glasgow Provan	37,838
Glasgow Rutherglen	53,777
Glasgow Shettleston	52,129
Glasgow Springburn	45,873
Gordon	78,438
Greenock and Port Glasgow	53,267
Hamilton	62,543
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	68,848
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	62,513
Kincardine and Deeside	65,660
Kirkcaldy	52,419
Linlithgow	61,812
Livingston	62,070
Midlothian	60,875
Monklands East	49,226
Monklands West	50,132
Moray	63,351
Motherwell North	58,215
Motherwell South	51,236
North East Fife	53,399
North Tayside	55,252
Orkney and Shetland	31,355
Paisley North	47,770
Paisley South	49,091
Perth and Kinross	65,135
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	58,460
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	55,174
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	43,758
Stirling	58,296
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	61,806
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	39,608
Western Isles	23,073

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how long it usually takes for information to be made publicly available as to whether a driver had been drinking alcohol before driving and being killed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information about whether a driver killed in a road accident had consumed alcohol would become publicly available only if evidence to that effect was led at subsequent court proceedings, including any fatal accident inquiry.

Alcohol-related Crime

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to include the specific statistical data of young persons under 18 years in each category of criminal convictions where alcohol was directly or indirectly involved in the crime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on the age of persons convicted of drink-related offences such as drink driving, drunkenness and liquor licensing offences are already available. It is not feasible to collect regular statistical information on convictions for offences where alcohol was indirectly involved.

Scottish Enterprise

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of launching Scottish Enterprise and its associated local enterprise companies.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Child Abuse

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many criminal convictions there have been for offences against children where children were abused by a parent in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the relationship between offenders and their victims is not collected centrally.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all crime statistics in each Scottish police authority, indicating each police division in order of crimes recorded for each category and give the percentage of increase in each category for every year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally. Information for police authority areas is given in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, copies of which are available in the Library.

Planning Procedures

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why he called in the planning consent for housing development at Fishers road, Port Seton; when he expects to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These applications were notified to my right hon. Friend by East Lothian district council, the local planning authority, because the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department had objected to the use for housing of prime quality agricultural land which had not been allocated for development in the relevant development plans. My right hon. Friend called in the applications to allow him to examine more closely the arguments for releasing the land put forward by the district and regional councils, which both supported the proposal. The protection of prime quality agricultural land from development that could be satisfactorily accommodated elsewhere remains an objective of Government policy.

I expect my right hon. Friend to issue his decision shortly and will ensure that the hon. Member receives a copy of the decision letter.

Self-employed People

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of people registered as self-employed in each Scottish parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest information available on the number of self-employed by parliamentary constituency comes from the 1981 census of population. This information is available from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Library staff are ready to assist in accessing the information if necessary.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost to date of the public affairs department of Grampian health board in preparing and issuing press releases giving publicity to NHS trust status for Aberdeen royal infirmary, Foresterhill site; and whether any costs will be charged directly to the group of senior managers and consultants who have decided to submit an application for NHS trust status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The work involved is a small part of the activities of the public affairs department of Grampian health board, the cost of which is not separately identifiable. Health boards have a clear duty to provide assistance to trust candidates and it is quite appropriate for Grampian health board to issue press releases on behalf of the Foresterhill project manager and his team.

Steel Industry

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has submitted additional evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on British Steel since 25 March.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On 27 March my right hon. Friend sent the Chairman of the Select Committee a copy of the final report on the Arthur D. Little study on the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland. My right hon. Friend has not submitted any evidence as such to the Committee since 25 March.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he last met the European Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, to discuss the steel industry; and if he will make a detailed statement on those discussions;

(2) if he will publish a minute of his meeting of 25 March with Sir Leon Brittan in so far as it concerns the Scottish steel industry;

(3) what information he received from Sir Leon Brittan on 25 March with regard to the European Commission's attitude to a potential sale of the Ravenscraig and Clydesdale steel works; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has received from the European Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, relating to statements made by Sir Robert Scholey concerning the attitude of the Commission to a possible sale of Ravenscraig and Clydesdale steel works.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend met Sir Leon on 25 March. It was a private meeting at which a number of subjects were dismissed and my right hon. Friend does not intend to make a detailed statement. But one of the subjects was steel; Sir Leon was able to confirm the Commission's view that any refusal by British Steel to offer the Ravenscraig hot strip mill for sale to a European competitor did not amount to abuse of a dominant position. The Commission was not able to take a view on any proposed sale of the mill until it received a specific application. However, as my right hon. Friend indicated to the Select Committee on 12 December, he is not aware of

any powers that the Commission has to prevent the mill from being sold and continuing in production within the Community.

Manufacturing Jobs

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many manufacturing jobs have been lost in Scotland in each year since 1989.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In December 1990, the latest available date, there were 401,100 employees in employment in manufacturing in Scotland. This represents a small fall of 1,300 (0·3 per cent.) compared with December 1989. Over the same period the number of manufacturing employees in Great Britain fell by 130,000 (2·5 per cent.).

Quarries

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the quarries in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is contained in the British Geological Surveys publication "Directory of Mines and Quarries", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Firearms

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been fined for illegal possession of firearms in Scotland in each year since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1989, 36 people were fined for offences under section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968 of illegal possession of a firearm. This figure excludes cases where illegal possession was not the main charge. Statistics for earlier years are not available.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria are used to decide whether any part of a motorway in Scotland should be provided with lighting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Lighting on motorways is normally provided when cost benefit calculations show that the benefits of a reduction in the number of night-time injury accidents would exceed the cost of its installation and subsequent maintenance. White-lining, cats' eyes and other markings are considered adequate in ordinary circumstances and generally, on motorways, lighting would afford only marginal road safety benefits which would not justify the cost.

The detailed criteria are set out in the Scottish Office Technical Memorandum SH6/89 ("Appraisal of New and Replacement Lighting on Trunk Roads and Trunk Road Motorways"), a copy of which I am arranging to be placed in the Library.

Environmental Health Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many environmental health officers have been employed by local authorities in Scotland for each year since 1980.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* This information is not held centrally.

SCOTLAND

Opencast Mining

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list all those areas in Scotland for which planning permission has been granted for opencast mining.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 April 1991]:* Under current legislation my right hon. Friend deals only with applications for opencast coal operations which come before him on appeal. Up to 29 February 1984 opencast coal site applications were the concern of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. Thereafter, under transitional arrangements, they transferred to my right hon. Friend until the local planning authorities assumed responsibility on 11 December 1987. I understand from British Coal (Scotland), which holds central records, that the details requested are as follows:

British coal sites

Site name	*Planning authority area*
1. Operational	
Darnconner	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Roverhill	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Chalmerston	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Horsecleugh	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Airdsgreen	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Libry Moor	Nithsdale District
Dalquhandy	Clydesdale District
Damside	Motherwell District
Blindwells	East Lothian District
Keirsbeath	Dunfermline District
Lambhill	Perth and Kinross District
2. Sites with planning permission (not operational)	
Westfield Link	Kirkcaldy District
Piperhill	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Polkemmet	West Lothian District

Other Sites

Site name	*Location*	*Planning authority area*
1. *Licensed and operational*		
Colinshiel	Armadale	West Lothian District
Common Farm	Lugar	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Craigmad	California	Falkirk District
Crawick	Crawick	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Croftangreen	East Kilbride	Hamilton District
Easter Baton	Shotts	Motherwell District
Humbug	Crossgates	Dunfermline District
Kitleyknowe	Carlops	Borders Region
Laigh Riggend	Wattston	Monklands District
Legbrannock Farm	Newhouse	Motherwell District
Nether Longford	Stoneyburn	West Lothian District
North Rhodens	Armadale	West Lothian District
Oakerdykes	Slammannan	Falkirk District
Parkwood West	Dollar	Clackmannan District
Sherriff Faulds	Hamilton	Hamilton District
South Landridge	Salsburgh	Monklands District
South Roughcastle	Falkirk	Falkirk District
Tippetcraig North	Slamannan	Falkirk District
Venture	Newmains	Motherwell District
Waterloo	Wishaw	Motherwell District
West Kelt	Banknock	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District
Woosethead	Newhouse	Motherwell District
2. *Sites believed to have planning permission but no licence*		
Harehill	Climpy	Clydesdale District
Garlaff Farm	Cumnock	Cumnock and Doon Valley District
North Monkland Junction	Slamannan	Falkirk District
Earnockmuir	Hamilton	Hamilton District
Airth Mains	Airth	Falkirk District

All information as at April 1991.

Police Operations

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been killed in police pursuits in Scotland *(a)* excluding and *(b)* including police officers in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 April 1991]:* Figures have been collected centrally only for the past four years. Since 1987 there have been six deaths—four in 1987, one in 1988, one in 1989 and none in 1990. All arose from incidents where a police vehicle was in direct or indirect pursuit of a fleeing suspect vehicle, or responding to an emergency call; none of those killed was a police officer.

HEALTH

Cancer Screening

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects a breast cancer screening programme to become operational in the South and East Cumbria health authorities' areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Screening will begin in South Cumbria at Barrow in June 1991 and in East Cumbria at Carlisle in September 1991. All eligible women should have received their first screening invitation by 1993.

General Practitioner Targets

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of general practitioners in Cleveland have achieved their targets for child immunisation, pre-school boosters and cervical cytology.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 31 March 1991 the following percentage of GPs in Cleveland qualified for target payments in respect of their achievements on 1 October 1990:

	Percentage of GPs achieving targets		
	Higher	*Lower*	*Total*
Childhood immunisation	61	32	93
Pre-school booster	41	37	78
Cervical cytology	83	17	100

I congratulate all those concerned on this excellent achievement.

Immunisation (Children)

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of children are immunised against diphtheria, whooping cough and measles in the South and East Cumbria health authorities' areas together with the corresponding averages for the Northern region, England, the United Kingdom as a whole and the World Health Organisation's target percentage.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional figures for 1989-90 are as follows:

	Diphtheria	*Whooping Cough*	*Measles (MMR[1])*
South Cumbria DHA	96	85	93
East Cumbria DHA	93	83	90
Northern RHA	90	79	86
England	89	78	84

[1] A combined vaccine against measles mumps and rubella (MMR) replaced measles-only vaccine from 1 October 1988.

It is not possible to provide an average percentage for the United Kingdom as a whole because of differences in methods of collecting the figures. The World Health Organisation's target for its European region was 90 per cent. coverage by 1990. More recent estimates, by the COVER—Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly—programme, managed by the communicable disease surveillance centre, show that by February 1991 the percentages for England had reached 90 for diphtheria (and tetanus and polio), 89 for MMR and 85 for whooping cough.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was spent by health authorities on the provision of speech therapy in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities spent £43·4 million on speech therapy services in 1989-90. This represents an increase in real terms of 138 per cent. since 1978-79.

Appointments

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what way appointments to health authorities are considered and made.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appoints the chairman and non-executive members of regional health authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. My right hon. Friend also appoints the chairmen of district health authorities and family health services authorities. Regional health authorities appoint the non-executive members of district health authorities and family health services authorities.

There is no statutory requirement to consult. Nominations of suitable people willing to serve on a health authority from various sources are always welcome and considered.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his assessment of the future role of the hearing therapist profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Hearing therapists play an important role in the rehabilitation and after-care of people with a hearing loss. Officials are in discussion with the British Society of Hearing Therapists and the national health service training directorate about the possibility of developing a national vocational qualification in hearing therapy.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how often the range of NHS hearing aids is reviewed; and what steps are taken to ensure that this range is updated in line with technical developments.

Mr. Dorrell: Contracts for the standard range of NHS hearing aids are normally awarded for one or two year periods and are then subject to review and re-tender. Technical developments are kept under continuing review, having regard to clinical suitability, reliability and cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by his Department to regional health authorities to assist them with drawing up their budget allocation for hearing aids and for setting their staffing levels within the audiology service.

Mr. Dorrell: None. It is for health authorities to allocate resources for the purchase of hearing aids and audiology services in the light of local needs.

Norwich DHA

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the expenditure by Norwich district health authority for the latest available year on the general practitioner contract, general practitioner fund holders, the hospital's internal market and the resource management initiative.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is not held centrally in the form requested.

In 1989-90 the total revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services within Norwich district health authority was £122,580,000 of which expenditure on hospital services amounted to £95,948,000.

The East Anglian regional health authority received £158,000 of central funds in 1990-91 to support resource management projects within Norwich district health authority.

The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Colin Walker, the chairman of East Anglian regional health authority, for details of expenditure on general practitioner contracts and general practitioner fund holders.

Long-stay Patients

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has any plans to prevent the transfer by district health authorities of financial responsibility for the long-stay care of frail, elderly patients which occurs when such patients are discharged from long-stay hospital beds to private nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department's guidance on hospital discharge procedures requires a patient who is to be discharged to a private nursing home to be notified in writing whether or not the health authority will meet the fees of the home under a contractual arrangement. It also makes it clear that no one should be unwillingly discharged to such care if it means that he, she or a relative will be personally responsible for the home's charges.

United Kingdom Residents from Mauritius

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people from the island of Mauritius resided in the United Kingdom at the last available date.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated number of people born in Mauritius but resident in the United Kingdom is 22,000. This estimate has been derived by averaging the results of the 1987, 1988, and 1989 labour force surveys.

TRANSPORT

Fenchurch Street Rail Service

12. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals from British Rail to reduce the load factor on peak-time trains on the Fenchurch Street line to 100 per cent.

Mr. Freeman: The load factor objective for rolling stock of the type operated on the Fenchurch Street line is 110 per cent. with no standing over 20 minutes except through choice. Journeys to Fenchurch Street from Basildon take more than 20 minutes, so the load factor objective is, therefore, already 100 per cent. from there. We have received no proposals from British Rail to reduce the target to 100 per cent. throughout Network SouthEast.

Motorways

13. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to extend the motorway network.

Mr. Chope: Our plans for extending the motorway network were set out in "Trunk Roads England into the 1990s" published in February last year. Subsequent proposals to upgrade the A1 to motorway status from the M25 to Tyneside were announced in July 1990.

Road Improvements, Devon

14. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what major road improvements he plans for north Devon in co-operation with Devon county council during the next five years.

Mr. Chope: The 47-mile long north Devon link road was completed in 1989 at a cost of £47 million and the Barnstaple and Bideford bypasses were completed in 1987 and 1989 at a cost of £21 million and £17 million respectively.

The level of investment in roads in north Devon in the next five years will not be as great, but schemes put forward by Devon county council for transport supplementary grant will be considered on their merits.

London Assessment Studies

15. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give starting dates for the public transport schemes in the London assessment studies that he intends should proceed.

Mr. Freeman: Subject to the passage of relevant legislation, we hope that construction of the Lewisham extension of the Docklands light railway will begin in 1992 and construction of the east-west crossrail in 1993.

Other schemes recommended in the assessment studies may be brought forward later. The alignment of the Chelsea-Hackney underground line has already been safeguarded.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the total cost to his Department of the work involved in the western environmental improvement route assessment study;

(2) what was the total cost to his Department of the work involved in the South London assessment study; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what was the total cost to his Department of the work involved in the South Circular assessment study; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what was the total cost to his Department of the work involved in the west London assessment study; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what was the total cost to his Department of the work involved in the east London assessment study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The cost of the four London assessment studies was:

	£ million
South Circular	2·9
South London	3·4
West London	2·7
East London	3·0

The western environmental improvement route was a scheme in the national road programme. It had reached the public consultation stage, at a study cost of £1·1 million. The announcement of decisions on the assessment studies indicated that a number of the most important public transport schemes identified in the studies were under active consideration, that it had been decided not to proceed with any of the major road schemes recommended by consultants, but that the limited road improvements

specified would be pursued. Since then Bills to authorise east-west crossrail and the extension of the Docklands light railway to Lewisham have been announced, and the line of the Chelsea-Hackney line has been safeguarded. The limited road improvements specified have been subject to initial appraisal and an announcement will be made shortly.

Prestwick Airport

16. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with BAA about the future of Prestwick airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: Prestwick airport is one of a number of subjects which my right hon. and learned Friend has discussed with the senior management of BAA in recent months.

London Orbital Motorway

17. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for an additional outer London orbital motorway.

Mr. Chope: None.

Buses, London

18. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the projected trend in bus usage in London over the next two years.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that London Transport expects little overall change in bus usage in London over the next two years. The Government have issued a consultation paper on the deregulation of the provision of bus services in London and believe that such deregulation offers the best opportunity for increasing patronage in the longer term.

Rail Privatisation

19. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of British Rail regularly, to discuss a variety of issues.

British Rail Investment

20. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it is policy to make approval for any BR investment proposals conditional upon orders being placed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's purchasing policy is to obtain the best overall value for money through competition. About 95 per cent. of British Rail's requirements for supplies and services are currently ordered within the United Kingdom. Decisions on the placing of railway orders are commercial matters for British Rail and it would be inappropriate for Government approvals of British Rail investment proposals to be conditional on orders being placed in the home market.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the 1991, 1992 and 1993 amount of public funds given to British Rail to improve passenger and goods access from Scotland to the continent via the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail plans to invest up to £1·4 billion on works linked to the channel tunnel in this financial year and the next two. BR's investment is financed from a combination of internal and external finance, including borrowing. Section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act forbids Government subsidy for international rail services.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out figures for rail investment, in cash and real terms, for the last 20 years, and the estimate for next year.

Mr. Freeman: Actual figures up to 1990-91 are listed in the table:

Rail Investment

Year	*Cash £ million*	*1990-91 Prices £ million*
1970	48	329
1971	59	371
1972	73	424
1973	81	440
1974	103	468
1975	157	568
1976	176	561
1977	193	541
1978	208	526
1979	248	537
1980	304	556
1981	277	462
1982	243	379
1983	252	375
[1]1984-85	280	397
1985-86	399	536
1986-87	399	519
1987-88	526	648
1988-89	545	626
1989-90	696	752
1990-91	[2]822	822

[1] 12 month equivalent.
[2] Estimated outturn.
The definition of rail investment includes investment in Freightliners, British Rail Maintenance Ltd. and British Rail Engineering Ltd. but excludes the laying of continuous welded track which BR do not now classify as investment.

Plans for this financial year and the next two—1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94—are given in the departmental report 1991 (Cm. 1507).

Motorway Lighting

21. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for improving and extending the lighting on the M4 and other motorways.

Mr. Chope: The lighting requirements on all motorways in England, including the M4, are kept under continuous review. Plans are in hand for more lighting on the M1, M5, M20, M40, M56 and on the M62. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for the M4 motorway in Wales.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his most recent estimate of the potential safety improvements and increased capacity of motorways resulting from the installation of lighting.

Mr. Chope: Research in this country and elsewhere has shown that the average reduction in night-time accidents attributable to road lighting is about 30 per cent. There is, however, substantial variation between locations, depending on type of road and other factors. Evidence is not available on the effect of lighting on motorway capacity.

Rail Services (South-East)

22. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss rail services in the south-east.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend and I frequently discuss NSE services with the chairman of British Rail.

London Regional Transport

23. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will increase the funding for London Regional Transport for 1991-92.

Mr. Freeman: The Government are reviewing the level of funding required by London Transport in 1991-92. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers travelled on London Transport on average *(a)* in 1990, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Passenger journeys on London Transport

million

Year	*Underground*	*Buses*[1]	*Docklands Light Railway*
1975	601	1,455	Nil
1985	740	1,154	Nil
1990	775	1,220	8·2

[1]Including tendered services.

London Underground (Crime)

24. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the latest figures for violent crimes on the London Underground.

Mr. Freeman: I was pleased to announce on 20 March that violent crime on London Underground has been reduced for the third successive year. In 1990, there were 1,341 violent crimes recorded on the underground—a reduction of 23 per cent. on the previous year—while passengers made some 800 million journeys.

A2 Roadworks

23. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the interruption of traffic during the roadworks on the A2 from the M2 to London, since 1990.

Mr. Chope: The roadworks concerned are part of a phased programme of contracts to carry out essential major maintenance and provide hard shoulders along the whole of the A2 trunk road in north-west Kent between the London boundary and the M2 Motorway.

I regret that works of this magnitude on such a heavily trafficked road inevitably cause some degree of disturbance. But my Department will continue to take all practicable measures to keep inconvenience and delay to a minimum, compatible with the safety both of the public and the road operatives.

Channel Tunnel

26. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received from British Rail any proposals on the location of the recent London terminus for the channel tunnel, in the light of the Government's declared commitment to the Chelsea-Hackney crossrail.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's study of alternative routes for a high-speed rail link to the channel tunnel includes the siting of a second London terminal. We expect to receive the board's proposals soon.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss a channel tunnel freight terminal in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 March.

East Coast Motorway

27. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to consider the possible environmental consequences of the construction of the proposed east coast motorway.

Mr. Chope: Proposals for an east coast motorway were the subject of a feasibility study commissioned by a consortium of local authorities and private sector organisations. This Department was not involved.

Airlines

28. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy towards maintaining a multi-airline industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government's policy is to promote free and fair competition in aviation, so that there remains a healthy, competitive airline industry in the United Kingdom which meets the needs of users. The market is diverse enough to sustain a variety of United Kingdom-based carriers as well as their foreign competitors.

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many awards have been won by the advertising campaign to reduce drink driving.

Mr. Chope: The Christmas 1990 campaign won two major awards last week in the British television advertising awards 1991. Twelve other major awards have been won by the "Drinking and Driving Wrecks Lives" campaign since 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long it usually takes for information to be made publicly available as to whether a driver had been drinking alcohol before driving and being killed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

It is possible for information about whether a driver killed in a road accident had consumed alcohol to become publicly available in a variety of circumstances, for example, during criminal proceedings against someone else involved in the same accident. But such information is most likely to emerge from any publicity given to a coroners' inquest into the death of the driver if the coroner, who is an independent judicial officer, admits evidence of this nature at the hearing. The date of any inquest is a matter for the coroner to decide and the length of time between the death and the inquest will vary according to the circumstances of each individual case.

A66

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a time scale for all the improvements to the A66 Scotch Corner-Penrith road which he had in mind.

Mr. Chope: There are three schemes in the road programme for the A66 between Scotch Corner and Penrith with a current timetable as follows:

Bowes to County Boundary
Under construction
Expected completion—Autumn 1992

Stainsmore to Banksgate
Order Publication—Summer 1991
Start of Works—Spring 1993

Stainburn to Great Clifton
Order Publication—Summer 1992
Start of Works—Summer 1994

Environmental Assessment Studies

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to update the manual of environmental appraisal to include the issues raised by the European Community's directive on environmental assessment; and if he intends to consult outside organisations on this matter.

Mr. Chope: It is a measure of the comprehensiveness of the manual of environmental appraisal that no changes were necessary to implement in full the European Council directive on environmental assessment (85/337/EEC).

A13

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are for changes to the A13 highway; and whether there will be an opportunity for the public to object and a public inquiry held into any of its stages.

Mr. Chope: A number of improvements are under way or planned for the A13 trunk road. These are listed in the table. Where there is a need for orders under the Highways Act or legislation relating to compulsory purchase the public will have the opportunity to object after draft orders are published. Depending on the status, number and content of those objections the Secretary of State will decide whether to hold a public inquiry.

Improvements to A13 trunk road

	Nature of improvement	
A13/Butcher Row	Junction improvement	—
A13/West India Dock Road (Interim)	Junction improvement	—
A13/West India Dock Road (Final)	Junction improvement	Side Roads/CP0
A13/Blackwall Tunnel Cotton Street	Junction improvement	CPO
A13/Leamouth Road	Junction improvement/Widening	—
A13/Ironbridge/Canning Town Flyover	Widening/New Junction	Line/Side Roads Orders/CPO
A13/A112 Prince Regent Lane	Junction improvement	Line/Side Roads Orders/CPO Exchange Land Certificate
A13//A117 Woolwich Manor Way	Junction improvement	Line/Side Roads Orders/CPO Exchange Land Certificate
A13/Movers Lane	Junction improvement	Line/Side Roads Orders/CPO
A13/West of Heathrow to Mar Dyke	New Trunk Road	Line/Side Roads Orders/CPO/ Detrunking

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* all road works under way and which will be undertaken on the A13 Commercial road and East India Dock road between Aldgate and Canning Town until the end of 1991; and what are the estimated consequential minimum flows of traffic in each direction in passenger car units per hour for each phase of the works.

Mr. Chope: The A13 Commercial road from Aldgate to Butcher Row is the responsibility of the London borough of Tower Hamlets. The Department has two schemes under way this year on the A13 between Butcher Row and Canning Town. One is at the junction with West India Dock road where there are five remaining works phases. A minimum of one lane in each direction will be kept open, widening to two lanes at the approaches to the traffic signals. The second is at Leamouth road which has two remaining works phases with a minimum of two lanes in each direction. The capacity of a lane under these circumstances is about 1,500 passenger car units per hour, although these figures are likely to be constrained by the junctions. There will be three areas of resurfacing with renewal of footways and other essential maintenance works including work by statutory undertakers which may affect traffic flows from time to time.

Tolls

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all tolls charged on roads within the responsibility of his Department, and the recipients of the income.

Mr. Chope: The only tolled facility for which the Department is entirely responsible is the Severn bridge on the M4. Tolls are £1 for cars and £2 for HGVs. The income accrues to the Exchequer.

There are other tolled crossings, for which the Department is not responsible, which link trunk roads or motorways. They are:

	Tolls		
Location	*Car*	*HGV*	*Recipient of toll income*
Dartford Tunnels (A282/M25)	80p	£2·10	Dartford River Crossing Ltd.
Humber Bridge (A15)	£1·60	£6·50—£10·90	Humber Bridge Board
Tyne Tunnel (A1)	50p	£1·00	Tyne and Wear PTA
Tamar Bridge (A38)	40p	£1·35—£1·80	Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee
Selby Bridge (A19—A63)	7p	[1]6p	Company of Proprietors of Selby Bridge
Dunham Bridge (A57)	15p	10p per axle	Dunham Bridge Company

[1]per tonne (gross weight)

Jubilee Line

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total level of grant from his Department to London Transport for the Jubilee line extension; if he will list its distribution by year; and for each year what percentage it is of the total London Transport grant allocation.

Mr. Freeman: In Common with other public expenditure, the grant to be paid to LT is determined only for a three-year forward period. Figures have therefore only been settled for the years up to 1993-94. These are as follows:

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
£ million	40	121	251	376
Percentage of total grant to LT	7	18	33	36

Trunk Roads

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whom he intends to consult on the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report before formulating policies to implement any recommendations.

Mr. Chope: The Department will consult interested parties before implementing major changes to the values or underlying principle of the inputs to trunk road scheme appraisal. SACTRA itself has already consulted widely in preparing its report on environmental assessment.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment to report on its review of environmental evaluation; and if he will give the working title and the anticipated title of the report.

Mr. Chope: The report from SACTRA is now not expected until late summer. The title of the report has not been decided.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking in respect of the report of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment on the prospect of nature conservation in the appraisal of trunk roads.

Mr. Chope: The report from SACTRA has not yet been received and is now not expected until late summer.

M66

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there will be a further public inquiry into the M66 line order at the M66/A664 interchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Yes. While the route of the motorway is fixed a new connecting roads order for the M66/A664 junction was published last January. The inquiry will provide an opportunity for interested persons to comment on or object to those proposals.

Drivers (Qualifying Age)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change the qualifying age to enable people to drive a motor vehicle in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chope: No.

St John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities he has made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Chope: My Department is in contact with the St. John Ambulance Brigade and will be giving publicity to the "Over to you, John" appeal through its in-house journal.

Disabled People

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reports he has received recently from the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee; and what response he has made to them.

Mr. Freeman: I have received two reports this year. "Information and Mobility" presents the findings of a public hearing held by the committee in March 1990 on the importance of information and communications in enabling disabled people to travel. The second report, "Mobility for Britain's Entire Population", develops the committee's views on future policy direction towards achieving a public transport system which is fully accessible to disabled people.

These latest reports, together with earlier reports from the committee, are being studied and will contribute significantly to my Department's thinking in this area.

Highway Code

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he plans to introduce to inform drivers of the contents of the Highway Code.

Mr. Chope: It is the responsibility of all road users to be aware of the contents of the Highway Code. The code is already widely available through HMSO, booksellers and an increasing number of other retail outlets. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency also supplies copies on request to applicants for provisional driving licences. My Department takes every opportunity to promote increased public awareness of the safety measures in the code.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on the basis of the toll assumptions in the table in clause 9 of the Severn Bridges Bill, when payment for the present Severn bridge will be completed and what will be the assumed gross income in the final year; and on the basis of the same table, what is the assumed income of the present bridge in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Chope: I very much regret that due to an administrative error there was a delay in responding to the right hon. Member's earlier questions on this subject. I can now refer him to the answer I gave him on 18 April, columns *214-15*.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he is taking to raise the level of public awareness of the changes to the law resulting from regulations coming into force on 1 October 1990 concerning the supervision of learner drivers;

(2) what steps he is taking to monitor public awareness of the changes to the law resulting from regulations coming into force on 1 October 1990 concerning the supervision of learner drivers.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 16 April 1991]:* The regulations were drawn up after extensive consultation, and three separate press notices were issued to publicise their introduction, which were widely reported.

In addition, details of the new qualifying conditions for supervising drivers are set out in a leaflet which is issued with all new provisional driving licences. The leaflet stresses that it is the responsibility of the learner driver to ensure that the supervising driver is appropriately qualified and points out that it is an offence for both parties if those conditions are not met.

The new requirement is also set out on the provisional licence itself, and described in the guide for learner drivers, "Your Driving Test", published by the Driving Standards Agency.

M20

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he now has an opening date for the M20 motorway Ashford to Hollingbourne section.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 April 1991]:* The M20 motorway between Maidstone and Ashford is being built under two contracts. The first is due for completion this month, but cannot be opened until the second contract is ready. The second contract is due for completion in July, but work is ahead of programme and I now hope that it will be possible for the road to be opened before July.

I shall inform my hon. Friend as soon as an opening date is fixed.

ENVIRONMENT

Lambeth Council

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the current debts for rent and rates owed to Lambeth council which have not been written off;

(2) what part of the budget of Lambeth council of £315·5 million for 1991-92 represents payment of interest on moneys borrowed against *(a)* rent arrears and *(b)* rate and poll tax arrears;

(3) how much money is currently borrowed by Lambeth council against *(a)* rent arrears and *(b)* rate and poll tax arrears and exclusive of the additional sums which he has permitted Lambeth to borrow.

Mr. Key: On the latest information provided to my Department by the council, Lambeth is owed £28·9 million in respect of rents, £28·0 million in respect of domestic rates and £13·7 million in respect of business rates.

It is not possible to provide the further information requested by the hon. Member since local authority debt is managed corporately and loans are not raised against particular assets.

Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to press for existing EC directives on sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide to be revised to reflect World Health Organisation guidelines.

Mr. Baldry: The preambles to the present directives make it clear that the limit values for which they provide are based on work by the World Health Organisation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many nitrogen oxide monitoring stations there are in the United Kingdom; what is the average number of such stations amongst the EC nations; and how many such stations there are in *(a)* Holland and *(b)* Japan.

Mr. Baldry: My Department funds 12 nitrogen oxide samplers in the United Kingdom, seven of which are for the purposes of the European directive on nitrogen dioxide. The number of directive sites in other EC countries is as follows:

	Number
Belgium	21
Germany	200
Denmark	11
Spain	15
France	85
Greece	33
Ireland	6
Italy	34
Luxembourg	4

	Number
Netherlands	53
Portugal	17

I understand that in 1989 there were 1,337 nitrogen oxide monitoring sites in Japan.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites used for the monitoring of sulphur dioxide *(a)* in 1982 and *(b)* in 1991.

Mr. Baldry: I am arranging for a list of these sites to be placed in the Library.

Estate Action Schemes

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been spent each year since 1987 under the estate action scheme in *(a)* Stockton, *(b)* Middlesbrough and *(c)* Hartlepool; and how many dwellings have been improved or created.

Mr. Yeo: The table shows the amounts approved by the Department under the estate action scheme in each financial year since 1986-87 in respect of Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool.

	Stockton £	*Middlesbrough* £	*Hartlepool* £
1986-87	341,243	424,500	562,271
1987-88	186,895	181,118	842,240
1988-89	472,000	810,117	1,546,107
1989-90	1,593,549	272,026	2,069,192
1990-91	764,019	221,189	1,059,150
Total	3,357,706	1,908,950	6,078,960

As a result of these approvals a total of 2,212 dwellings have been improved in the three local authority areas concerned.

The figures in the table represent a high proportion of the total expenditure on estate action schemes. They were supplemented by resources from the authorities' mainstream housing investment programme. It will take a little time to establish the total expenditure on these schemes and I will write to my hon. Friend when I have full details.

Smoke Control Areas

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many successful prosecutions there have been of suppliers of unauthorised petroleum coke in smoke control areas throughout the United Kingdom in each year since 1987; and if he will identify the local authority area and the name of the supplier.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available to my Department.

Advice Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether standard spending assessments take account of the provision of advice services and section 38 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mr. Portillo: Provision for these services up to a standard level is covered by the all other services element of standard spending assessments.

Trade in Wildlife

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are currently being examined in order to impose and extend the controls on the import of species which are unlikely to survive in captivity.

Mr. Baldry: Discussions are taking place in the European Community on a proposed regulation to improve and extend the controls on trade in wildlife. This includes provisions that would enable restrictions to be imposed on the import of species which are unlikely to survive shipment or captivity. A draft of the regulation is expected to be published for consultation early in the summer.

Travelling Fairs

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the outcome of his consultations with local authorities on travelling fairs;

(2) what recent representations he has received from the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain on problems associated with travelling fair grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I have received no representations from the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain about the problems associated with travelling fair grounds, nor have I consulted local authorities about travelling fairs. However, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside on 20 December, column *273*, about sites from which travelling showpeople base their activities. My officials have prepared some draft planning policy guidance about these sites, and invited comments from the Showmen's Guild. When we have these comments we intend to issue a revised draft for public consultation, involving the local authority associations.

Poll Tax

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will examine all outstanding poll tax cases currently the subject of prosecution before the courts with respect to reviewing continuation of the prosecutions.

Mr. Key: No. Community charge payers are under an obligation to pay their charge and local authorities must make all reasonable efforts to recover the charge from those who have not paid.

Parks Conference

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution he is making to the fourth international parks conference in Caracas in 1992.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's statutory advisor, the Countryside Commission for England, intends to submit a number of papers to the organisers, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, for possible inclusion in the programme of the fourth world congress on national parks and protected areas. It is for the IUCN to determine the final programme.

Kuwait (Pollution)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the results to be available of the UNEP environmental assessment in relation to the effect of hydrocarbons in the food chain and elsewhere in Kuwait; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 17 April, *Official Report*, c. *183*. UNEP estimates that the completion date for its survey and assessment work is on environmental damage generally likely to be 15 July 1991.

UN Conference on the Environment and Development

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for consultations in the preparatory process to the United Nations conference on the environment and development which is due to be held in Brazil in 1992.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 April 1991]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside on 10 December to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), c. *266*.

Water Supplies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require the water companies to enable customers who wish to do so to spread their payments over monthly periods of at least 10 months.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 19 April 1991]:* No. Companies are already required by condition G of their individual instruments of appointment to submit to the Director General of Water Services for approval a copy of a code of practice for customers, describing arrangements for the payment of bills by domestic customers including information about payment by instalments and budget plans.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek a reduction in, or removal of, the EC co-responsibility levy on milk.

Mr. Curry: The Government have always opposed the co-responsibility levy and will continue to press for its abolition provided that the cost is offset by price cuts on a sufficient scale.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there is a minimum retail price per pint for the sale of liquid milk to the consumer.

Mr. Gummer: No. Statutory controls over the retail price of milk ceased with effect from 1 January 1985.

Whaling

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to promote within the European Economic Community a total ban on commercial and scientific whaling.

Mr. Curry: The European Community has not assumed responsibility for policy on whaling, but no whaling, whether commercial or scientific, is believed to take place in Community waters. Further, the Community prohibits trade in whale products through its implementation of the convention on international trade in endangered species. We will continue to press within the International Whaling Commission for the conservation of whales and for scientific research to be carried out by non-lethal methods wherever possible.

Honey

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a study of the problem of residues, brought about by the use of acaracides in the treatment of honey bees, in imported and home-produced honey, and the related effect of herbicides.

Mr. Maclean: Supplies of imported and home-produced honey are sampled for analysis for the presence of the antimicrobial compound fumagillin and for various pesticides. We have no plans at present to extend this testing to include acaracides and herbicides but will keep the situation under review.

Farm Waste

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he hopes to introduce regulations to control the disposal of farm wastes, to replace the code of good agricultural practice.

Mr. Curry: We have no plans to do so. The unconsented pollution of controlled waters, whether from farm wastes or any other cause, is already an offence under section 107 of the Water Act 1989. The Government recently increased from £2,000 to £20,000 the maximum fine applicable in magistrates courts for such offences. The forthcoming new code of good agricultural practice for the protection of water will give detailed practical advice to farmers on how to avoid pollution. Failure to comply with it could be taken into account in any legal proceedings for a pollution offence.

Water Pollution

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the long-term damage to wildlife of lochs, streams, and rivers caused by chronic pollution from agricultural runoff, after slurry has been spread on fields.

Mr. Curry: Land run-off accounts for approximately 10 per cent. of serious pollution incidents caused by agriculture, and about 2 per cent. of serious incidents from all causes. The Department is helping to support a research project designed to provide detailed information on the effect of land use on river quality and fish populations in the River Torridge catchment. We share the concern to reduce farm pollution of watercourses and the Government have introduced a wide range of measures designed to help achieve this.

Organophosphorous Sheep Dip

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep carcases were tested in the past five years for organophosphates residues, expressed as a percentage of all sheep slaughtered.

Mr. Curry: In the five years 1986-90, 889 sheep carcases were tested for organophosphate residues which represents a little over 0·001 per cent. of the number slaughtered but about 1 per cent. of the number of sheep flocks in the United Kingdom. No levels hazardous to human health have been found, but should that situation change a more intensive sampling regime would be introduced.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigations he is conducting into possible contamination by organophosphates of water supplies, sheepmeat and farm and market workers.

Mr. Maclean: Organophosphorus pesticides generally decompose rapidly within the environment and are not normally expected to reach water. All water companies have been asked to consult ADAS about the use of all pesticides within their water supply areas. Companies have drawn up lists for monitoring purposes of those pesticides which are likely to reach water supplies. In some areas this list includes organophosphorus pesticides. The results of monitoring have not indicated problems with these pesticides.

Monitoring for organophosphorus residues in United Kingdom-produced sheepmeat is carried out under the national surveillance scheme. The results for 1989 are included in the recently published annual report of the veterinary medicines directorate. No residues were found above the advisory maximum limit.

The Health and Safety Executive has commissioned a three-year research project into the frequency and severity of acute pesticide poisoning incidents, including organophosphorus and whether they can result in long-term health effects. The executive also surveyed 25 sheep dipping sites during 1990 to ascertain the health effects of exposure to sheep dips and in particular to those containing organophosphorus.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is planning to introduce new regulations or recommendations on the use and disposal of sheep dip.

Mr. Maclean: It is already an offence under the Water Act 1989 to pollute a watercourse. In 1988 and 1989 four farmers were prosecuted for sheep dip pollution incidents. No further regulations are planned.

Under the Medicines Act 1968, sheep dip products must be licensed before they can be marketed. Existing licensed sheep dip products are currently subject to review by scientists in the veterinary medicines directorate to ensure that the most up-to-date safety standards apply. The review must be completed this year under EC rules. Any sheep dip products which fail to meet these standards will have their licences revoked.

New guidance notes on disposal are currently being prepared by the VMD and will be available in July. A code of good agricultural practice for the protection of water is also being prepared by the Ministry, which will include advice about use and disposal of sheep dip. This will also be published in July.

Animals (Live Exports)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further steps are being taken to improve the conditions of animals who are sent to the continent as live exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Discussions are continuing on Commission proposals for a new Community regulation on protection of animals during transport. The Government are pressing for the adoption of high welfare standards for all transport of animals in the Community.

Fishing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels in each port in England have been put up for sale since the introduction of the EC fishing regulations that came into force this year.

Mr. Curry: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 23 January at column *245*.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 18 April.

Mr. Curry: I attended the EC Council of Fisheries Ministers in Luxembourg on 18 April 1991 with Lord Strathclyde, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office.

The Council had an exchange of views on the Commission's communication about the common fisheries policy. There was general recognition that fishing effort against many stocks needs to be reduced. I made it clear that the basic framework of the common fisheries policy is sound, but some improvements are needed. In particular total allowable catches and quotas, together with the principle of relative stability, are a central element, but need better support from improved technical conservation measures and enforcement. The Commission will now prepare by the end of this year the report provided for in the basic CFP regulation 170/83.

The Council had a further discussion of the Commission's proposals for technical conservation measures. The Council will return to this issue at its next meeting in July.

Biodiversity Convention

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his policy on the Biodiversity convention being prepared for the United Nations conference on Environment and Development being held in Rio De Janeiro in June 1992.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 4.26 of the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", (Cmnd. 1200), confirming the Government's support for international efforts led by the United Nations Environment Programme to agree a global convention for the conservation of biological diversity. It is intended that the convention should be ready for signing during the 1992 conference.

Flooding

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what local authority representations he has had in the last two years about the way his Department funds and administers sea defence, coast protection and river flooding schemes; what changes he has made to his policy in the past two years; and if he will now reconsider his current policy.

Mr. Curry: During the past two years, we have received 40 representations from local authorities about the funding and administration of sea defence, coast protection and river flooding schemes. These were primarily about the availability of capital allocation or supplementary credit approvals for schemes; changes to the method of calculating the grant rate for coast protection work which was made necessary because of the changes to the system of financing of local authorities; general questions about the approval and progress of schemes; and about the level and availability of grant. There have been no changes in the policy over the last two years with regard to either the funding or administration of such schemes and we have no plans to make changes in the foreseeable future. We have continued to increase the grant available for flood and coastal defence work, and over the period from 1989-90 to 1993-94 provision will have increased by nearly 80 per cent. from £35·9 million to £63·4 million.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now bring forward proposals to enable one authority to be responsible for sea defence and coast protection and river flooding prevention to replace the existing multi-authority system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The present arrangements, which take full advantage of local knowledge, are well understood by the authorities concerned. The arrangements have worked well over time and I see no reason to change them.

Artificial Reef

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evaluation his Department has made of the National Rivers Authority scheme to build an artificial reef off the shore off the north Norfolk coast; and what lessons he expects from the scheme proposals to be applicable to the remaining Norfolk and whole of Suffolk coastlines.

Mr. Curry: The National Rivers Authority's proposals to build an offshore reef to protect the Happisburgh to Winterton frontage of the north Norfolk coast are expected to be submitted to our engineers early in May. The Department has been kept fully informed of developments on the scheme as the NRA's consultants have progressed the design of the scheme, in the light of the knowledge generated by the east coast management study. Our normal technical appraisal of the proposals for grant purposes can be carried out only once the scheme has been received, so it is too early to reach any firm conclusions about the proposals, or to make an assessment of whether it would be possible to apply a similar approach to the remaining Norfolk and Suffolk coastline.

EMPLOYMENT

Ex-offenders (Training)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is reconsidering the methods of funding to voluntary organisations to ensure the provision of sufficient special needs training for ex-offenders; and whether he intends to make more funds available for such training.

Mr. Jackson: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Clerical Work, London

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has of the change in employment opportunities in the central London clerical field *(a)* over the past two years and *(b)* over the next two years.

Mr. Jackson: In January 1991, at jobcentres in inner London, there were 668 unfilled job vacancies in the clerical and machine operators occupational class. This compares with 2,943 in January 1989. The Department does not forecast vacancy figures.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many long-term unemployed are registered in the Peterlee and Seaham areas; and what the numbers were year by year since 1987.

Mr. Jackson: The information is available in the Library, and is shown in the table which gives the number of claimants in the Peterlee and Seaham jobcentres areas who were unemployed for at least a year as at January 1987 and each subsequent January.

Date	*Total*
Peterlee jobcentre area	
January 1987	1,454
January 1988	1,326
January 1989	892
January 1990	446
January 1991	331
Seaham jobcentre area	
January 1987	1,000
January 1988	907
January 1989	758
January 1990	412
January 1991	331

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees in employment training are *(a)* under 25 years and *(b)* in each five year age range between 26 and 65 years.

Mr. Jackson: Thirty-five per cent. of trainees in employment-training were under 25 years of age at 31 October 1990, the latest date for which data are available. The other information is not available in the form required, except at disproportionate cost.

Unemployed Claimants, London

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of unemployed claimants in *(a)* London Docklands, *(b)* the London borough of Newham, *(c)* the London borough of Southwark and *(d)* the London borough of Tower Hamlets in each year since 1981, as a percentage of unemployed claimants in Greater London.

Mr. Jackson: The information, available from June 1983, can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library.

Training Schemes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that persons on Government training schemes will continue to enjoy the conditions applicable at the time of their embarking on the courses; and if he will take steps to restore the travel allowance to Mrs. P. Horsley of 9 Byron avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex for the final four weeks of her course at the Manor college, South Benfleet.

Mr. Jackson: The Essex training and enterprise council is responsible for Mrs. Horsley's training. Essex TEC is contractually obliged to ensure that employment training and youth training trainees already in training in its area immediately prior to the start of the financial year 1991-92 should remain in training, be offered an individual training plan identical, or closely similar to that formerly being pursued, and should be offered terms and conditions of training, remuneration and assistance towards support costs at least as good, item by item, as those previously available to those trainees. My officials are looking into Mrs. Horsley's situation in these terms, and I will write to my hon. Friend shortly when I have their findings.

Youth Employment

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people under 18 years there are in the borough of Blyth valley who are not employed and have not had a youth training opportunity offered to them.

Mr. Jackson: Blyth Valley is part of the area covered by the North Tyne training and enterprise council. The TEC has a clear contractual duty to ensure that every young person under 18 not in school or a job who is seeking YT entry should have the offer, and if necessary re-offers, of a suitable training place. No particular problems have been reported concerning the YT guarantee for young people in Blyth Valley. The TEC and the Employment Department are jointly committed to maintain the guarantee.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what facilities he is making available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Jackson: The Department encourages all staff to contribute to a whole range of charities by means of payroll giving.

Regular reminders are issued to staff about this facility, but, in view of the large number of competing charities, it would be invidious to single out any particular case.

Open College

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the Government have allocated to the Open college for each year since its establishment in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, indexed so its first year equals 100; and what was spent in start-up costs for the Open college.

Mr. Jackson: The Government have provided pump priming funding to the Open college since its launch in September 1987 with the aim of improving the skills of the work force by making open learning opportunities more widely available. To date the college has received £26.9 million. No separate funding has been supplied to the college in respect of start up costs.

The allocations made to the college each year are as follows:

	Cash terms £ million	*Real terms[1] £ million*	*Index*
1986-87	2·0	2·0	100
1987-88	10·0	9·5	474
1988-89	5·7	5·0	252
1989-90	3·8	3·1	156
1990-91	5·4	4·2	209

[1] 1986-87 prices.

Wages Councils

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will update his answers to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, *Official Report*, 14 March 1990, columns *252-56* and 2 April 1990, columns *460-62*, concerning wages councils.

Mr. Jackson: As the information requested is contained in a large number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member enclosing the information and place a copy of my reply in the Libraries.

Young Workers

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the total annual wage bill for the latest available year in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany is accounted for by the local annual wage bill of those under the age of 18.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

Motor Components

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons are employed in the motor components industry in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the motor components industry for France and Germany is not readily available.

Information at United Kingdom level is available only from the census of employment. At September 1989, the latest available date, there were 100,000 employees in the motor vehicle parts industry—activity heading 3530 of the standard industrial classification 1980. This covers the manufacture of motor vehicle parts made wholly or mainly of metal. Those engaged in the manufacture of other types of motor vehicle parts are classified elsewhere and are not separately available.

Wages

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many male and female workers earn non-adult rates in the Northern region and in each of the counties in the region.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the New Earnings Survey is provided in the following table:

Numbers of employees in the NES sample, April 1990

		Total	Of which: on non-adult rate	
			Number	Percentage of total
Northern region	Male	4,962	169	3·4
	Female	4,194	85	2·0
Tyne and Wear	Male	1,870	63	3·4
	Female	1,687	23	1·4
Cleveland	Male	867	34	3·9
	Female	704	20	2·8
Cumbria	Male	939	39	4·2
	Female	700	23	3·3
Durham	Male	888	23	2·6
	Female	733	12	1·6
Northumberland	Male	398	10	2·5
	Female	370	7	1·9

Note: Since the NES sample is mostly drawn from PAYE records, many of those with earnings below the income tax threshold are not covered. This may be expected to affect employees on non-adult rates more than other employees, and so the proportions in the sample who are in this category may not accurately reflect the proportions in the working population as a whole.

Labour Statistics

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the number and proportion of families with four or more children where neither parent is in full-time paid work.

Mr. Jackson: It is not possible to distinguish between full-time and part-time paid work for the spouse of the head of the family unit. The answer relates to single and two-parent families with four or more children where neither parent has paid employment. Preliminary estimates from the GB Labour Force Survey for spring 1990 indicate that there were 76,000 such families, representing 28 per cent. of the total number of families with four or more dependent children.

Quarries

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many companies have been charged for failing to keep quarries safe in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales, in each year since 1985.

Mr. Jackson: Since 1985 in Scotland there has been one prosecution of a quarry company and two prosecutions of quarry owners, all in 1989. Since 1985 in England and Wales, one company was prosecuted in 1988; four in 1989 and one in 1990; two owners were prosecuted in 1989; and one manager in 1988.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many quarries in Scotland were visited and inspected by Health and Safety Executive officials in each year since 1985.

Mr. Jackson: The information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, in 1989-90, Health and Safety Executive quarry inspectors made 870 inspection visits to quarrying activities in Scotland.

Wheal Jane Mine, Cornwall

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what development of tourism grants have been *(a)* applied for by and *(b)* granted to the Wheal Jane mine, Cornwall; and what was the amount of each application and grant.

Mr. Jackson: No applications for grant assistance have been received by the English tourist board, nor have any offers of assistance been made, in respect of the Wheal Jane mine.

Bishopton ROF

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions British Aerospace have been prosecuted for safety offences at the former royal ordnance factory, Bishopton, Renfrewshire; and what was the result of each case.

Mr. Jackson: Royal Ordnance plc, Bishopton, a subsidiary of British Aerospace, has been prosecuted once for a breach of health and safety legislation since taking over the Royal Ordnance factory at Bishopton in 1985. The company pleaded guilty and was fined £1,600.

Quarries

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average time spent each year on quarry inspections by the Health and Safety Executive in Scotland; and what is the average time taken for each quarry inspection.

Mr. Jackson: Information is not available on the time spent each year on quarry inspections by the Health and Safety Executive before 1 April 1989.

However, between 1 April 1989 and 31 March 1990 HSE spent 2,543 hours inspecting all quarrying activities in Scotland. The average time taken for each quarry inspection in Scotland in 1989-90 was three hours.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many officials are employed by the Health and Safety Executive in Scotland to visit and inspect quarries.

Mr. Jackson: On 1 April 1991 HSE employed one full-time quarries inspector in Scotland. However, other HSE staff, including factory and specialist inspectors and staff from the employment medical advisory service, may visit quarries to carry out investigations or surveys or for other reasons, as part of the planned programme of workplace visits of HSE's field operations division.

In addition, a senior inspector of quarries based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne has responsibilities for quarries in Scotland and will also make visits as necessary.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will propose legislation to make it a criminal offence in Scotland to leave detonation cord and detonators on the surface land in and around a quarry without supervision.

Mr. Jackson: The Quarries (Explosives) Regulations 1988 already require quarry managers to ensure that explosives and detonators are kept securely. In particular the manager is required to ensure that at all times explosives and detonators are either in a locked explosives

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 23 April 1991

NORTHERN IRELAND

Driving Offences

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made towards introducing a penalty points system for offending drivers.

Mr. Needham: A first draft of a Road Traffic (Offenders) (Northern Ireland) Order to introduce a penalty points scheme has been prepared. The draft order will be finalised following the conclusion of discussions with the Northern Ireland court service and the RUC on the practical implications of the scheme. These discussions are at an advanced stage. It is hoped that formal consultation will take place over the summer months and that the draft order will be laid before Parliament by the end of 1991.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of BSE have been identified to date in 1991; what is the trend; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There have been 50 confirmed BSE cases in Northern Ireland in 1991 to date. Incidence of the disease continues to increase and is expected to do so for some time until the ban on feeding of ruminant-derived protein takes effect.

Water

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—what was the public response to the consultations document describing the options for development of a new source of water for the eastern part of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: There was considerable interest in the document from councils other Government Departments, public bodies, commercial concerns, various recreational, environmental and other interests, as well as individual members of the public.

Their comments were most useful and taking these into account, together with cost considerations, the Department of the Environment has decided to reduce the options to be examined in the environmental assessment to the following three:

(i) Abstraction from Lough Neagh at Hog Park Point, treatment at Hog Park Point, delivery to the existing Purdysburn service reservoir.

(ii) Abstraction from Lough Neagh at Hog Park Point, treatment at Forked Bridge, delivery to the existing Purdysburn service reservoir.

(iii) Impoundment of the Glenwhirry River, treatment adjacent to the dam, delivery to the existing Oldpark service reservoir.

The environmental assessment is expected to commence within the next three months.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Miscarriages of Justice

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, for each of the last four years, he will list the sums of money that have been paid by his Department as compensation on an ex-gratia basis where there has been misconduct or default by the police or some other agency of the criminal justice system other than cases involving wrongful imprisonment; and if for each such sum he will briefly summarise the circumstances.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Compensation on an ex-gratia basis where the police and probation services are concerned is a matter for the police authority or in the Metropolitan police district the receiver, or probation committee concerned.

Ex-gratia payments made in respect of the prison service cover a range of circumstances and the information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Fox Hunts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of people arrested in the past two years prior to the commencement of a fox hunt and then released without charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Operational policing is the responsibility of the chief officer concerned. I understand that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time asylum seekers have to wait for their application to be decided.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 4 March 1991 at column *10*.

Fox Hunting

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of persons charged with offences arising from activities surrounding fox hunting in the past year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of people who are charged is not collected centrally. It is also not possible from information held centrally to identify the number of prosecutions for offences arising from activities surrounding fox hunting.

Fire Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to privatising the fire service in England and Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government have no plans to change the public service basis on which the fire service is provided in this country.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken by the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority to implement recommendations 119 and 29 of the Fennell inquiry report on the London fire brigade.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: London fire and civil defence authority training deals with incidents at underground stations in firefighters' own and adjacent fireground territories. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 22 March at column *251* with regard to recommendation 119.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance has been promulgated by his Department to local fire authorities and brigades on the wearing and use of extended duration breathing apparatus by firefighters.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: None so far, since trials by a small number of brigades in the use of extended duration breathing apparatus are at an early stage.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the level of criminal offences committed by juveniles who have absconded from local authority care; if such offences constitute a significant part of reported crime in relation to auto-crime and burglary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information on the number of offences committed by juveniles who have absconded from local authority care is not collected centrally.

Probation Service

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what indicators or measures of performance are applied to probation service civil work; and what results have been obtained from such assessment.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: These are the responsibility of the management of local probation areas. Consideration is, however, being given to the establishment of national measures as part of the response to HM inspectorate of probation's recently completed thematic inspection of civil work.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average weekly cost per case in the provision of family conciliation work by the probation service in England and Wales, including local and central costs, in the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information on the costs of conciliation work is not held centrally.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost to the probation service in England and Wales, including local and central costs, of family conciliation work in the last year for which records are available; and how many such cases were handled in that year by probation officers.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information is not available separately for the cost of conciliation work. The number of conciliation cases on which the probation service began work in 1989 was 10,510—table 9.3 of "Probation Statistics England and Wales 1989".

Immigration (Iraqis)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to review the prohibitions imposed on Iraqi nationals under the immigration rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has removed the prohibitions in the "Statement of Changes in the Immigration Rules" which was published on 12 April—Cm 1491. All applications by Iraqi nationals for visas, admission or extensions of stay now fall to be determined in accordance with the normal requirements of the rules.

Joan Harrison (Murder)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask for a report from the chief constable of Lancashire on the progress of the investigation into the murder of Joan Harrison who died on 23 November 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The death of Joan Harrison has been the subject of a major investigation. A number of suspects have been interviewed, but no one has been arrested and charged; to date 2,320 statements have been taken. The case is reviewed regularly and any new information is fully investigated.

North Yorkshire Police

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many policemen there were in the North Yorkshire police in 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When the Government took office in May 1979 the strength of the North Yorkshire police was 1,337 officers. At the end of February 1991 this had increased to a strength of 1,383 officers. The force had 25 vacancies in February.

Immigration

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the countries the nationals of which currently need visas or entry clearance to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The countries whose nationals require visas to enter the United Kingdom are listed in the appendix to the Immigration Rules—HC 356. Nationals of other countries, except European Community member states, require entry clearance to enter the United Kingdom for the following purposes:

(i) permit-free employment as a minister of religion, missionary or member of a religion; representative of an overseas newspaper, news agency or broadcasting organisation; or sole representative of an overseas firm;
(ii) as a businessman, self-employed person or person of independent means;
(iii) as a writer or artist;
(iv) as a dependant of a person in categories (i) to (iii) above or of a work permit holder;
(v) as the fiancé(e), spouse or other dependant of a person settled here.

Drink Driving

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any new measures have recently been introduced to expedite the handling of drink driving cases.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am pleased that following discussions between representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Crown prosecution service and the Justices Clerks' Society, agreement has been reached on the way in which alleged offences of drink driving should be handled to ensure that they are dealt with as expeditiously as possible. The agreement, which is now in operation, provides that where an evidential breath test is in excess of the legal limit, and there is no subsequent blood or urine test, the person should be charged immediately rather than being released without charge and summoned at a later date. The agreement further provides that for cases where the documentation is complete and no further inquiries are required, the defendant should be bailed to appear at court seven days after his release from a police station. Where there are outstanding inquiries about documents, he should be bailed to attend court 14 days after release from the police station. Where inquiries are necessary for other driving offences, he should be bailed for 21 days. These procedures should ensure that most cases take no longer than 21 days from offence to the defendant's first court appearance at which we anticipate a substantial number of cases will be completed. The target days are of course without prejudice to any more expeditious handling which may be achieved locally. In some cases, where it is not the defendant's first drink driving offence he may well be brought to court within days so that the court can consider whether or not it is appropriate to impose a no driving condition on his bail. These arrangements represent a further significant step forward in dealing with drink drivers. Their operation will be reviewed in 12 months' time.

BBC2 (Reception)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why television viewers in south-west Scotland cannot receive the Scottish regional programme broadcast on BBC2; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In order to receive television programmes, viewers in south-west Scotland depend upon the broadcasts from the main transmitter at Caldbeck in Cumbria which also services that area of England. When BBC2 offers regional programmes, the Caldbeck transmitter broadcasts the programmes appropriate to north-west England. As a result, viewers in south-west Scotland cannot see the programmes appropriate to their region on occasions and they therefore miss broadcasts of a number of significant programmes including major political, cultural and sporting events. To rectify this problem, the BBC has proposed adding a further channel to the output from Caldbeck as it has already done for BBC1.

We have given this matter very careful consideration. Frequency spectrum is a limited resource. The intensive use of this resource in order to bring four national programme services—soon to become five—to most of this country, means that in some areas, very few channels remain available. Technical studies indicate that, after taking account of the likely needs of Channel 5, only one more channel could be used at Caldbeck. We have a responsibility to ensure that this channel is used effectively in the public interest. Under the BBC proposal, the channel would most of the time broadcast the same programmes viewers already have available on BBC2 North West; Scottish regional programmes would only be broadcast for a few hours each week on average. Nevertheless' we recognise the importance of these programmes for viewers in south-west Scotland and we have therefore decided to allocate channel 67 to the BBC for this purpose. But in view of the consideration already outlined, we have to make two provisos. First, we shall need to keep the position under review. Once the current licensing round for Channel 3 has been finalised the independent television company serving south-west Scotland may be able to offer a wider use of channel 67 bringing significantly more choice to viewers in that area. We shall therefore look at the use which the BBC is making of this channel in 1993. If, at that point, we should decide to reallocate the frequency to Channel 3 it would be expected to compensate the BBC for the investment made in re-engineering the transmitters.

Secondly, the BBC's efforts to introduce the new service should not interfere with its programme of building new transmitters for these communities in other parts of the country who still have no television service at all.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of public sector housing tenants who where in receipt of *(a)* full housing benefit in 1989-90 and 1990-91 and *(b)* partial housing benefit in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and what estimate has been made of the numbers who will be recipients of (i) full and (ii) partial housing benefit in 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the following table.

Scottish rent rebate caseload

Thousands

	[1] *1989-90*	[2] *1990-91*	[3] *1991-92*
Full rebate[4]	270	259	270
Partial rebate	208	205	220

[1] Average of four quarterly stock counts.
[2] Derived from November 1990 stock count (latest available).
[3] Derived from family expenditure survey based analysis.
[4] Data shown relates to rent rebates granted on the basis of receipt of income support. Some people not getting income support may also get a full rent rebate, but their numbers are not readily available and they are thus included under partial rebates.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amount of direct housing benefit subsidy made available to each district council in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* 1990-91; and if he will give a projection of estimated direct housing benefit subsidy payable to each district council for 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Direct housing benefit subsidy—Scottish district councils

£ million

Councils[1] [2]	*1989-90*[3]	*1990-91*[4]	*1991-92*[5]
Aberdeen	14·29	14·74	14·06
Angus	4·95	5·26	5·58
Annandale and Eskdale	2·08	2·23	2·30
Argyll/Bute	4·72	4·83	4·76
Badenoch	0·62	0·62	0·66
Banff and Buchan	4·56	4·78	5·20
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·83	0·93	0·92
Berwickshire	1·12	1·16	1·24
Caithness	1·62	1·81	1·84
Clackmannan	3·59	4·04	4·51
Clydebank	6·75	7·45	7·69
Clydesdale	3·14	3·69	3·73
Cumbernauld	2·05	2·12	2·81
Cumnock and Doon	3·30	3·57	4·28
Cunninghame	10·22	11·00	11·83
Dumbarton	6·54	7·69	7·83
Dundee	22·88	25·70	27·93
Dunfermline	8·54	9·23	9·91
East Kilbride	0·90	1·04	1·22
East Lothian	5·93	6·60	7·24
Eastwood	0·80	0·87	0·94
Edinburgh	52·68	53·08	62·76
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1·47	1·76	1·84
Falkirk	11·00	11·68	12·52
Glasgow	129·04	137·14	150·17
Gordon	2·07	2·20	2·43
Hamilton	8·74	9·20	9·80
Inverclyde	9·09	10·35	11·62
Inverness	4·07	4·52	4·38
Kilmarnock	6·48	7·48	7·58
Kincardine and Deeside	1·03	1·18	1·22
Kirkcaldy	12·01	13·06	14·69
Kyle and Carrick	8·13	7·33	9·73
Lochaber	1·16	1·32	1·53
Midlothian	3·98	3·81	3·82
Monklands	11·65	12·27	13·79
Moray	4·86	5·15	5·13
Motherwell	13·55	14·56	14·22
Nairn	0·67	0·57	0·56
Nithsdale	3·08	3·37	3·70
North East Fife	3·64	3·62	3·95
Perth and Kinross	6·02	6·87	7·35
Renfrew	14·59	17·42	20·41
Ross and Cromarty	3·23	3·39	3·93
Roxburgh	2·34	2·49	2·71
Skye and Lochalsh	0·67	0·72	0·75
Stewartry	1·12	1·20	1·32
Stirling	5·61	6·85	7·12
Strathkelvin	3·80	4·29	[6]
Sutherland	0·74	0·81	0·88
Tweedale	0·76	0·80	0·89
West Lothian	7·21	7·56	8·07
Wigtown	2·61	2·65	3·24

Notes:

[1] The data in the table reflect rent rebate and rent allowance expenditure only.

[2] Subsidy is paid to local authorities on a monthly basis. At the beginning of each financial year payments are based on authorities initial estimates. They are adjusted as necessary in the light of mid year estimates and final subsidy claims. The latter are externally audited.

[3] Based on 47 final claims and 6 mid year estimates.

[4] Based entirely on mid year estimates.

[5] Based entirely on initial estimates.

[6] Estimates awaited.

Industrial Deafness

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation to provide compensation for those people suffering loss of hearing from industrial processes, including the textile industry, and remove the limit of less than five years ago that the damage was inflicted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: From October 1974, occupational deafness was prescribed as an industrial disease in respect of a number of occupations. In 1979 the regulations were amended to include cover for processes in textile manufacturing and other occupations, and they were further extended in 1983.

We are currently evaluating the feasibility of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's recent recommendations on the administration and operation of provision for occupational deafness—Cm 1245. A response will be made shortly.

A time limit on claiming for industrial deafness has existed ever since the condition was first prescribed. There are no plans to change the five-year limit.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Holidays

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will bring forward proposals to abolish the May day holiday in England and declare St. George's day a public holiday instead.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so, though I recognise that this is a holiday that many people disapprove of.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 23 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his policy in relation to long-term coalition presence in the Gulf.

The Prime Minister: We have made it clear that it is for the states of the region to take the lead in establishing lasting security arrangements for the Gulf, We stand ready to play our part in underpinning such arrangements, if requested, but we have no intention of maintaining a permanent ground force presence in the Gulf.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to bring war charges against Iraqi leaders; and if he will make a statement on British policy on this issue.

The Prime Minister: Iraqi leaders bear personal responsibility under international law for their actions. This principle was reiterated in United Nations Security Council Resolution 674. In the case of both the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Genocide Convention of 1948, Iraqi leaders can, in law, be brought to trial before a national court or international tribunal. We and our EC partners have asked the United Nations Secretary-General to investigate how this might be achieved.

DEFENCE

Tornados

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce arrangements for the return to Britain of Tornado aircraft at present deployed to NATO bases in Germany; and if he will consider joint use by the RAF and the United States Air Force of facilities at RAF Lakenheath.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Local station announcements are to be made shortly on the reductions in the RAF Tornado force in Germany foreshadowed in the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 25 July 1990. There are no plans for the joint use by the RAF and the United States Air Force of facilities at RAF Lakenheath.

The Gulf

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effects of the Gulf conflict on the procurement of equipment for the British Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are considering the outcome of the campaign and the conclusions to be drawn from it in this as in other areas.

Defence Estate

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library a list of all sites on the United Kingdom defence estate in excess of 500 acres stating their location, name of establishment and county.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall do so shortly.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library a list of the number of civilian employees at each of the sites on the United Kingdom defence estate in excess of 500 acres.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. The information requested is not held in this form. It could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Heckler and Koch

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the effect of the purchase of Heckler and Koch by Royal Ordnance on the ability of the United Kingdom defence industrial base to meet the long-term requirements of the armed forces.

Mr. Alan Clark: We provided confidential advice on the proposed acquisition to the Office of Fair Trading in the usual way.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his German counterpart regarding the purchase of Heckler and Koch by Royal Ordnance.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the management of Royal Ordnance regarding their purchase of Heckler and Koch.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Defence Support Agency

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on defence support agency status for the service children's schools, north-west Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Service Children's Schools (North West Europe), within the British Army of the Rhine, will be launched formally as a defence support agency of the Ministry of Defence on 24 April. The agency comprises 86 schools in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sardinia. It is currently staff by some 1,300 teachers and educational administrative staff, and 1,200 other full and part-time employees; for the financial year 1991-92 it has a projected operating budget of some £40 million cash and over £60 million full cost. The agency's chief executive, appointed through open competition from outside the civil service, is Mr. I. S. Mitchelson.

The role of Service Children's Schools (North West Europe) is to provide an efficient and effective education service, comparable to good local education authority practice, for the dependant children of MOD personnel in north-west Europe. It must respond not only to the changes in the size and disposition of British forces in Europe as the result of the changing political climate, the Gulf situation and "Options for Change", but also to the requirements of the Education Reform Act and current developments in the management of education.

I am confident that the chief executive and his staff will meet those challenges, and will maintain the high-quality educational service that SCS(NWE) has traditionally provided. As an agency, SCS(NWE) will have greater executive and managerial freedoms, and there will be increased opportunities for the chief executive to improve the efficiency and value for money of his organisation.

Accordingly, the chief executive has been set the following key targets for the first year of operation as an agency:

- in 1991-92, to maintain at least current rates of pupil success at GCSE and A-levels;
- by 1 April 1992, to develop and introduce systems which will provide a comprehensive measure of pupil performance, in terms of both examination results and other school activities; to formulate policies which aim for a progressive improvement in pupil performance; and to formulate work and activity programmes designed to make residence in NW Europe an educationally beneficial experience;
- by 1 April 1992, to develop appropriate measures of the level of qualification and training of teachers, and to set targets both for the match between teacher qualification and post and for the further training of teachers;
- to establish, by 1 September 1991, a two-year cycle of teacher appraisal;
- to plan and provide, by 1 April 1992, a co-ordinated support service both to voluntary groups catering for under-age school children and children with special educational needs;
- to develop, and introduce by 1 September 1991, a system for assessing parental satisfaction, and to seek progressive improvements in the level of parental satisfaction;
- to develop, and implement by 1 April 1992, processes both to allow parents to take a more active involvement in agency activities and to inform them of relevant educational developments;

to adhere to the statutory timetable for implementing the requirements of the Education Reform Act;

by 1 September 1991, to introduce improved management planning and information systems, including development plans for corporate services within the agency and school development plans;

to keep within the agreed budget;

by 1 April 1992, to develop a financial information system which captures the full cost of agency activities; permits in-year forecast, monitoring and reporting of expenditure; and allows publication of accounts to Treasury requirements;

to achieve continuing improvements in efficiency over the next five years by making, in 1991-92, cash releasing efficiency savings equivalent to 1 per cent. of cash costs, and by developing, by 1 April 1992, plans for achieving further efficiency improvements over the following four years;

by 1 April 1992, to develop and begin to implement plans for the restructuring of the agency and its services, in light of ministerial decisions on "Options for Change" and changes in the deployment of British forces in north-west Europe.

CIVIL SERVICE

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what facilities he is making available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Renton: The payroll giving to charity scheme operates in my Department, and, if they wish, staff may use this facility to contribute to the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

THE ARTS

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts what facilities have been made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Renton: The Office of Arts and Libraries has not been canvassed but staff may certainly use the payroll giving to charity scheme which is in operation—to contribute to the St. John Ambulance Brigade appeal.

Educational Theatre Companies

Mr. Wells: To ask the Minister for the Arts what guidelines the Government have given to the Arts Council on the priority to be given in the allocation of Government funds in respect of educational theatre companies.

Mr. Renton: The Arts Council's current three-year plan, which my Department has endorsed, specifically identifies the development of theatre for young people as a drama department objective.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Unquoted Companies (Employee Participation)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many schemes have been approved by the Inland Revenue for profit sharing and share option schemes under the Finance Act 1988, sections 185-87 and schedules 9 and 10 for employees of unquoted companies; and how many such employees are covered.

Mr. Maude: Schemes approved by the Inland Revenue up to March 1991, under legislation now contained in the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, including 4,721 discretionary share option schemes and 1,934 all-employee share schemes. Of the latter, 962 were profit-sharing schemes and 972 were savings-related share options schemes. It is estimated that about 200,000 and 2·25 million individual employees had participated in these discretionary and all-employee schemes, respectively, up to the end of March 1990.

These schemes, many of which include several companies, relate to both quoted and unquoted companies. I regret that information about the numbers of unquoted companies and their eligible employees covered by these approved schemes could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employee trusts established by unquoted companies the Inland Revenue have accepted as qualifying employee share ownership trusts under the Finance Act 1989, section 74 and Schedule 5; and how many employees are now potential beneficiaries under such trusts.

Mr. Maude: The Inland Revenue may not learn of the establishment of employee share ownership trusts as defined in the Finance Act 1989 until claims for tax relief are received. Such claims may be made up to two years after the end of the period of account in which the relevant company contributions are made. One trust established by an unquoted company has been accepted as a qualifying employee share ownership trust; it covers about 25 employees. Further trusts are likely to be accepted as qualifying shortly.

Gross Domestic Product Deflator

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the gross domestic product deflator, quarter by quarter, starting with the first quarter of 1978.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest quarterly estimates of the gross domestic product deflator for 1978 onwards are as follows:

Implied gross domestic product deflators based on expenditure data

		At market prices	*At factor cost*
1978			
	Q1	50·5	52·6
	Q2	52·0	53·5
	Q3	52·9	54·8
	Q4	54·2	55·6
1979			
	Q1	56·0	57·8
	Q2	57·6	59·2
	Q3	62·0	62·2
	Q4	64·3	64·7
1980			
	Q1	67·3	68·1
	Q2	70·4	70·6
	Q3	73·2	73·8
	Q4	75·8	76·6

		At market prices	At factor cost
1981			
	Q1	77·6	78·5
	Q2	79·0	78·3
	Q3	80·3	79·7
	Q4	82·4	81·7
1982			
	Q1	84·0	83·0
	Q2	85·0	84·4
	Q3	86·5	85·7
	Q4	88·1	87·5
1983			
	Q1	89·2	88·7
	Q2	89·3	88·5
	Q3	90·8	90·4
	Q4	92·3	92·1
1984			
	Q1	92·6	92·6
	Q2	94·2	94·5
	Q3	95·0	95·1
	Q4	96·4	97·1
1985			
	Q1	97·8	98·5
	Q2	99·4	99·4
	Q3	100·7	100·4
	Q4	102·1	101·7
1986			
	Q1	102·2	101·8
	Q2	103·2	102·2
	Q3	103·7	102·6
	Q4	105·1	104·0
1987			
	Q1	106·4	105·8
	Q2	107·9	107·0
	Q3	109·4	108·4
	Q4	111·1	110·4
1988			
	Q1	112·2	111·4
	Q2	114·7	113·5
	Q3	117·0	115·9
	Q4	120·2	119·7
1989			
	Q1	121·5	121·0
	Q2	123·7	123·3
	Q3	124·0	123·7
	Q4	127·0	127·2
1990			
	Q1	128·5	128·4
	Q2	130·0	132·1
	Q3	132·4	134·5
	Q4	135·5	138·4

Winter Letting

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received any representations from the holiday flat and self-catering industry concerning the restrictions on winter letting contained in section 50 of the Finance Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have not received any such representations.

The Gulf

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost, per capita, in respect of the recent Gulf dispute.

Mr. Mellor: The latest estimate for additional defence costs, spread over several years, is of the order of £45 per capita. However, I expect the bulk of costs to be covered by cash contributions generously pledged by other governments.

Income Tax

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the difference in tax revenue raised if the 75 per cent. of subcontractors paying schedule D tax, but providing labour only for hire, were on pay-as-you-earn instead.

Mr. Maude: This information is not available.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of total central Government revenue is raised by value added tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Figures for tax revenues disaggregated by tax for the United Kingdom, France and Germany on a comparable basis are published in "Revenue Statistics of OECD Member Countries" which can be found in the Library.

Statistics

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, for each quarter from the first quarter of 1979 to the first quarter of 1991, the annual percentage increase on the following indices: the retail prices index, the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments, the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments, rates and the community charge, the tax and prices index, the TPI excluding mortgage interest payments, the TPI excluding mortgage interest payments, rates and the community charge, producer output prices, the gross domestic product deflator, average earnings, whole economy, underlying, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies inflation index.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* The table gives the available information. The tax and price index is not available excluding mortgage interest payments or the community charge rates. I refer my right hon. Friend to the written answer I gave to him today for the gross domestic product deflator.

Percentage increase on a year earlier

Date	Retail prices index	RPI excluding mortgage interest payments	RPI less MIPs and community charge/rates	Tax and price index	Producer output prices	Average earnings whole economy underlying	RPI using new measure of housing costs (IFS)
1979 Q1	9·6	8·7	8·6	6·4	8·7	—	—
Q2	10·7	9·5	9·4	12·9	10·1	—	—
Q3	16·0	15·1	15·0	13·6	11·6	—	—
Q4	17·2	16·5	16·5	14·9	12·8	—	—
1980 Q1	19·1	18·0	17·9	16·9	14·9	20¼	—
Q2	21·5	20·5	20·3	18·1	15·5	21¾	—
Q3	16·4	15·3	15·0	17·9	13·7	21½	—
Q4	15·3	14·2	13·8	16·6	12·3	18½	—
1981 Q1	12·7	12·7	12·4	13·5	10·3	16	—
Q2	11·7	12·2	11·8	15·3	9·5	13¼	—
Q3	11·3	11·8	11·4	14·7	8·9	11½	—
Q4	11·9	12·1	11·4	15·5	9·5	11¼	—
1982 Q1	11·1	10·7	10·4	14·6	9·5	10¾	—
Q2	9·4	9·0	8·8	9·7	7·6	10	—
Q3	8·0	7·7	7·4	8·7	7·4	9	—
Q4	6·2	6·8	6·8	6·6	6·5	8¼	—
1983 Q1	5·0	6·3	5·9	5·2	5·3	8	—
Q2	3·8	4·6	4·6	3·2	5·7	7½	—
Q3	4·6	5·0	5·0	3·6	5·4	7¾	—
Q4	5·1	4·9	4·8	4·1	5·6	8	—
1984 Q1	5·2	4·5	4·5	4·3	5·3	7¾	—
Q2	5·1	4·9	4·9	4·1	5·8	7¾	—
Q3	4·7	4·2	4·2	3·5	5·6	7½	—
Q4	4·8	4·1	4·0	3·6	5·5	7½	—
1985 Q1	5·5	4·8	4·7	4·4	5·6	7½	—
Q2	7·0	5·3	5·2	6·4	5·3	7½	—
Q3	6·3	5·4	5·2	5·7	5·2	7½	—
Q4	5·5	5·2	5·0	4·4	5·1	7½	—
1986 Q1	4·9	4·5	4·4	3·8	4·7	7½	—
Q2	2·8	3·3	2·9	0·9	4·3	7½	—
Q3	2·6	3·3	2·9	0·7	4·1	7½	—
Q4	3·4	3·4	3·0	2·0	4·0	7½	—
1987 Q1	4·0	3·7	3·3	2·7	4·0	7½	—
Q2	4·2	3·6	3·4	2·5	3·6	7¾	—
Q3	4·3	3·6	3·5	2·6	3·8	7¾	—
Q4	4·1	4·0	3·8	2·4	4·1	8¼	—
1988 Q1	3·4	3·7	3·5	1·4	3·8	8¼	4·3
Q2	4·2	4·4	4·3	2·1	4·3	8¾	5·1
Q3	5·4	5·1	4·9	3·4	4·9	9¼	6·2
Q4	6·5	5·1	5·0	4·6	4·9	8¾	6·4
1989 Q1	7·7	5·6	5·5	5·9	5·2	9¼	6·8
Q2	8·2	6·0	5·9	8·4	5·0	9	6·9
Q3	7·7	5·8	5·6	7·8	5·1	9	6·4
Q4	7·6	6·1	5·9	6·3	5·2	9¼	6·3
1990 Q1	7·8	6·2	6·0	6·5	5·4	9¼	5·9
Q2	9·7	8·1	6·8	7·9	6·3	9¾	6·5
Q3	10·4	9·0	7·7	8·8	5·9	10	7·1
Q4	10·0	9·2	8·0	9·7	5·9	9¾	7·3
1991 Q1	8·7	8·5	7·4	8·2	6·3	—	6·8

The Gulf

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the contributions from other countries to the costs of Her Majesty's Government relating to the Gulf war received in the financial year 1990-91 or received or expected in the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Mellor: The following countries have made or pledged cash contributions towards these costs:

£ million

	Received in 1990-91	Received or expected in 1991-92
United Arab Emirates	85	190[1]
Kuwait	110	550[2]
Germany	275	—
Japan	25	158[3]
Saudi Arabia[4]	—	580
Belgium	—	15
Hong Kong	15	—
Denmark	8	—
South Korea[5]	—	17
Total	518	1,510[6]

[1] Two payments of $166 million; one received 2 April and the other expected about the end of April.

[2] £110 million received 15 April. Four further payments of £110 million are expected in the middle of each month, May-August inclusive.

[3] Received 2 April.

[4] A payment of $200 million made on 2 April. A further $800 million has been pledged.

[5] $30 million, subject to Korean Parliamentary approval.

[6] The sterling value of payments not yet received and denominated in US dollars will depend on the exchange rate prevailing at the time.

In addition, some 16 countries have provided assistance in kind.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in descending order of balance of payment performance *(a)* cereals, *(b)* agricultural products as a whole, *(c)* agricultural products minus cereals, *(d)* oil, *(e)* chemicals, *(f)* iron and steel, *(g)* coal, coke, and so on, *(h)* motor vehicles, *(i)* electricals, *(j)* visibles and *(k)* invisibles for the years 1979, 1986 and the latest date available.

Mr. Maples: Figures for total trade are available on a balance of payments basis:

Balances *£ billion*

	Visible trade	*Invisible trade*
1979	−3·3	+2·9
1986	−9·5	+9·4
1990	−17·9	+5·1

The following table shows crude trade balances[1] on an overseas trade statistics basis with the categories listed in the order of their 1990 surplus or deficit.

Crude balances[1] *£ billion*

SITC[2]		*1979*	*1986*	*1990*
5	Chemicals	+1·5	+2·3	+2·3
33	Petroleum and petroleum products	−1·1	+3·7	+1·2
67	Iron and steel	—	+0·1	+0·4
04	Cereals and cereal preparations	−0·4	+0·4	+0·3
32	Coal, coke and briquettes	−0·1	−0·3	−0·5
716, 75-77	Electrical machinery	—	−2·8	−3·3
78	Road vehicles	−0·8	−4·0	−5·3
	Agriculture[3]	−4·3	−6·0	−6·4
	Agriculture[3] less cereals and cereal preparations	−4·7	−5·6	−6·1

[1] Exports cif less imports fob.
[2] Standard International Trade Classification (Rev. 3)
[3] There is no generally accepted definition of agriculture in the SITC. The figures used cover food and live animals, feed, beverages and other agricultural products (SITC Sections 0 and 4; Divisions 11 and 22 and parts of Divisions 21, 26, 29, 51, 53 and 59).

Local Government Finance

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations of public policy and public finance follow from the decision that local authorities in exceeding their powers are not required to meet their banking commitments.

Mr. Mellor: The House of Lords has ruled that local authorities have no power to undertake interest rate swaps. The Government are studying the full implications of the judgment. The case raises a number of complex issues including the effect on local authorities and their charge payers as well as on banks.

ENVIRONMENT

London Zoo

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of payments made from central Government to all organisations associated with London Zoo since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: During this period central Government has paid grants worth about £31 million to the Zoological Society of London and the Institute of Zoology. This figure includes about £5·4 million for the institute's research work.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any checks were made by his Department on the use of funds provided by Her Majesty's Government to London Zoo.

Mr. Trippier: During the period that the society was in receipt of revenue subsidy and contributions to capital investment, its finances and activities were closely monitored. The £10 million endowment in November 1988 was a once-for-all payment, and severed the financial relationship with my Department completely as well as the system of monitoring.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conditions were attached to funds provided by Her Majesty's Government to London Zoo.

Mr. Trippier: The £10 million endowment in 1988 was given to the Zoological Society of London on the understanding that the society had established a subsidiary operating company with a strong management team to run the zoos; this management team had drawn up a master development plan for the zoos to secure their future, and with this endowment the Government's financial commitment to the zoos was at an end.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial requests have been received in the last three months from the London Zoo authorities; and what response has been made.

Mr. Trippier: Over the last few months I have discussed with the Zoological Society of London its general financial situation and have reminded it that the Government's financial commitment to its zoos ended in 1988.

House Prices

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing an index of house prices in real terms, for each quarter from the first quarter of 1979 to the latest available quarter.

Mr. Heseltine: The following index has been derived by deflating my Department's mix-adjusted dwelling price index by the retail prices index.

Mix-adjusted index of United Kingdom house prices in real terms (Index: Q1 1979 = 100)

		Index
1979	Q1	100
	Q2	104
	Q3	106
	Q4	110
1980	Q1	109
	Q2	108
	Q3	108
	Q4	108
1981	Q1	105
	Q2	103
	Q3	103
	Q4	98
1982	Q1	95
	Q2	96
	Q3	98
	Q4	98
1983	Q1	100
	Q2	102
	Q3	104
	Q4	104
1984	Q1	105
	Q2	105
	Q3	109
	Q4	109
1985	Q1	107
	Q2	107
	Q3	110
	Q4	113
1986	Q1	115
	Q2	118
	Q3	123
	Q4	126
1987	Q1	127
	Q2	132
	Q3	137
	Q4	144
1988	Q1	149
	Q2	155
	Q3	173
	Q4	180
1989	Q1	181
	Q2	182
	Q3	186
	Q4	179
1990	Q1	174
	Q2	163
	Q3	163
	Q4	158

Source: Based on prices at completion stage collected in the building society mortgage survey and weighted to reflect a standard mix of sales by dwelling type, size and region.

Hedgehogs

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if the export of live hedgehogs is governed by the CITES agreement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many licences were issued for the export of live hedgehogs in 1990; and if he will make it his policy to discontinue the issuing of such licences.

Mr. Trippier: The export of the European hedgehog is not controlled by the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; the controls that apply were set out in my earlier answer to the hon. Member of 25 February, at column *353*.

No licences to export live hedgehogs were issued in 1990. All licence applications are treated on their own merits, following consultation with our scientific advisers, the joint nature conservation committee.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of Government grant in 1990-91 per head of relevant population in the London boroughs of Hackney, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.

Mr. Key: The information is as follows: Government grants in 1990-91, consisting of revenue support grant, special grants, specific grants in aggregate external finance, community charge benefit grant and transitional relief grant, per head of relevant population are £1,415 in Hackney, £960 in Newham, £396 in Redbridge and £678 in Waltham Forest.

Benzene

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the maximum level of benzene permissible in petrol *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Five per cent. by volume, in both cases.

Green Belt

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to permitting development on green belt sites in the East Thames corridor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Any proposals for development on green belt sites in the east Thames corridor are considered in the light of the planning criteria which apply everywhere in the green belt.

Irrigation, East Anglia

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many licences for extracting water from bore holes have been granted in each of the past two years to the horticultural industry in East Anglia; and what was the average amount of water permitted for extraction under each licence;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to conserve water in East Anglia by restricting the amount of water permitted for extraction by bore holes by the horticultural industry;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect on water conservation by the horticultural industry in East Anglia of *(a)* limiting times of the day when water extraction is permitted, *(b)* limiting the total quantity of water permitted to be extracted by each user and *(c)* encouraging night-time use of water to reduce evaporation;

(4) what restrictions have been imposed by the National Rivers Authority on extraction of irrigation water from bore holes by horticultural undertakings in East Anglia;

(5) whether he will issue a direction to the National Rivers Authority to conserve water in East Anglia by restricting the amounts extracted by horticultural undertakings.

Mr. Baldry: These are all matters for the National Rivers Authority. The chairman will write to my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to issue a direction to the National Rivers Authority.

Conifer Planting

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the outcome of the consultation exercise on the proposal to exempt parts of the industrial Pennines from the Government's general policy not to grant-aid predominantly conifer planting in the English uplands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Our consultation exercise last year gave rise to a large number of detailed responses and we have given careful consideration to these. Although there was support for some planting within the areas identified by the joint Department of the Environment-Forestry Commission working group, the general view was that the present policy adequately caters for the types and scale of new planting which will be appropriate and that the proposed exception would not be helpful. In recognition of this, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have decided not to proceed with the proposal.

Local Authorities (Finance)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the budgeted revenue expenditure and sources of income for local authorities in England, and their implication for community charge levels, in 1990-91 and 1991-92, before and after the enactment of the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991.

Mr. Portillo: Following the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991, the average community charge actually paid in 1991-92, taking account of assistance received via income support, is estimated to be £172; charges will account for just less than 15 per cent. of authorities' revenue spending. The corresponding figures before the Act were £274 and 23·6 per cent. respectively; for 1990-91 they were £285 and 26·6 per cent. Full details are given in the table.

Sources of finance for local authority expenditure: England 1990-91 and 1991-92

	1990-91	*1991-92 before £140 reduction*	*1991-92 after £140 reduction*
Estimated expenditure/income (£ billion)			
Gross revenue/budgeted expenditure	36·48	39·82	39·82
Use of balances	0·80	0·62	0·62
Budgeted income	35·68	39·19	39·19
Less Aggregate Exchequer Finance	23·29	26·05	30·88
Plus/minus adjustments[1]	0·14	0·35	0·35
Raised from gross charges	12·25	13·49	8·66
Percentage of expenditure	33·60	33·90	21·70
HEADLINE CHARGE (£)	357·00	392·00	252·00
Less: Reduction scheme grant	0·26	1·70	1·25
Estimated community charge benefit subsidy	1·83	1·92	1·06
Raised from net charges	10·16	9·87	6·35
Percentage of expenditure	27·90	24·80	15·90
Less income support[2]	0·40	0·43	0·43
Actual charges paid	9·76	9·44	5·92
Percentage of expenditure	26·60	23·70	14·90
AVERAGE CHARGE ACTUALLY PAID (£) (taking into account income support)	285	274	172
Aggregate Exchequer Finance (£ billion)			
Business rates	10·428	12·408	12·408
Specific grants	3·189	3·413	3·413
Special grants	0·187	0·555	0·555
Revenue Support Grant	9·490	9·674	9·674
Community charge grant	—	—	4·830
Total grants	12·866	13·642	18·472
Total AEF	23·294	26·050	30·880
Chargepayers (million)			
Relevant population[3]	35·65	35·54	35·54
Equated population[4]	34·37	34·50	34·50

[1] Adjustments include RSG grants to specified bodies (which are part of AEF but do not go to local authorities); net interest payments by the Collection Fund; the proportion of non-domestic rates collected by the City of London which is retained by the authority's collection fund; the estimated deficit on the Collection Fund in 1990-91; and the budgeted surplus on the Collection Fund in 1991-92.

[2] This amount represents the allowance in income support to cover 20 per cent. of the average charge.

[3] Relevant population indicates the number of chargepayers subject to a full community charge, plus one fifth of students subject to a charge, plus the number of people liable to pay collective community charges.

[4] Equated population is the equivalent number of personal charges which local authorities expect to receive from personal, standard and collective chargepayers.

Local Government Boundary Commission

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will happen to the work of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England during the consultation period on the Government's proposals on local government.

Mr. Heseltine: We consider that the commission should continue with its current programme of work. Decisions on the implementations of their proposals can then be taken on the merits of those proposals and in the context of the wider proposals for change in local government.

Norwich City Council

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out details of the basis of calculation which has led him to require Norwich city council to limit its spending to £15 million in 1991-92, and set out the representations he has had asking him to impose this limit.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* We have received a number of representations to cap excessive budgets. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has designated Norwich city council for capping because he considered that its budget was excessive on the basis of the principles which he has adopted for capping for 1991-92. The maximum budget or "cap" of £15 million proposed by my right hon. Friend represents his view of what is reasonable, achievable and appropriate in the light of the authority's particular circumstances, on the basis of all the information available to him.

Transport Privatisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consultations his Department has had with local authorities over the proposed privatisation of municipal airports, ports and harbours and bus companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the Government intend to bring forward proposals for the privatisation of municipal airports, ports and harbours and bus companies; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received from private sector companies interested in bidding for the municipal airports, ports and harbours and bus companies that the Government intend to privatise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the scope for privatisation of local authority ports, airports, and public transport companies but has reached no conclusions. A company which is in negotiation with a local authority to take a lease of part of their port has been in touch with my Department; no other representations from prospective purchasers have been received.

Local Government

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the total number of local government staff in the following categories *(a)* education (lecturers and teachers), *(b)* education (others), *(c)* construction, *(d)* social services, *(e)* other general services and *(f)* police in the United Kingdom giving figures for (i) total number of staff and (ii) full-time equivalents for each of the years 1968, 1988 and 1990, or the latest date available showing the percentage increase/decrease in each case.

Mr. Key: The information for England is as follows:

Local government staffing in England
Selected service breakdown (December data)

Service	*Total (FT+PT)*	*Year-on-year change per cent.*	*Change since 1975 per cent.*	*Full-time equivalent*	*Year-on-year change per cent.*	*Change since 1975 per cent.*
1975 (See Note 1)						
Education (L/T)	653,020	—	—	529,937	—	—
Education (other)	677,999	—	—	410,972	—	—
Construction	132,715	—	—	132,385	—	—
Social Services	265,150	—	—	182,512	—	—
Other general services	595,540	—	—	546,120	—	—
Police (all ranks)	100,364	—	—	100,364	—	—
1988						
Education (L/T)	651,728	−0·4	−0·2	502,838	−0·7	−5·1
Education (other)	649,222	−1·0	−4·2	382,571	−0·7	−6·9
Construction	101,072	−5·0	−23·8	100,676	−5·0	−24·0
Social Services	336,756	0·7	27·0	229,675	1·0	25·8
Other general services	578,597	−0·4	−2·8	518,460	−0·7	−5·1
Police (all ranks)	118,249	0·9	17·8	118,249	0·9	17·8
1989						
Education (L/T)	628,414	−3·6	−3·8	481,407	−4·3	−9·2
Education (other)	627,822	−3·3	−7·4	364,315	−4·8	−11·4
Construction	97,435	−3·6	−26·6	97,037	−3·6	−26·7
Social Services	341,366	1·4	28·7	233,953	1·9	28·2
Other general services	584,767	1·1	−1·8	523,606	1·0	−4·1
Police (all ranks)	119,605	1·1	19·2	119,605	1·1	19·2
1990						
Education (L/T)	614,908	−2·1	−5·8	477,204	−0·9	−10·0
Education (other)	624,957	−0·5	−7·8	363,124	−0·3	−11·6
Construction	91,118	−6·5	−31·3	90,687	−6·5	−31·5
Social Services	343,508	0·6	29·6	237,401	1·5	30·1
Other general services	592,456	1·3	−0·5	529,909	1·2	−3·0
Police (all ranks)	120,593	0·8	20·2	120,593	0·8	20·2

Notes:
1. 1975 is the earliest year for which data is available.

2. Education figures are affected by the transfer of polytechnics from the local authority sector in April 1989.
3. Other general services figures are affected by the transfer of municipal bus and airport undertakings from the local authority sector in 1986 and 1987.

HEALTH

Ethnic Monitoring

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the department of psychological medicine of the City and Hackney health authority keeps records of the racial origins of in-patients and out-patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: A contact register is being developed for all patients receiving care from the department of psychological medicine at City and Hackney health authority. Patients are asked to identify their own ethnic origin. Where this is not possible, that particular section will be left blank. The register has a security mechanism whereby information relating to ethnic origin is kept confidential and can be checked by the patient on request.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to encourage social service departments to monitor girls from the relevant ethnic communities referred to in the answer to the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on 22 February, *Official Report*, columns *304-5*.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 25 March at columns *322-24*.

Staphylococcus Infection

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the closure of ward 3X at the Royal Liverpool University hospital, following contagion from multi-resistant staphylococcus; and how many other hospitals in the United Kingdom are affected by this bacterium.

Mr. Dorrell: A patient recently admitted to the hospital was found to be carrying the organism. Before this was identified, cross-infection occurred in two small units in the hospital. Conventional infection control methods, including the temporary closure of ward 3X, brought the outbreak under control. Ward 3X was reopened on Monday 22 April.

There are no national figures for the number of affected hospitals. Infection with multi-resistant staphylococcus —MRSA—is not among the diseases which are statutorily notifiable. However, a survey of the incidence of MRSA from 1986-90 is being prepared by the public health laboratory service and will be available shortly.

Cancer Services

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what matters are currently being considered by the advisory committee on cancer services; and when its next report is expected.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Standing Medical Advisory Committee, which advises my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, has a standing sub-committee on cancer which advises it on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer and, where relevant, on education. The sub-committee keeps all these topics under regular review. It has recently prepared a manual on quality assurance in radiotherapy.

Nurses' Pay

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the increase of pay in real terms for nurses in the employ of the health service since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Basic pay rates for nursing and midwifery staff and health visitors have increased by almost 45 per cent. on average in real terms since 1979.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *256*, what reasons have been given by Dr. Nicolaides for the late notification to the chief medical officer of the abortion of the King's College baby, under ground 2, by selective reduction at 27½weeks gestation, notified to his Department on 11 April 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not the Department's practice to disclose information provided in relation to individual cases of termination of pregnancy.

NHS Reforms

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how man copies of the March 1991 letter from the chief executive of the national health service about the 1 April national health service reforms have been distributed; and at what total cost.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The letter from the NHS chief executive marking the implementation of the NHS reforms on 1 April has been distributed to all 970,000 employees of the NHS in England. The cost of printing and distributing the letter to health authorities was £127,000.

Drug and Alcohol Addiction

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to extend drug and alcohol addiction advice centres.

Mr. Dorrell: The provision of local services to advise drug and alcohol misusers is a local responsibility. The Government's objective is to ensure that a comprehensive and integrated network of appropriate services is established to help these clients, and to this end has provided the following assistance to local agencies active in this field:

since 1986-87, regional health authorities have received additional allocations rising to nearly £16·5 million in 1991-92 for the expansion of services for drug misusers including HIV prevention aspects. This builds upon the network of local services set up by the central funding initiative which made available £17·5 million for 188 local drug projects between 1983 and 1989;

£4 million has been allocated to the national voluntary organisation Alcohol Concern for the three years starting in 1990-91, for disbursement to local voluntary organisations to support the improvement and expansion of alcohol advisory and counselling services;

awards totalling £1·4 million have been made to local authorities under the alcohol and drugs specific grant introduced by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. This grant will support expenditure of £2 million in 1991-92. The specific grant is available to local authorities to support voluntary sector organisations providing services for alcohol and drug misusers. This grant should help local authorities prepare for the new responsibilities placed upon them by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990;

grants are made to help meet the national headquarters expenses of Alcohol Concern, the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse and Turning Point, all of which support local agencies providing advice for alcohol and/or drug misusers.

Prestwich Hospital, Manchester

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the patients of Pinfold, Troy and Tottington wards at Prestwich hospital, Manchester, will be evacuated as advised by the health advisory service/social services inspectorate in its report dated October 1990 No. (90) M1/E.12.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that Clifton house at Prestwich hospital, Manchester, will close by August 1991. Troy ward will close in May, Pinfold in June and Tottington in July.

The Gulf

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by each regional health authority the amount of money that was made available to meet the costs of receiving casualties from the Gulf dispute; and how much was actually spent by each regional health authority.

Mr. Dorrell Regional health authorities have incurred only minimal treatment costs, but did incur costs making preparations to treat casualties. Provisional cash limit adjustments were made at the end of 1990-91 based on regions' estimates of their expenditure and are given in the table. Adjustments cannot be finalised until the Department has received and validated final figures.

	£
Northern	546,000
Yorkshire	542,000
Trent	597,000
East Anglia	479,000
North West Thames	1,249,000
North East Thames	325,000
South East Thames	670,000
Wessex	868,000
Oxford	478,000
South Western	733,000
West Midlands	1,336,000
Mersey	739,000
North Western	763,000
National Blood Transfusion Service	75,000
London postgraduate hospitals (SHAs)	104,000
Total	9,504,000

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what facilities he has made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was informed of the "Over to you, John" appeal at a meeting with national representatives of St. John Ambulance in March, and wished it well. The Department would consider how best to involve its staff in the appeal on receipt of a formal request to participate.

Chemical Agents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines his Department has given to doctors on defence against chemical agents.

Mr. Dorrell: Specific guidance on the treatment of patients affected by chemical agents was issued to the health service on 28 December 1990, in the context of the Gulf crisis. The same advice was also given to the national poisons information service to ensure a consistent response to inquiries from the health service. In addition various publications on the subject are available.

Dentists

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (i) how many dentists in each regional health authority had registered no adult or child patients under the new contract by the end of February;

(2) how many dentists for each regional health authority had registered adult or child patients under the new contract by the end of February in the ranges *(a)* less than 100, *(b)* between 101 and 500, *(c)* between 501 and 1,000 and *(d)* over 1,001;

(3) how many dentists had registered patients under 18 years of age only, in total and in respect of each regional health authority, as at the end of February.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available in the form requested. The table gives information regarding dentists' contracts, rather than individual dentists, as of 31 March 1991. Many dentists have more than one contract.

Region	*Total number of contracts*	*Numbers of contracts with capitation and continuing care patients*				
		None registered	*1-499 registered*	*500-999 registered*	*1000+ registered*	*Capitation only*
Northern	1,288	136	466	302	384	15
Yorkshire	1,551	96	528	401	526	11
Trent	1,865	164	672	382	647	37
East Anglian	803	46	263	160	334	24
North West Thames	1,855	222	997	407	229	51
North East Thames	1,610	185	810	338	277	29
South East Thames	1,691	164	767	392	368	36
South West Thames	1,530	171	712	349	298	37
Wessex	1,141	76	343	253	469	19
Oxford	1,037	121	377	244	295	30

Region	Total number of contracts	Numbers of contracts with capitation and continuing care patients: None registered	1-499 registered	500-999 registered	1000+ registered	Capitation only
South Western	1,551	122	506	330	593	26
West Midlands	1,909	152	610	470	677	15
Mersey	1,088	80	435	287	286	12
North Western	1,716	146	604	440	526	43
TOTAL						385

Source: Dental Practice Board.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists had registered adults who were exempt from charges by the end of February.

Mr. Dorrell: The precise number of dentists who are accepting adults exempt from charges into continuing care arrangements under the new general dental services contract is not known. Recent information from family health services authorities suggests that the vast majority of dentists are doing so.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of estimates scheduled to dentists in respect of the categories *(a)* adults over 18 years and *(b)* children under 18 years for each of the five months from October 1990 to the end of February 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available in the form requested. Most treatment of children is now covered by capitation fees paid to dentists, and is not claimed by submitting estimates. The table sets out the total number of claims for remuneration for item-of-service treatment of adults. It does not include claims for continuing care payments where no item-of-service treatment has been provided.

Total number of adult item-of-service claims

Date	Total
October 1990	2,120,042
November 1990	1,880,791
December 1990	1,896,491
January 1991	2,001,663
February 1991	1,841,982

Source: Dental Practice Board.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of estimates scheduled to dentists in respect of the categories (i) under the old contract, *(a)* adults and *(b)* children under 18 years and (ii) under the new contract (1) adults for registration only and excluding treatment, (2) adults with both registration and treatment, (3) adults for occasional treatment only, (4) children with entry payment claimed and (5) children with no entry payments claimed for each of the five months from October 1990 until the end of February 1991.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available in the form requested. The table gives information on estimates under the old contract and claims for remuneration under the new contract, for England and Wales. It is not possible to give separate figures relating to the following categories under the new contract: (i) claims for continuing care payments for adult patients where no treatment fees are claimed; and (ii) claims for occasional treatment.

Date scheduled for payment	Old contract: Adult Estimates (Item of Service)	Child Estimates (Item of Service)	Adults accepted into continuing care	New contract: Adult Item of Service	Entry payments for children before acceptance into capitation	Child Item of Service	Total number of children accepted into capitation
October 1990	2,061,768	895,837	—	58,274	16,233	3,965	—
November 1990	892,818	298,824	2,878,836	987,973	164,080	44,899	842,628
December 1990	411,261	122,800	2,267,407	1,485,230	250,962	69,185	938,317
January 1991	226,596	69,582	1,736,821	1,775,067	216,178	77,189	633,040
February 1991	140,816	47,911	1,617,834	1,701,166	227,495	88,374	713,169

Source: Dental Practice Board

NHS Internal Market

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether tertiary referrals will be treated in the same way as emergencies for the purpose of payment in the national health service internal market;

(2) what are the arrangements for paying for tertiary referrals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Tertiary referrals will normally be paid for in the same way as referrals by a GP: district health authorities will contract directly with the units receiving tertiary referrals. The same arrangements as for other kinds of referrals will apply to emergency and non-emergency tertiary referrals not covered in advance by a contract.

Harrogate Hospitals

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new beds have been provided in the Harrogate district and general hospitals since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. I. Lester, the chairman of the Harrogate health authority, for details.

Stillbirth

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *507*, to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), what consideration has now been given to revising the definition of stillbirth.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 1 March at columns *632-33*.

Wheelchair Patients

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that all doctors' surgeries and all doctors' consulting rooms are accessible to patients in wheelchairs, *(a)* in private sector surgeries and consulting rooms in London to which NHS patients are referred and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* It is the Department's policy to ensure that facilities are accessible to patients in wheelchairs. Building regulations require reasonable provision to be made for the access of disabled people into and within buildings. These regulations are legally enforceable on both the National Health Service and the private sector. In 1989 the Department published "Health Building Note 40, Common Activity Spaces Volume 4—Designing for Disabled People", a copy of which is available in the Library. The building note gives guidance on designing health care facilities to meet the needs of disabled people. The Department is about to publish building guidance on general medical practice premises which includes specific recommendations on designing for wheelchair access.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Cricket Coaching

13. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is considering further initiatives to promote the coaching of cricket in schools.

Mr. Atkins: I am very keen to encourage cricket in schools both within the curriculum and as part of extra-curricular sport. I am today holding a conference on "Sport and Young People" to which a wide range of physical education and sporting organisations have been invited. Many useful and interesting issues are being raised and I will be considering these further as part of my current review of sports policy.

Grammar Schools

14. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give consideration to an expansion of grammar school provision.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The organisation of school provision is a matter for individual local education authorities. I will consider any proposals by LEAs to reorganise schools, including proposals for introducing grammar schools, on their merits.

School Playing Fields

15. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department intends to carry out a survey of the availability of school playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The provision of school playing fields is the responsibility of LEAs and others in charge of the schools in the light of the standards in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981. However, the Sports Council will begin to draw up a register of playing fields during the course of this year. The register will include details of school playing fields.

Grant-maintained Schools

16. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he is considering regarding change of character of schools when approving grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Schools may not propose a significant change of character in applying for GM status. Inevitably, however, they will wish in the course of time to assess whether their provision reflects local parent demand and changing circumstances. Where they decide to publish change of character proposals I will consider them and any objections on the merits of each case.

17. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in Shropshire have applied for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: Three. Shropshire has one grant-maintained school. A further two schools have submitted applications which will reach my right hon. and learned Friend for decision shortly.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the number of grant-maintained status schools he expects to be operating from 18 September 1991 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The future number of grant-maintained schools in operation cannot be accurately predicted, but there are more schools seeking grant-maintained status now than ever before. For example, there are currently 80 schools with grant-maintained ballots pending. This time last year there were seven. In the last three months alone, 48 schools have voted to seek grant-maintained status.

Reading

18. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last received an Her Majesty's inspectorate report on the training of students in teacher training colleges in the methods of teaching reading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Ministers receive regular advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate on teacher training as on other aspects of the education system. Her Majesty's inspectorate will be providing advice to Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in connection with the inquiry we have asked the council to conduct, and this will be included in their report at the end of the year.

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teaching of reading skills in schools.

Mr. Eggar: It must be a priority of every primary school to enable children to read. Advice on good practice was offered in the report on reading by Her Majesty's inspectorate which was circulated to all primary schools in January. The main message was that reading has to be taught, in a structured way, and the most effective teachers used a mix of methods to teach initial reading, invariably including phonics. School reading policies, well organised classrooms, good teaching and regular testing and recording were other important factors in fostering reading skills. The national curriculum for English provides an effective framework for the teaching and assessment of reading skills.

Swimming Lessons

19. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about Derbyshire county council's proposals to cut swimming lessons in the county's schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from pupils, parents and schools in Derbyshire about the effect of budget reductions on the education service in the county, including provision of swimming.

The education element of Derbyshire's standard spending assessment has risen by nearly 15 per cent. between 1990-91 and 1991-92. That is a substantial increase which should enable the authority to finance an education service of high quality if it manages its affairs well.

Education, South Cumbria

20. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding higher and further education in south Cumbria.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations in recent months regarding higher and further education in south Cumbria.

Citizenship

22. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has reviewed the effectiveness of the teaching of citizenship within the curriculum.

Mr. Eggar: The National Curriculum Council issued guidance on education for citizenship last November. Her Majesty's inspectorate will report on the effectiveness of the teaching of citizenship to my right hon. and learned Friend in the course of their inspections.

Pupil Assessment

23. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statment on the introduction of pupil assessment in conjunction with the national curriculum in schools.

Mr. Eggar: The first national assessments of seven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science will take place this summer. The statutory arrangements for assessing seven-year-olds in other subjects at key stage 1 and for assessing other age groups will be phased in over the coming years.

Seven-year-olds (Testing)

24. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decisions he has made about the publication of the tests of seven-year-olds this summer.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Teachers (Career Changes)

25. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision exists for retraining and redeployment within the education service for teachers or lecturers who *(a)* wish or *(b)* are required through redundancy, to change careers.

Mr. Fallon: The deployment and redeployment of teachers are matters for individual LEAs and schools, as is responsibility for in-service training. The Department is providing substantial support through grants for education support and training for in-service training, including retraining to teach new phases and subjects.

Science and Engineering Research Council

26. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council; and whether he proposes to discuss the funding of pay awards.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council from time to time; he has no plans at present for a further meeting.

Sport

27. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Saturday sport in schools.

Mr. Atkins: I am currently considering ways of encouraging more Saturday sport in schools, including greater partnerships between local sports clubs and schools. The Department is also revising its proposed guidance booklet on the community use of school sports facilities to reflect the recently identified need to amend section 42 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what facilities he is making available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Eggar: None. Staff are encouraged to join the give-as-you-earn scheme which enables them to support the charity of their choice through regular deductions from salary.

Religious Education

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the National Curriculum Council to publish guidelines for the teaching of religious education in schools.

Mr. Eggar: There are no plans to issue guidance as to the content of individual agreed syllabuses for religious education. This is a matter for each local education authority to determine in the light of the statutory requirements. The National Curriculum Council has, however, a remit to advise at local request on the mechanics of constructing a syllabus taking account of the national curriculum approach of setting clear learning objectives through attainment targets and programmes of study. I understand that the National Curriculum Council is considering the issue of some collated advice of this nature for local education authorities. The timing would be a matter for the National Curriculum Council.

Graduate Teacher Training Registry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now publish the telephone numbers of his Department's graduate teacher training registry.

Mr. Fallon: The graduate teacher training registry is neither funded nor controlled by the Department of Education and Science.

Oil Fires

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on oil fire-related research in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Science and Engineering Council is currently supporting 17 projects concerned with the controlled combustion of oil, at a total cost of some £2 million. In addition, the Natural Environment Research Council is undertaking much work on atmospheric pollution, a significant percentage of which is on pollutants resulting from fossil fuel combustion and their effects on the environment.

Truancy

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent consultations he has had with local authorities about truancy from schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend, in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, last week issued to local education authorities and others a consultative circular and draft regulations on school attendance. Consultees have been invited to comment on the proposals by 17 June.

Primary Schools (Administration)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to reduce the burden of administration within primary schools.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has already taken a number of steps to make the Government's reforms manageable for primary schools and to minimise paper work. We shall continue to look for opportunities further to reduce administration.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio, Harrogate

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the pupil-to-teacher ratio of Harrogate schools in 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Fallon: Information on Harrogate schools is not available centrally. The pupil-teacher ratio for North Yorkshire local education authority, which includes Harrogate schools, was 19 in January 1979 and 17·3 in January 1990 the latest date for which figures are available.

School Inspections, Tower Hamlets

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place a copy of the recent Her Majesty's inspectorate report on Culloden primary school, Tower Hamlets, in the Library.

Mr. Fallon: Copies of all Her Majesty's inspectorate reports are sent to the Libraries of both Houses on the Friday of the week in which they are published. A copy of the report on Culloden school was sent on 19 April.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on which date he ordered Her Majesty's inspectorate to investigate standards of reading by pupils at Culloden primary school, Tower Hamlets; by what date the report was completed; on what date he first received the completed report; on what date the principal and chairman of governors at the school were first informed of the findings of the report *(a)* orally and *(b)* in writing; and on what date the media were first informed by his Department of the findings.

Mr. Fallon: On 6 March 1991, my right hon. and learned Friend asked the senior chief inspector—SCI—for information about the standards of reading in Culloden primary school, Tower Hamlets. Since no recent and relevant information was available the SCI took the decision to inspect the school.

The school was inspected on 18 to 22 March 1991. The report was completed on 10 April and my right hon. and learned Friend received it on the same day. It was printed on 12 April 1991.

The headteacher was informed orally of the findings of the inspection on the last day of the inspection as is customary. Copies of the report were sent to the headteacher and chairman of governors early on 16 April prior to its release to the press on the same day. HMI met the chairman and governors' body to discuss the report on the evening of 18 April 1991.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail the extent of Her Majesty's inspectorate's investigation at Culloden school, Tower Hamlets, enumerating the number of Her Majesty's inspectorate visiting the school, the duration of the investigation and the total cost of the inquiries.

Mr. Fallon: Her Majesty's inspectorate inspected Culloden primary school in the week 18 to 22 March 1991. Five inspectors each spent four and a half days in the school and were joined for one and a half days by one other inspector. The total cost of the inspection was £5,760. In addition to the actual inspection, HMI made preliminary visits, attended meetings of the governing

body and were involved in preparing and writing the report. The total cost was, therefore, approximately £7,680.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of all Her Majesty's inspectorate inspections of primary and secondary schools in Tower Hamlets since 1 April 1990, and a list of all subsequent reports that have been published.

Mr. Fallon: During the year in question, 23 inspection visits have been made to primary schools in Tower Hamlets and three to secondary schools; a further three were visited in February 1990. Three special schools were also visited. Although there was feedback to the schools in question during the visits themselves, none of the inspection visits to secondary or special schools were reporting inspections. Consequently they did not lead to published reports. The report on one of those inspection visits to primary schools, Culloden, was published on 16 April 1991. Since 1 April 1990 a report has also been published on Hague primary school, which was inspected prior to that date.

London Hospital Schools

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in respect of the Hospital Schools in London Bill.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has received letters from three London hospitals about the Hospital Schools in London Bill.

WALES

Education (Science Teachers)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of qualified science teachers in each county who teach in each of the years in (i) the primary schools of Wales and (ii) the high schools of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibility regarding animal welfare in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: High standards of farm animal welfare on farms, during transport, at markets and at the place of slaughter are matters of major importance. The Government are committed to promoting the maintenance and improvement of farm animal welfare standards, and have taken many positive measures in this regard.

Pharmacists (Advice)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the written advice of his Department to retail pharmacists regarding the methods of disposal for unwanted medicines and poisons returned to them by their customers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain gives advice to community pharmacists on the disposal of returned medicines. The Department has not issued any written advice in addition to this.

DUMP Campaign

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of funding his Department has deemed appropriate for the financing of the Welsh Pharmaceutical Committee disposal of unwanted medicines and poisons (DUMP) campaign, during the autumn of 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department will be providing approximately £28,000 in respect of contractor costs for the all-Wales DUMP campaign proposed for the autumn of 1991.

Teachers (Qualifications)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the qualifications of teachers in Wales who take classes in the physical sciences.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am pleased that the latest secondary school staffing survey showed that, taken together, about 95 per cent. of teachers teaching biology, chemistry and physics at GCSE level have a qualification in that subject or in a related science subject. At A-level, at least 95 per cent. have a qualification in the science subject they teach.

I wish to see an improvement and that is why we have widened the scope of the shortage subject bursary scheme to include all sciences and thus attract more science teachers into the profession.

Probation Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the teaching force in each of the local education authorities in Wales are probationers.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested, based at September 1990, is as follows:

Percentage of the teaching force who are qualified and on probation

	Primary	*Secondary*
Clwyd	2·6	2·3
Dyfed	4·4	2·5
Gwent	2·9	2·3
Gwynedd	2·7	2·5
Mid Glamorgan	2·2	2·5
Powys	2·7	1·6
South Glamorgan	8·0	3·4
West Glamorgan	2·7	1·4
WALES	3·6	2·4

Science Teaching

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of non-specialist supply teachers or people with no training in the national curriculum, who take science lessons in *(a)* the primary schools and *(b)* the high schools of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No reliable information is available.

Broadcasting in Wales

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his role and functions regarding broadcasting in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Broadcasting is the statutory responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. We liaise closely with the Home Secretary on the particularly Welsh features of broadcasting policy. We also advise the Home Secretary on broadcasting appointments related to Wales.

Pupil Assessment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he will take to assist *(a)* head teachers and *(b)* teachers who must assess pupils under the national curriculum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government have made available considerable assistance to support head teachers and teachers in Wales in preparation for this year's first statutory assessment of seven-year-olds. This includes:

- approval of specific grant aided expenditure up to £2·3 million in 1991-92 for training and in support of administrative arrangements;
- an extra day's school closure specifically for primary school teachers involved in the assessment of seven-year-olds;
- a computer-based system, developed jointly with LEAs, to cut down the burden of teachers in calculating the detailed assessment results;
- comprehensive guidance material and training seminars provided through the School Examination and Assessment Council and LEAs.

North Wales Expressway

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the north Wales expressway Conwy tunnel to open; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The A55 Conwy crossing scheme is expected to be opened in the autumn of this year as indicated in the 1991 supplement to "Roads in Wales".

Chester-Bangor Expressway

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Chester-Bangor expressway to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Fifty-one of the 60 miles of the A55 between Chester and Bangor are already dualled and open to traffic; eight miles are under construction. Work on the final section, the Aber improvement scheme, is planned to start before April 1994 and to take about 18 months.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cattle in Wales were confirmed to have had BSE last year *(a)* under the age of five years and *(b)* over the age of five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of cattle in Wales confirmed in 1990 to have had BSE is as folows:

	Number
(a) Cattle with an age at onset of up to and including five years	574
(b) Cattle with an age at onset of greater than five years	433
(c) Cattle for whom the age at onset is unknown	37

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis for the years 1966-67 to 1990-91, otherwise identical in format to table 1.1 of "Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics No. 14", 1990, of rate fund services revenue account but which also distinguishes *(a)* non-domestic rate revenue from domestic rate revenue and *(b)* gross rates, net rates and rate rebate grant.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* The historical tables referred to are available in Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics (in table 1) for each year since 1975-76. The additional information requested, where available, is shown in the following table.

£ million

	Gross rate income	*Rate rebates*[1] *Domestic rate relief grant*	*Housing and disabled*	*Enterprise zones*	*Net rate income*	*Net domestic rate income*	*Net non-domestic rate income*
	column 1	*column 2*	*column 3*	*column 4*	*column 5*[2]	*column 6*	*column 7*
1975-76	195	41	3	—	151	47	104
1976-77	220	43	4	—	173	58	115
1977-78	236	44	5	—	187	63	124
1978-79	276	45	6	—	225	80	145
1979-80	308	46	8	—	254	92	162
1980-81	388	47	12	—	329	125	204
1981-82	441	48	13	—	380	148	232
1982-83	457	25	18	—	414	174	240
1983-84[3]	461	25	44	—	392	149	243
1984-85[4]	501	25	53	2	421	166	255
1985-86	545	25	56	2	462	185	276
1986-87	614	26	63	3	522	214	308
1987-88	673	26	68	3	576	237	338
1988-89	737	27	56	4	650	281	369
1989-90[5]	826	27	65	4	730	316	414

[1] Expenditure by local authorities on rate rebates.
[2] Column 5 = column (1 − 2 − 3 − 4) = column (6 + 7).
[3] In 1983-84 there was a change in Housing Benefit payments. some payments previously paid by DHSS to recipients of supplementary benefits and classed as "Rates" were from 1983-84 paid by the local authorities and classed as "Rate Rebates". Thus figures from 1983-84 are not strictly comparable with those for previous years.

[4] Figures shown for Rate Income in the L.G.F.S. publications prior to 1984-85 are net of rate rebates and domestic rate relief. From 1984-85 onwards, figures are gross of rate rebates and net of domestic rate relief.
[5] Provisional.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many grade 2 listed buildings have been demolished in Gwent and the Glamorgan counties in the last three years; and what information is held on the circumstances of such demolitions.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Before a listed building can be lawfully demolished listed building consent must be obtained. Local planning authorities consider such applications against the detailed guidance issued by my Department. This is contained in Welsh Office circular 61/81, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Where a local authority is minded to grant consent for demolition the papers must be referred to my Department for the case to be examined. In the past three years, in line with this process, two grade II listed buildings have been demolished in Gwent and the three Glamorgan counties with the benefit of listed building consent. In addition, my Department is aware of the demolition of a further grade II structure. An application for retrospective consent for this case is being considered.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the progress of international negotiations towards achieving a consensus on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The second session of the XIth special consultative meeting of Antarctic treaty parties began in Madrid on 22 April.

Discussion on mineral activities and environmental protection in Antarctica will be taken forward at this meeting and we hope a consensus can be reached.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what facilities he is making available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Garel-Jones: This Department has received no official approach about this appeal. No special facilities have therefore been offered, but there would be no objection to officers making collections on their own initiative.

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of non-Cypriots now living in *(a)* northern Turkish Cyprus and *(b)* southern Greek Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We do not have reliable information on the number of non-Cypriots in Cyprus.

China

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any representations to the Chinese Government about the denial to local people of the right to attend masses said by foreign priests at the chapel and tomb of St. Francis Xavier on Sancian island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No.

Thailand

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make United Kingdom attendance at the World bank annual meeting in Bangkok, later in the current year, conditional on the setting of a timetable for elections and a return to democracy in Thailand.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The site of the World bank's annual meeting is chosen by the membership as a whole some years in advance. We have expressed our regret at the overthrow of the democratically elected government in Thailand and our hope for the speedy restoration of democracy. However, the provisional constitution announced on 1 March has set a timetable for elections and a return to democracy.

Kurds and Shias

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in his efforts to provide the Kurds and Shias in Iraq with safe havens, he will approach the International Committee of the Red Cross and other signatories of the four international conventions of 1949, to which Iraq is a signatory, to bring these conventions, including the creation of protected neutral and safety zones as set out in the Red Cross conventions, Draper 1958, into operation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The provisions of the fourth Geneva convention, such as article 15 which provides for the setting up of neutralised zones in regions where fighting is taking place, are applicable only to international conflicts. During non-international armed conflict, article 3 of the fourth Geneva convention sets out the minimum humanitarian standards which are to be applied.

The ICRC is, of course, providing humanitarian assistance to those in need in Iraq. We fully support its efforts in this respect.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to take any initiative in association with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other signatories of the four international conventions of 1949 in respect of grave breaches, referred to in section 1 of the Geneva Conventions Act 1957, such as those against Kurds and Shias, including the convention relating to civilians in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Individual Iraqis bear personal responsibility under international law for any grave breaches of the Geneva conventions they order or commit. This principle is reiterated in United Nations Security Council resolution 674.

We are already in regular contact with coalition allies in connection with the collation of evidence which might support criminal charges against Iraqis or others who are in their custody as a result of the conflict. We understand that the Kuwaiti authorities intend to start such trials in the near future.

Sudan

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there are any proposals to create a safe haven for the Christian peoples of south Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such plans. Our efforts are directed instead towards averting the impending famine in Sudan through the despatch of substantial amounts of humanitarian aid and to urging on both sides in the long-running civil war the need to settle their differences. We wish to see all religious communities in Sudan play a full part in the country's affairs. This would involve the Government of Sudan providing adequate safeguards for Christians living in the south of the country.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment was made of the effect of calls for insurrection by radio stations on *(a)* the Kurds and *(b)* the Shias during February and March.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the end of the Gulf conflict those oppressed by Saddam Hussein in the Kurdish north and the Shia south of Iraq decided to rise up against the Iraqi regime. Those concerned took this decision for themselves.

Border Controls

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will place in the Library an English language translation of the Schengen agreement.

Mr. Garel Jones: The United Kingdom is not a party to the Schengen agreement, but we have asked the Schengen secretariat whether copies may be transmitted to the parliaments of non-signatories.

Bahurutshi Tribespeople

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the President of South Africa as a matter of urgency to aid the Bahurutshi tribespeople who were displaced from their homes in Braklaagte on 8 January.

Mrs. Chalker: We have raised the problems facing dispossessed communities with the South African authorities on a number of occasions. Staff from our embassy have visited the Braklaagte area to see the situation for themselves.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Iraq

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when and how he was consulted by the US office of foreign assets control before it issued its list of specially designated nationals of Iraq on 1 April.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 15 April 1991, *Official Report*, columns *30-31*.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what recent inquiries he has undertaken to enable him to decide whether the claim made on 1 April by the United States Government that Sollatek UK Ltd. is acting or purporting to act directly or indirectly on behalf of the Government of Iraq is correct; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he supplied to the US office of foreign assets control about Sollatek UK Ltd. following the meeting between his officials and that company on 9 April;

(3) what recent inquiries he has undertaken to enable him to decide whether the claim made on 1 April by the United States Government that Sollatek UK Ltd. is owned or controlled by Iraqis is correct; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he supplied to the US office of foreign assets control about Sollatek UK Ltd. prior to 1 April;

(5) what evidence he was supplied with by the US office of foreign assets control when it consulted him about its plans to include Sollatek UK Ltd. in its list of specially designated nationals of Iraq.

Mr. Sainsbury: DTI officials met representatives of Sollatek on 9 April. The company provided my officials with commercially confidential information which, with Sollatek's permission has been passed to our embassy in Washington to use when making representations to the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, DTOFA. No other information has been supplied to the US DTOFA prior to this.

Kuwait Oil Field Fires

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if British equipment and personnel are available to assist the extinquishing of oil field fires in Kuwait; how much has been accepted by the Kuwait Government; and what action he is taking to encourage British firms to offer such assistance of Kuwait.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 April 1991]:* A number of British companies has put forward proposals to the Kuwait Oil Company for assistance in extinguishing oil field fires. The Prime Minister wrote to the Crown Prince on 27 March offering the services of a consortium of British companies and the fire services, and I was able to discuss these proposals with the Crown Prince, the Minister for Oil and the chairman of the Kuwait Oil Company during my visit to Kuwait on 9-10 April. I hope the Kuwaitis will soon be in a position to respond positively.

Tourism

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what level of support he has given to the tourist industry for the Northumbrian region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The English tourist board, which is grant-aided by my Department, has made the following subventions to the Northumbria tourist board in the past five financial years:

	£
1986-87	206,000
1987-88	204,000
1988-89	212,000
1989-90	235,000
1990-91	385,000

TRANSPORT

MV Pescado

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the circumstances in which the Pescado, whose wreckage was found on 8 March was lost; whether that vessel was previously involved in any incident since 1980; and if he will set up a public inquiry into the incident.

Mr. McLoughlin: The loss of MV Pescado is the subject of a full inspectors' inquiry, which is at present in progress. The circumstances of the loss are, at the moment, still unclear. To the inspectors' knowledge, the only previous incidents concerning this vessel were two injuries sustained by crew members while fishing. With the inquiry in hand it would be wrong for me to make any further statement at this stage.

When the inquiry is complete, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider, in the light of its conclusions, whether a public inquiry should be ordered. If he decides against this, the report of the chief inspector of marine accidents will be published. This will be based on that of the inspectors' inquiry and will include the inspectors' findings in full.

Marine Accident Investigation Unit

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the staffing levels in the marine accident investigation unit for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Lady will, of course, be aware that the marine accident investigation branch was set up by Parliament two years ago. Therefore, I am unable to answer the question as submitted.

When the marine accident investigation branch was set up, the initial staff level was set at 15, and this was achieved by February 1990. The present level has increased to 21.

Unadopted Roads

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reform the legislation on unadopted roads.

Mr. Chope: None, at present. Following a review in 1983, it was decided that the basic principles of private street works law should remain unchanged.

M11

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those who made representations to him and his Department in relation to Mallards Plot 815 along the route of the M11 link road.

Mr. Chope: Forest housing association made representations prior to the 1989-90 public inquiry; the Bushberry road and Benn street residents association has raised the matter following the decision of 26 March.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has assessed whether the common land at Quartermile lane, next to Hackney marshes, which it proposes to take for the M11 link road, is capable of use for sporting and recreational purposes; whether the proposed exchange strip of land in front of the new Spitalfields development is capable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Land in front of the new Spitalfields site is being offered in exchange for a length of roadside verge on Quartermile lane; plot 15 in the draft compulsory purchase Order. The exchange land and plot 15 could accommodate comparable recreational activities. The majority of the existing common land at Quartermile lane will not be required by the scheme proposals, but for those other areas which are to be taken, exchange land will be given elsewhere.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make available to the hon. Member for Leyton his Department's M11 link road construction drawings of the Lea bridge interchange, giving an indication of where they differ from the plans his Department placed before the recent public inquiry.

Mr. Chope: The construction drawings are not yet available. They will be drawn at a larger scale than the order plans and with appropriate detail.

Road Building

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment is made by his Department of the quality of land, to replace other land required for road building, for its environmental benefit to the local community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Land is required to be given in exchange only for open space, common or allotment land. My Department assesses potential exchange land against the statutory criteria. The land must be not less in area and equally advantageous. Area, condition, location and use are taken into account. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment decides whether the land is suitable only after consideration of any representations and objections in response to his advertisement of the proposal.

Road Casualties

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how and when he expects to respond to, or comment on, the European Commission report by experts on the ways to reduce road casualties.

Mr. Chope: The report to the European Commission by the Committee chaired by Monsieur Gerondeau was published by the Commission on 19 February. I welcome the report as providing the basis for the development of a Community strategy for road safety from which to identify priorities for Community action to reduce casualties. Following our representations, the report is to be considered at the June Transport Council.

Exxon Valdez

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to the reports and recommendations of the several inquiries into the Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska on 24 March 1989 with a view to ascertaining any lessons relevant to the protection of the marine and coastal environment around British waters; and whether Her Majesty's Government propose any practical measures or improvements to environmental control procedures in the light of such reports and recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The US national transportation safety board marine accident report on the Exxon Valdez oil pollution disaster has made a number of recommendations. Many deal with local conditions and operations, but others, in particular those covering double bottoms and oil spill response, are actively being considered by the International Maritime Organisation: fatigue, manning, drug and alcohol abuse were issues already under consideration at IMO. The Department is participating and contributing to these international activities and will support such measures and improvements to international regulations which are seen to be beneficial and practicable.

On the domestic front, contingency arrangements to deal with pollution at sea in United Kingdom waters are kept under constant review by the Department's marine pollution control unit.

A thorough examination covering United Kingdom counter pollution responsibilities, communications and resources was carried out following the Exxon Valdez incident. The result, as I announced in the House on 6 March last year, is that the capability of the MPCU to deal with major oil spills has been increased by doubling its contracted dispersant spraying capacity by the use of larger aircraft. The MPCU's ability to detect oil slicks at sea has also been doubled by increasing to two its complement of remote sensing aircraft, which are used to control and direct counter pollution operations. Additionally, this enhanced remote sensing capability has been used to increase by 60 per cent. regular aerial surveillance patrols of United Kingdom waters to deter and detect ships making illegal operational discharges of oil.

Emergency Services

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rescue equipment, communications equipment and vehicles he plans to make standard issue for the new limited response teams; and what steps he will take to encourage greater use of private vehicles on coastguard duties.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The concept of initial response teams along with their number, location, and equipment requirements necessary to meet the recommendations of the review is still being discussed and assessed. As far as the vehicular requirements of individual teams are concerned the use of private vehicles will be considered where this would provide the most suitable and cost-effective method of meeting the response criteria recommended in the review.

Coastguard Review (Humber)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have been held between senior management and local interests in the Humber district of the coastguard review.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Following my announcement of the coastguard review, the district controller at Humber maritime rescue sub centre made a direct approach to all interested local authorities in his district advising them of the review and inviting written comments. Subsequently, most of these bodies replied. I am satisfied that all local interests have had the opportunity to comment and their views are being taken into account in the draft proposals to implement the recommendations of the review.

Coastguard Service (Annual Budgets)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the annual budget for the coastguard service for each of the past five years in cash and real terms; and what proportion of that budget is spent on the auxiliary service.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* The figures requested are as follows:

£'000

Actual cash costs	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Total Her Majesty's Coastguard costs	21,762	23,990	25,853	28,584	29,630
Auxiliary Coastguard pay, allowances and equipment	1,956	2,069	[1]2,732	2,078	2,007
Auxiliary accommodation costs	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	407	388
Assuming constant 1986-87 prices					
Inflation factor (per cent.)	100	105·45	113·14	120·36	129·98
Equivalent total Her Majesty's Coastguard costs	21,762	22,750	22,850	23,748	22,795

[1] Costs include two years spend on vehicles and boats.
[2] Not available.

Vehicle Emissions

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what instructions he has given to his regional traffic area offices with regard to complaints from the public about smoky vehicles; how many such complaints have been received since the publication of the leaflet "Wake up to what you can do for the Environment"; and what action has been taken, or is planned, in respect of such complaints.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 19 April 1991]:* If a complaint is about a smoky vehicle subject to operator licensing, which means most buses and lorries and sufficient details of the vehicle and the incident are provided, the Department will write to the operator. The letter will ask him to have the vehicle checked and to report to the Department, within 10 days of the date of the letter, on the action taken. The letter will also warn that excessive smoke emission is an offence under regulation 61 of the Construction and Use Regulations. As these arrangements have only recently come into force, it is too soon to estimate their impact on numbers of complaints.

Goole Railway Bridge

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of pilotage companies which, over the last 10 years, or the nearest practicable equivalent time span, have been licensed, or otherwise authorised or entitled, to pilot river craft on the Rivers Humber and Ouse up to the point near Goole railway bridge where pilotage ceases to be compulsory.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Associated British Ports has been responsible for pilotage services in this area both as competent harbour authority since 1 October 1988 under the Pilotage Act 1987 and prior to that as pilotage authority for the district under previous pilotage legislation. Only those pilots authorised by Associated British Ports may act as authorised pilots in this area.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions over the last 10 years, or the nearest practicable equivalent time span, on which Goole railway bridge over the River Ouse has been struck in collision by river craft to the extent of causing appreciable bridge damage; and on how many such occasions the bridge has had to be closed to rail traffic.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Since 1981, collisions causing appreciable damage to the bridge structure or its protective fenders and piles have occurred on the following dates:

Year	
1981	24 February
1984	26 August
1985	20 January
	29 November
1986	30 May
	13 June
1987	27 April
	23 October
1988	12 September
	6 November
	21 November
	23 November
	5 December
1989	28 April
	16 October
1990	29 January
	20 April
	22 August
	30 August
	12 September
	3 October
	5 October

After any collision involving the main bridge structure, rail traffic is stopped until an examination is completed by BR's area engineer. The incident on 23 November 1988 was the only one to cause an extended closure of the line.

Public Transport (Environmental Impact)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what weight is given in cost-benefit analyses to environmental criteria in assessing road and rail schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* In reaching a decision on a particular transport infrastructure scheme, we take great care to ensure that full weight is given to the environmental as well as the economic consequences. Where a scheme may give rise to significant environmental effects, an environmental assessment is prepared and the impacts quantified, where practical. The full range of evidence on economic, environmental and other effects is gathered to inform decision making, whether or not it can be quantified or expressed in monetary values.

EMPLOYMENT

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which other European community countries supported the United Kingdom's position on Commission proposals at the Social Affairs Council meeting on 26 November 1990.

Mr. Howard: At the Social Affairs Council on 26 November, the Council unanimously adopted the health and safety directive on biological agents and similarly agreed a common position on a directive to control the use of asbestos in the work place. There was also unanimous agreement on an action programme in favour of the elderly and on a resolution on the comparability of vocational training qualifications.

A large majority of delegations agreed with the United Kingdom that rapid progress could be made towards agreeing the proposed directive on the health and safety of temporary workers. A majority of member states including the United Kingdom had significant difficulties with the substance and proposed treaty base of the Commission's proposals for directives concerning the employment of part-time and temporary workers. A minority of other member states also had difficulties with proposals to amend the regulations concerning free movement of labour and social security entitlements for migrant workers; and it was agreed that the proposals should be remitted for further consideration by officials.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people there are outside the guarantee and aim groups on employment training.

Mr. Jackson: A total of 62 per cent. of people on employment training were outside the aim and guarantee groups, as at October 1990, the latest date for which information is available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of employment training schemes that will be required to close as a result of cuts in the training budgets for training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The awarding of contracts for the provision of employment training is now the responsibility of training and enterprise councils in England and Wales, and local enterprise companies in Scotland. The Employment Department does not keep figures on the withdrawal or participation of training providers in employment training.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is proposing any new initiative for training provision for special needs groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Local enterprise companies in Scotland and training and enterprise councils in England and Wales have been given the responsibility and flexibility to innovate and arrange the delivery of training to meet the varying needs of unemployed people in their area. I have no plans to set up any new initiatives for training provision for special needs groups.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what current steps he is taking to pursue the objective set out in "Training and Employment" of attracting returners to the labour market.

Mr. Jackson: Local enterprise companies in Scotland and training and enterprise councils in England and Wales have a contractual requirement to ensure equality of opportunity in all their activities. Returners to the labour market may enter employment training without being registered as unemployed, providing they have been out of employment for at least two years for domestic reasons. The framework within which local enterprise companies and training and enterprise councils operate gives them the flexibility to tailor their training with their domestic commitments—for example, with part-time participation —the use of distance learning material and support with childcare costs.

Periods of Unemployment

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the average lengths of time that individuals are unemployed; and whether this varies as between different levels of income before and after the period of unemployment.

Mr. Jackson: In January 1991, the latest date for which information is available, the median duration of unemployment in the United Kingdom was 21·7 weeks. Information relating to income is not available.

Training Schemes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent changes and reforms he has made in respect of Government training schemes; what is the financial impact of the changes; and what is the basic purpose of these changes.

Mr. Jackson: The most important recent change is that responsibility for planning and delivering training programmes at a local level has been given to the new employer-led training and enterprise councils. TECs have considerable flexibility, within a national framework set by Government, to tailor their training to meet local needs, and to evolve innovative approaches to developing skills and supporting business growth. Other significant changes include:

- Training credits, which are being piloting by 10 TECs, and one local enterprise company in Scotland. This initiative will expand and improve training for young people by giving them the power to choose and buy training to approved standards;
- the development of youth training, which assists young people to achieve nationally recognised vocational qualifications;
- the investors in people initiative, designed to encourage employers to improve performance through effective development to their people;
- education business partnerships, which are joint ventures between TECS and local education authorities involving employers, educationalists and others in the local community.

The creation of TECs and the flexibilities they have will ensure that programmes are more effective and responsive to both business and individuals. This will in turn lead to improved value for money. The purpose of these changes is to help ensure that our economy has the skills it needs.

Kilbarchan Quarry

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many times in the past 12 months the quarry in Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire, has been examined by health and safety inspectors.

Mr. Jackson: The Health and Safety Executive's quarries inspectorate has carried out two inspections at Kilbarchan quarry, Renfrewshire, during the past 12 months.

Employment Office Closures

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines he has issued to the Employment Service Executive Agency in connection with the closure of employment offices in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Jackson: The employment service's roles and responsibilities for the management of its estate are outlined in section 6 of the agency framework document, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. When considering the closure of an office, account will be taken of the comprehensiveness of the service available in the office concerned, business volumes, accessibility to other offices and whether resources are being best used.

Strikes, Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost through strikes in Yorkshire in each of the past 12 years.

Mr. Jackson: Industrial disputes data are only available by standard region. The data for Yorkshire and Humberside are given below:

Year	Working days lost (thousands)
1990[1]	89
1989	325
1988	244
1987	339
1986	250
1985	2,076
1984	9,354
1983	415
1982	575
1981	449
1980	2,832
1979	3,115

[1] 1990 data are provisional.

SCOTLAND

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evaluation he has undertaken of the enterprise initiative in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The enterprise initiative is a national initiative. Consequently, all evaluations of it have been undertaken by the Department of Trade and Industry on a United Kingdom basis, taking account of, but not evaluating separately, Scottish participation.

The following evaluations have been published and copies are available in the Libraries of the House:

Evaluation of the Consultancy Initiatives
Segal Quince Wickstead
HMSO ISBN 0 11 514677 6;

Evaluation of the Consultancy Initiatives—Second Stage
Segal Quince Wickstead
HMSO ISBN 0 11 515269 5;

Evaluation of Regional Enterprise Grants
Leslie Hays Consultants Ltd.
HMSO ISBN 0 11 515236 9;

Evaluation of Regional Enterprise Grants
Segal Quince Wickstead
HMSO ISBN 0 11 515273 3.

Fishing Vessels (Callings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of reported callings by fishing vessels for each month from, and including, January into the ports of Scrabster, Stornoway, Ullapool, Aberdeen and Shetland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: United Kingdom fishing vessels intending to cross the 4° west line of longitude to the north of the Scottish mainland are required to contact a designated office of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department. The designated offices were Ullapool, 1 January to 4 March 1991, and Peterhead, 5 March to date. The number of calls received at these offices were as follows:

	January	February	March	April (1 to 15)
Ullapool	47	100	19	—
Peterhead	—	—	190	69

No calls were made to Scrabster, Stornoway, Aberdeen or Shetland as these were not designated offices during the period specified.

Child Care

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children have been taken into care in each Scottish local authority to protect them from abuse within their family, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information relates to 1987, 1988 and 1989.

The following figures show the number of children who have received compulsory measures of care in relation to grounds *(d)*, *(dd)* and *(e)* of section 32(2) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, that is, as victims of offence, in the same households as schedule 1 offenders, and in the same households as incest victims.

	1987		1988		1989	
	Community placement[1]	Residential placement[2]	Community placement[1]	Residential placement[2]	Community placement[1]	Residential placement[2]
Borders	8	0	4	2	4	0
Central	18	6	27	0	21	3
Dumfries/Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	24	5	31	6	19	3
Grampian	29	5	32	0	48	6
Highland	11	0	8	2	27	2
Lothian	0	0	1	0	16	3
Strathclyde[3]	—	—	—	—	260	81
Tayside	4	9	25	6	29	6
Orkney	0	0	1	0	0	1
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCOTLAND	94	25	129	16	424	105

[1] Include at home, with relatives or friends, and foster parents.
[2] Include children's homes or hostels, residential schools, and assessment centres.
[3] Breakdown by individual grounds not available for Strathclyde in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the expenditure figures for each local authority area in social work each year since 1979 and the percentage of such expenditure on child care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The social work gross expenditure figures for the years 1978-79 to 1988-89 and the percentage of expenditure attributed to child care are set out in the tables below.

Gross expenditure of social work (£000s), 1978-79 to 1988-89.

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Borders	2,732	3,406	4,099	4,698	5,137	5,418	5,881	6,284	6,744	7,563	8,440
Central	6,300	7,938	9,992	11,594	12,584	13,939	15,346	16,727	18,012	19,984	22,632
Dumfries/ Galloway	3,102	3,812	4,725	5,318	5,642	6,297	6,876	7,566	8,415	9,263	10,680
Fife	7,963	10,451	13,182	15,411	17,140	18,497	22,114	23,433	25,193	28,681	32,255
Grampian	11,528	13,969	17,706	19,883	22,014	23,838	25,859	28,329	30,388	35,281	39,505
Highland	4,398	5,461	6,942	8,202	9,063	10,233	11,210	12,191	12,458	13,888	15,313
Lothian	27,688	36,451	48,669	53,111	54,391	55,770	55,531	59,676	64,828	71,844	77,364
Strathclyde	78,713	97,613	121,651	133,324	144,962	153,966	163,267	178,206	180,271	205,669	230,846
Tayside	12,476	15,764	19,443	21,914	23,634	25,129	26,932	29,553	30,923	34,264	38,318
Orkney	723	902	1,624	1,137	1,221	1,304	1,459	1,675	1,745	1,851	2,172
Shetland	755	958	1,446	1,852	2,075	2,284	2,464	2,691	2,771	3,029	3,245
Western Isles	1,284	1,771	2,262	2,686	3,034	3,370	3,295	3,578	3,806	3,875	4,408
SCOTLAND	157,662	198,496	251,741	279,130	300,897	320,045	340,234	369,909	385,554	435,192	485,178

Percentage of gross social work expenditure on child care, 1978-79—1988-89

Percentages

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Borders	11·8	13·7	11·9	11·8	11·9	12·3	11·3	10·6	11·9	10·5	9·7
Central	22·9	22·3	21·8	21·2	21·1	21·1	20·1	19·6	20·1	17·8	16·7
Dumfries/Galloway	14·5	14·8	12·3	13·7	14·1	16·3	14·0	13·2	12·3	12·6	14·3
Fife	19·8	20·5	20·1	18·2	18·8	19·6	16·1	15·8	12·2	11·1	9·5
Grampian	18·1	17·3	17·0	16·1	13·4	15·4	14·5	14·5	16·1	15·0	14·7
Highland	15·3	15·1	14·1	15·4	14·2	13·7	14·4	14·4	14·9	12·4	11·5
Lothian	22·3	22·1	22·0	22·5	21·6	22·4	19·9	18·3	19·9	19·8	20·1
Strathclyde	23·6	23·6	23·2	23·0	22·2	22·5	21·3	20·1	18·3	19·9	19·6
Tayside	21·6	22·1	12·5	21·8	21·4	21·6	18·7	18·5	19·2	18·5	16·2
Orkney	3·5	2·9	2·3	3·2	3·4	3·9	4·2	3·6	3·9	3·3	3·9
Shetland	6·1	4·2	3·5	4·2	4·7	7·0	7·3	7·4	8·1	6·7	6·9
Western Isles	3·8	4·2	3·5	3·2	3·3	3·4	2·7	3·3	3·3	3·1	3·3
SCOTLAND	21·6	21·6	20·4	21·0	20·2	20·7	19·1	18·1	17·5	17·8	17·4

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement of Government policy towards provision for the profoundly mentally handicapped.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's policy on care for all people with mental handicaps is that where possible they should be enabled to live in the community with appropriate support.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the statutory obligations of central and local government towards the provision of care for the profoundly mentally handicapped.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

SECRETARY OF STATE'S DUTIES DISCHARGED THROUGH HEALTH BOARDS

National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978

Section 1(1) Duty to promote in Scotland a comprehensive and integrated health service

DUTIES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

Section 5A Duty to prepare and publish community care plans
Section 12 Duty to promote social welfare
Section 14 Duty to provide or arrange home help services
Section 61 Duty to register establishments providing social care
Section 68 Duty to visit people in social care establishments

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

Section (2)1 Duty to provide, where need is established material assistance

Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984

Section 8 Duty to provide after-care
Section 9 Duty to appoint mental health officers
Section 11 Duty to secure training and occupation for persons suffering from mental handicap
Section 39(3) Duty to consider taking people into guardianship

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Section 8 Duty to consider carer's needs
Section 13 Duty to assess needs of young people leaving special care, for social work services

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the numbers of profoundly mentally handicapped persons in each region outwith Strathclyde and within each district council area within Strathclyde;

(2) what is his estimate of the numbers of profoundly mentally handicapped aged 16 years and over.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Arson

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many arson attacks there were on Scottish schools in 1990; how many prosecutions resulted from such attacks; and what was the total cost to each Scottish education authority from arson.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1989, the latest year for which figures are available, fire brigades attended 322 fires in educational establishments in Scotland, of which 176 were recorded as deliberate or possibly deliberate. Separate figures are not available for the numbers of such fires in schools. Information on prosecutions resulting from wilful fire-raising does not identify the type of property involved. Information on the cost to education authorities from such attacks is not collected centrally.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total Scottish local authority *(a)* current expenditure and *(b)* capital expenditure as a percentage of Scottish gross domestic product in real terms in each year since 1974.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 16 April to a similar question.

Alcohol-related Crime

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding is provided by his Department to charities relating to alcohol abuse and related problems; and if he will specify *(a)* the charity and *(b)* the amounts given each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Financial assistance under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 and section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 has been provided in the period concerned to the charitable bodies set out in the table.

	Scottish Council on Alcohol £	*Albyn House Aberdeen* £	*Sunnybrae Christian Centre* £	*Glasgow Council on Alcohol* £	*Drinkwise Orkney* £	*Inverness, Designated Place* £	*Renfrew Council on Alcohol* £
1979-80	50,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
1980-81	50, 000	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981-82	57,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982-83	64,000	150,000	—	—	—	—	—
1983-84	68,325	119,000	5,000	—	—	—	—
1984-85	70,100	109,000	—	—	—	—	—
1985-86	94,658	109,500	—	—	—	—	—
1986-87	117,045	70,000	2,155	—	—	—	—
1987-88	124,500	—	—	—	—	—	—
1988-89	143,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
1989-90	142,190	—	—	39,646	13,363	6,750	—
1990-91	128,875	—	—	—	3,350	153,350	25,000

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children have been reported to children's panels for alcohol-related offences each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on referrals to reporters to children's panels for alcohol-related offences is available for only three regions and for the years 1987, 1988 and 1989. The figures are as follows:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Central	9	17	16
Grampian	6	9	7
Strathclyde	134	139	91

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of crime reports submitted to the procurators fiscal by the police resulted in court proceedings in 1980, 1985 and 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information which is set out in the table below refers to court proceedings as a percentage of all reports submitted to procurators fiscal, whether by the police or other reporting agency. The first column details the number of reports received in each of 1980, 1985 and 1990. The subsequent columns detail the disposals for each of those years, although some of the disposals may relate to reports received in the preceding year.

	Reports received	*No proceedings*	*Non-court proceedings* *No further proceedings*[1]	*Warning letters*	*Conditional offers*	*Fiscal fines*	*Diversions*	*Balance resulting in court proceedings*	*Court proceedings as percentage of total*
1980	301,030	36,324	n/a[2]	2,526	n/a[3]	n/a[4]	n/a[5]	262,180	87·09
1985	339,317	65,580	n/a[2]	20,123	42,269	n/a[4]	n/a[5]	211,345	62·29
1990	366,472	40,813	12,303	13,645	99,791	16,985	1,403	181,532	49·54

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Conditional offers were introduced in 1984.
[4] Fiscal fines were introduced in 1988.
[5] No figures are available for the numbers of diversions in 1980 and 1985. Such disposals would have been recorded as "no proceedings".

Health Service

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many national health service hospital beds were available and how many patients received hospital treatment in East Lothian in the first three months of 1981 and 1991, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures for the first quarter of 1981 are not available. At that date statistics relating to bed numbers and hospital treatment were recorded on an annual basis only. While statistics are now kept on a monthly basis, the figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent contact he has had with Arthritis Care; what issues were dealt with; and if he will make a statement about the development of rheumatology services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been no recent contact with Arthritis Care. The development of rheumatology services is a matter for health boards to determine.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the remuneration given to each health board chairman and members.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on Friday 6 July 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), *Official Report*, Vol. 175, column *733*.

Fife Social Work Department

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish his report by Sheriff Kearney into Fife social work department; and if he will give details of the total costs of the inquiry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The chairman of the inquiry into child care policies in Fife has finished hearing evidence from the parties concerned. My right hon. Friend is in correspondence with Sheriff Kearney about the likely date for submission of his report. I hope that we shall have his report by early summer. Pending completion of the inquiry, it is not possible to estimate its final costs.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he is making to publish the management statement for Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Highlands and Islands Enterprise management statement sets out the financial, managerial and operational framework within which Highlands and Islands Enterprise will operate.

I am arranging for copies to be laid in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Language Disorders

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the specialist schools for children with speech and language disorders in England at which pupils from Scotland are being educated with support from Scottish public funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Play Areas (Accidents)

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children have been reported hurt in serious accidents in local authorities' play areas in each district in Scotland during the past 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* This information is not held centrally.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans the Government have to put forward proposals calling for a higher status to be given to animal welfare in the treaty of Rome in the context of the inter-governmental conference;

(2) whether he intends to support the proposal which would give a higher status to animal welfare in the treaty of Rome, tabled by the German Government in the context of the inter-governmental conference.

Mr. Maclean: The treaty already provides power for action to be taken on animal welfare in areas which the Government consider appropriate for Community action, notably the protection of farm animals. We will participate constructively in any discussions on proposals to give a stronger emphasis to animal welfare.

Growth Promoters

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of the use of hormones and other illegal growth promoters in other countries of the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Residues Directive 86/469, EC member states are required to carry out a programme of surveillance for residues of veterinary drugs, including hormones and other illegal growth promoters. Details of results are required to be sent annually to the EC Commission, which has responsibility for making an assessment of the position. Results for 1990 are still being submitted to the Commission.

Private Water Supplies

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the cost to farmers of the plans to charge for the monitoring of private water supplies.

Mr. Curry: The Government's consultation paper on private water supplies was circulated to interested parties earlier this year. Comments received including those covering farmers' interests are currently the subject of inter-departmental consideration.

Irrigation, East Anglia

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the horticultural industry in East Anglia about National Rivers Authority restrictions on the extraction of irrigation water from bore holes.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry has received a number of letters and telephone calls from, and held meetings with, farmers and growers and their representatives in East Anglia. Their main concern is the possible restriction by the authority of abstraction for irrigation to the hours beween 6 am and noon.

Whaling

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his current policy concerning whaling for scientific and research purposes.

Mr. Curry: The Government oppose any whaling for scientific and research purposes unless the International Whaling Commission is satisfied that it would not endanger the whale stocks in question and would provide valuable information that could not be obtained through non-lethal methods. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in sponsoring or co-sponsoring IWC resolutions calling upon the Governments of Japan, Norway, Iceland and Korea to reconsider their research programmes which did not fully meet these criteria. Iceland and Korea are not now carrying on scientific research, and programmes by Japan and Norway involve much lower numbers than was originally planned. We shall continue our firm policy against unjustified scientific whaling.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to meet his *(a)* Japanese, *(b)* Norwegian and *(c)* Icelandic counterpart to discuss the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Mr. Curry: The Governments of Japan, Norway and Iceland are kept well aware of our views on the moratorium on commercial whaling. I have also raised it in my recent meeting in Norway with the Norwegian Fisheries Minister. The moratorium will be discussed again at the forthcoming meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Reykjavik at the end of May.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will continue to support a moratorium on commercial whaling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Yes: the conditions for lifting the moratorium are not met.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has sought any scientific advice on new whaling techniques.

Mr. Curry: Developments in techniques have been reported to the International Whaling Commission each year and we shall be seeking a further evaluation of these at the forthcoming meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received about the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Mr. Curry: We have received a great many representations about the moratorium on commercial whaling, many of which recognise the leading role the United Kingdom has played in working for the conservation of whales. We shall continue this work.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which environmental groups he has consulted about the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Mr. Gummer: My officials have recently discussed the moratorium on commercial whaling with representatives of Wildlife Link, the liaison body for the following major voluntary organisations in the UK concerned with wildlife: Care for the Wild, the Environmental Investigation Agency, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace UK, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the International League for the Protection of Cetaceans, the Marine Conservation Society, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, the World Society for the Protection of Animals and the World Wide Fund for Nature. I shall be meeting them myself shortly.

Screwworm Parasite Fly

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money the United Kingdom contributes to the United Nations attempt to eradicate the American screwworm parasite fly in Libya.

Mrs. Chalker: I have been asked to reply. The United Kingdom has given full and early support to the screwworm eradication campaign, having contributed £1 million to a Food and Agriculture Organisation multi-donor trust fund. As further results of the programme become known, we will consider additional funding.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 24 April 1991

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Evidence Acts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will examine the use of the law of evidence Act by local authorities, and give guidelines on the practice of not having officers present in the court on all occasions for which a formal application is made under the Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

The Evidence Act 1938 and the Civil Evidence Act 1968, to which I assume the hon. Gentleman refers, apply to local authorities in the same way as to everyone else. I am not therefore aware of any evidence of need for such an examination or such guidelines.

Assault Cases

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General whether he plans any changes in the procedures employed in preparing prosecution cases in incidents of assault where the victim or the only witness is mentally defective.

The Attorney-General: No. I am satisfied that the existing criteria contained in the code for Crown prosecutors, together with the internal procedures adopted by the Crown prosecution service in reviewing cases, are sufficient to promote considered and proper decisions.

Judicial Review

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General if it is the normal practice for potential beneficiaries from the outcome of cases of judicial review to have to make concurrent applications.

The Attorney-General: Potential beneficiaries from the outcome of judicial review may make concurrent applications if they wish to do so. However, in cases involving a number of potential beneficiaries it is not unusual for one of their number to apply for judicial review in order to test the arguments to be advanced.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General whether any studies have been undertaken by or on behalf of the Lord Chancellor's Department into the privatisation or contractorisation of any services within its responsibilities.

The Attorney-General: As required by the "next steps" initiative, the Lord Chancellor's Department considered the options of privatisation and contracting out in relation to the Land Registry and the Public Record Office when considering their suitability for executive agency status. In both cases the most appropriate way forward was found to be the granting of executive agency status. The Land Registry was established as an executive agency in July 1990 and the Public Record Office will follow in April 1992. The Lord Chancellor's Department has contracted out nearly all basic services such as cleaning and catering and, in addition, has contracted out the Registry of County Court Judgments and the investment manager function of the Public Trust Office.

Like other Departments, the Lord Chancellor's Department keeps under review the options of privatisation and contractorisation in respect of a wide range of its functions.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether, prior to the offer for sale, Property Services Agency services will be structured into two separate businesses;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress towards privatisation of Property Services Agency services.

Sir George Young: Property Services Agency services were restructured last autumn into two main businesses, one dealing with project management and design and the other with maintenance. This will make it possible for Property Service Agency services to be offered for sale in more than one part, but final decisions on sale have not yet been taken. The businesses continue to make progress in reducing staff and costs in order to become competitive.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the National Rivers Authority expects to publish the results of its 1990 national survey.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the NRA intends to publish results this autumn for comparison with those from the 1985 river quality survey.

Common Dog Whelk

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on why the common dog whelk has not re-established itself around the Isle of Wight since the banning of tributyl and the reasons for the differential between the island and other areas.

Mr. Baldry: The dog whelk is the most sensitive species to TBT contamination. Use of TBT-based paints on yachts until the ban in 1987 caused many populations to decline, especially in areas, such as the south coast, of intense yachting activity. Since the ban, there have been gradual improvements in water quality. However, the dog whelk has only limited ability to disperse and recolonise areas which were heavily impacted. Thus, it is likely to be some time before the Government's monitoring programme is able to demonstrate recovery of this species. There are surviving populations along the south coast of the Isle of Wight, but these have not contributed to any significant extent to the recolonisation of grossly affected areas. This is no different from the situation in other parts of the country where similar conditions prevail.

Drinking Water Quality

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a comprehensive list of every agreement that has been made with a water company for relaxation of any of the standards in the EC drinking water directive, together with dates by which compliance is required.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has not entered into any agreements with water companies for the relaxation of standards. He has authorised relaxations of certain standards in certain circumstances under regulation 4 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989, which implements article 9 of the drinking water directive; and he has accepted undertakings from companies under section 20 of the Water Act 1989 where he was satisfied that the company was taking all appropriate action to secure or facilitate compliance with a particular standard.

Details of all authorisations and undertakings are available on the public register maintained by water companies. Copies of them are included in the register maintained by the Director General of Water Services and are available in the Library. In most cases compliance must be achieved by not later than 1995.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish full information about compliance with drinking water quality standards in every water supply zone.

Mr. Baldry: Each water company maintains a public register which contains full information for each water supply zone about the results of analysis of all sampling carried out by the company under the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989. Individuals are able to obtain copies of register entries from the companies. The first annual report of the drinking water inspectorate, to be published later this year, will summarise the extent to which each water company has complied with the requirements of the regulations in its water supply zones.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what facilities he is making available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department is in contact with the St. John Ambulance Brigade and will be giving publicity to the "Over to you, John" appeal through its in-house journal.

Benzene

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to establish an air pollution monitoring network in the United Kingdom to include the monitoring of benzene levels and other hydrocarbons.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has been carrying out limited monitoring of United Kingdom levels of hydrocarbons, including benzene, for several years as part of a programme of research developing the technology for measuring these pollutants.

As announced in the environment White Paper, the Government aim to expand the existing urban monitoring networks. A first stage of this expansion is to be implemented early next year and will include two additional sites measuring benzene and other hydrocarbons.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of actual expenditure by Leeds development corporation on publicity and promotion in 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91, and the proposed level of expenditure in 1991-92; and if he will list the main elements of expenditure under the heading of publicity and promotion.

Mr. Key: Leeds development corporation's expenditure on publicity and promotion was £223,000 in 1988-89, £324,000 in 1989-90 and £480,000 in 1990-91. For 1991-92 the proposed level of expenditure is £500,000. The main elements of expenditure under the publicity and promotion heading are marketing of the urban development area and Leeds in general; the marketing of specific sites; publications; exhibitions; and community liaison.

Audible Bird Scarers

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish a revised code of practice relating to the use of audible bird scarers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: As soon as our work in responding to the recommendations of the noise review working party will allow. The recommendations include three on codes of practice.

Water Supplies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department has taken to assess the impact of the mild winters on domestic water supplies this summer in Chelmsford; and whether his Department expects any disruption to the supply of water.

Mr. Baldry: Such assessments are primarily for the water companies to make in conjunction with the National Rivers Authority, but I understand that in areas affected by shortages, including Chelmsford, companies expect to maintain supplies with selective restrictions on less essential uses until rainfall brings a substantial recovery in resources.

Standard Spending Assessment Handbook

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make available his Department's publication entitled "The Standard Spending Assessment Handbook 1991-92".

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has today placed copies of this document in the Library of the House. Copies have also been sent to every local authority in England and to the local authority associations.

Green Belt

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the development of redundant hospital sites in green belt areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* My Department issued a consultation paper on this subject on 11 March. The closing date for responses is 13 May. To date, 25 responses have been received.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce a scheme for classifying green belt sites according to their environmental and amenity value.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* No. Such a scheme could imply that some parts of the green belt were less protected than others.

Council House Sales, Harrogate

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of council houses sold to tenants of Harrogate borough council.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* A table showing the available information on total sales for each English local authority since 1979-80 was recently placed in the Library. In the case of Harrogate borough council, almost all the reported sales have been to sitting tenants.

Industrial Sites (Noise)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the maximum level of decibel noise laid down as reasonable for a B1 and B2 classification of an industrial site.

(2) what categories of industrial site are required to operate at a decibel level not exceeding 30 decibels.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* Industrial sites are not categorised by reference to decibel levels in planning, pollution control, or environmental protection legislation. Planning conditions may impose particular noise limits in individual cases.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Truancy

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will empower the governing bodies of schools as well as local education authorities to initiate prosecutions in cases of truancy.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so. Truancy needs to be tackled vigorously. Local education authorities have the power to prosecute the parents of truants, and it is important that they should use that power in appropriate cases.

Foreign Teachers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by local education authority *(a)* the number of foreign teachers recruited from abroad who are teaching in schools for the latest date he has available and *(b)* the countries they come from.

Mr. Fallon: The information required is not collected centrally. From records held, out of 397,200 teachers in full-time service in local authority-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools—England and Wales, March 1988—1,300 were trained outside the United Kingdom. Details of the countries in which they were trained are not readily available. The country in which they were trained is not necessarily their country of origin.

Insurance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of state for Education and Science what estimates he has on the total cost of insurance premiums and insurance claims made by the education authorities in England in relation to teacher absence for reasons of sickness in 1988, 1989 and 1990; and what information he has as regards the first quarter of 1991.

Mr. Eggar This information is not available centrally.

School Library Books

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what average amount per pupil has been spent on school library books by Durham education authority each year since 1987.

Mr. Fallon: Information on school library books is not collected separately, but is contained within a figure for local education authority spending on text and library books. Figures returned by local education authorities for spending on books need to be treated with caution because of differing local authority practices in classifying spending between books and equipment. The table therefore shows, for each year for which information is available, spending figures for books and equipment together as well as for books separately.

Durham—Expenditure per pupil

Year	*Books and Equipment* £	*Of which Books* £
1986-87	30·68	9·42
1987-88	33·92	10·27
1988-89	44·87	12·38

St. Thomas More High School

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions there have been between Her Majesty's inspectorate, the Catholic church and Tameside metropolitan borough council about lack of space and facilities for the national curriculum at St. Thomas More high school, Denton.

Mr. Fallon: There has been no discussion between Her Majesty's inspectorate and the Salford Roman Catholic diocesan schools commission. There has been discussion between Her Majesty's inspectorate and the school and between the Department and the Salford Roman Catholic diocesan schools commission and Tameside metropolitan borough council.

School Buildings

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out, by local education authority, the level of capital spending on school buildings in 1978-79 and 1984-85, and the latest available years.

Mr. Fallon: The readily available information is shown in the table.

Capital spending by LEAs on school buildings
(£ million cash)

LEA	1978-79	1984-85	1988-89
Barking	·5	2·1	1·3
Barnet	1·4	·9	2·6
Bexley	1·3	2·2	3·2
Brent	1·3	1·8	·6
Bromley	·7	2·4	6·6
Croydon	·8	1·3	5·0
Ealing	1·2	·7	1·6
Enfield	1·6	·7	4·0
Haringey	·9	1·0	3·3
Harrow	1·3	·9	2·6
Havering	·4	·9	3·4
Hillingdon	2·1	1·4	7·8
Hounslow	2·0	2·5	5·5
Kingston	·2	·4	1·7
Merton	·7	·9	2·4
Newham	2·5	4·5	2·9
Redbridge	1·3	1·8	4·0
Richmond	·7	1·2	·8
Sutton	·3	1·3	3·1
Waltham Forrest	1·5	·9	6·4
ILEA	12·7	10·4	21·3
Birmingham	2·8	8·3	4·2
Coventry	2·3	1·5	8·2
Dudley	1·5	4·0	3·6
Sandwell	1·8	1·3	·6
Solihull	1·2	1·1	2·1
Walsall	2·4	2·1	2·8
Wolverhampton	2·0	1·0	1·9
Knowsley	·8	1·3	1·2
Liverpool	1·9	1·6	9·7
St. Helens	2·5	1·4	1·5
Sefton	1·4	1·2	1·7
Wirral	·8	2·2	4·7
Bolton	1·0	1·3	2·2
Bury	1·8	·6	1·0
Manchester	1·1	5·3	8·6
Oldham	1·0	1·5	2·2
Rochdale	2·0	1·2	2·5
Salford	1·9	1·8	3·3
Stockport	·8	·9	2·8
Tameside	1·2	1·8	2·4
Trafford	·4	·6	1·4
Wigan	2·4	1·8	3·7
Barnsley	2·0	·1	1·7
Doncaster	1·5	·7	·8
Rotherham	1·6	1·3	2·2
Sheffield	1·6	9·1	9·0
Bradford	2·2	11·2	10·6
Calderdale	1·3	1·5	3·3
Kirklees	1·9	4·0	2·9
Leeds	3·9	5·2	15·1
Wakefield	2·3	1·3	5·6
Gateshead	1·1	2·4	3·0
Newcastle	1·4	1·6	4·4
North Tyne	1·2	1·3	2·8
South Tyne	1·4	3·3	2·5
Sunderland	1·4	2·4	4·9
Isles of Scilly	·1	0·0	n/a
Avon	3·0	4·3	6·5
Bedfordshire	5·7	2·3	4·4
Berkshire	4·9	9·0	n/a
Buckinghamshire	4·1	8·6	6·3
Cambridgeshire	5·9	6·8	15·4
Cheshire	10·4	8·3	21·9
Cleveland	3·3	3·5	5·1
Cornwall	4·3	3·3	6·5
Cumbria	1·7	4·0	5·2
Derbyshire	6·1	8·5	11·5
Devon	4·0	6·7	11·3
Dorset	3·4	3·2	3·5
Durham	2·8	3·2	3·7
East Sussex	2·8	6·3	10·2
Essex	11·6	7·1	n/a
Gloucestershire	2·9	4·2	5·8
Hampshire	11·6	16·1	24·6
Hereford and Worcester	5·1	2·9	n/a
Hertfordshire	3·1	8·0	10·7
Humberside	7·7	6·0	11·1
Isle of Wight	1·2	·6	1·8
Kent	9·2	5·3	11·4
Lancashire	6·1	5·0	10·6
Leicestershire	4·6	4·9	10·2
Lincolnshire	3·1	5·2	6·7
Norfolk	4·9	4·6	6·8
North Yorkshire	4·5	8·5	6·1
Northamptonshire	5·3	4·4	4·8
Northumberland	2·7	1·3	1·7
Nottinghamshire	5·9	3·9	n/a
Oxfordshire	1·4	2·3	6·1
Shropshire	3·5	2·2	4·2
Somerset	1·8	2·5	n/a
Staffordshire	8·4	5·5	7·7
Suffolk	5·1	4·0	10·1
Surrey	5·1	9·1	18·4
Warwickshire	2·5	2·4	3·3
West Sussex	2·2	5·4	7·2
Wiltshire	1·8	5·5	3·7

Notes:
1. n/a indicates data not available.
2. Expenditure is given in cash terms, rounded to the nearest £0·1 million; it includes provision from within the Department of the Environment's urban programme, and covers nursery, primary, secondary and special education.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library instructions given by his Department in relation to proposed contracts entered into by local education authorities concerning the assets of further education colleges since his statement in March.

Mr. Eggar: After my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, an official of the Department wrote to all chief education officers. Copies of this letter have been placed in the Library today. Further guidance will be issued shortly, and will also be placed in the Library.

Schools (Asbestos)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department will undertake a survey on the levels of asbestos in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Risk of exposure to asbestos in buildings, including schools and colleges, was reported to be low by a Government working party in 1987. It is for local education authorities and other responsible bodies to judge the need for surveys in schools. In 1986 the Department distributed updated guidance on asbestos in educational establishments, including advice about the circumstances under which a survey might be required.

Haberdashers' Aske's CTC

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what specific mechanism has been incorporated in paragraph 8(ii) of the funding agreement for the Haberdashers' Aske's city technology college for agreeing the value of the 99-year lease to be granted on the sites to be used for the purposes of the college.

Mr. Eggar: Paragraph 8 provides for the value of the lease to be agreed in writing between the Secretary of State and the CTC, after reference to the district valuer, at the time it is granted. If agreement is not reached, the value is to be determined by an expert appointed by agreement between the two parties, or if such agreement is not reached, one appointed by the president of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the cost of this being borne equally between the two parties.

Higher Education (Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the Government have spent *(a)* per student and *(b)* per graduate of higher education in each year since 1978-79 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, indexed so that 1978-79 equals 100.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Estimated public funding per student is shown for those higher education students at universities in Great Britain and polytechnics and colleges in England. Data are given for the financial years 1980-81 through to 1988-89. Data on cost per graduate are available from 1981-82 and are for higher education students in universities and polytechnics only for academic years.

Higher education: public funding per full-time equivalent student

	Cash (£)	Real index
1980-81	3,490	100
1981-82	3,700	97
1982-83	3,960	97
1983-84	4,040	94
1984-85	4,150	92
1985-86	4,240	89
1986-87	4,360	89
1987-88	4,600	89
1988-89	4,840	87

Higher education: cost per graduate (first degrees only)

	Cash (£)	Real index
1981-82	9,900	100
1982-83	10,300	98
1983-84	11,000	100
1984-85	11,500	99
1985-86	12,100	99
1986-87	12,800	101
1987-88	13,600	102
1988-89	13,800	96

The unit public funding figures are calculated by dividing estimated aggregate expenditure by financial year full-time equivalent student numbers.

The cost per graduate estimates reflect both recurrent and equipment costs. They exclude research and superannuation costs. The figures are necessarily approximate. Account is taken of average course length and the costs associated with those who fail to complete their course successfully. The real-terms indices have been calculated using the gross domestic product deflator.

PRIME MINISTER

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Cabinet Office in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his estimate for 1990-91 and budget for 1991-92.

The Prime Minister: No expenditure has been incurred by the Cabinet Office on fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation since 1979-80 and none is planned for 1991-92.

Senior Civil Servants (Degrees)

Mr. Page: To ask the Prime Minister if he will numerate those Under Secretaries who have engineering, science or mathematics degrees; and what percentage that is of the total.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to his reply, 19 February 1991, c. 89]:* Information now available records 110 Under Secretaries—22 per cent. of the total—with degrees in one or more of these subjects. Twenty-seven have engineering degrees, 70 have science degrees and 16 have mathematics degrees.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Escorts

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the costs and other consequences of police escorts for wide and heavily loaded vehicles; if he has considered whether this work can be taken over by public companies and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Association of Chief Police Officers has recently reviewed the current arrangements for providing police escorts for wide and heavily loaded vehicles. Its report is expected shortly and we shall consider any recommendations which the association may make.

Marriage Guidance

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to make available additional Government funding for Relate marriage guidance for the financial years 1992 to 1995.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This is under consideration as part of the current public expenditure survey.

Public Order Act

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *141* and to the hon. Member for Teignbridge of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *547*, and to his letter to the hon. Member for Teignbridge of 26 March, when he expects to announce the results of his review of section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We expect to announce our conclusions on section 39 very soon.

Non-animal Testing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to promote non-animal tests for cosmetics.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold: Before any project licence is granted, the applicant must show that he or she has considered alternatives not using living animals for any of the procedures. In the particular case of cosmetics, licences are granted only for the safety testing of these substances, generally in order to satisfy national and international regulatory and legal requirements for the protection of the public.

The Home Office, although not itself responsible for these regulations, will continue to support moves to encourage regulatory bodies to review their requirements so that they do not entail unnecessary testing on living animals.

In addition, the Home Office funds research into ways of reducing, refining or replacing the use of living animals in scientific procedures. Since the research scheme was established, some 10 projects have been funded, one of which was concerned with refining eye irritancy testing. This project may have particular implications for the safety testing of substances used in cosmetics, as well as many other products.

Fire Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those stations which the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority proposes to close and remove pump appliances from operational service.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This is at present wholly a matter for the London fire and civil defence authority. It will not become one for Ministers unless the authority submits proposals for closures of fire stations or reductions in the number of operational firefighters or firefighting appliances in accordance with the terms of section 19 of the Fire Services Act 1947.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will quantify the savings in mobilising time from fire stations in London that are currently being achieved by the CMC mobilising project in the London fire brigade.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The main objective of the London fire and civil defence authority's central mobilising project was to replace three centres and their outdated equipment with one which, with modern technology, would maintain high standards of emergency response throughout London. I am satisfied that this objective has been met.

Child Abuse

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal convictions there have been for offences against children where children were abused by a parent in Blyth Valley and Northumberland in the last two years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Except in the case of homicides, no information is collected centrally on convictions of parents for offences against their children. I understand that for Northumberland police force area there were two homicides of children in 1988 and one in 1989 which resulted in convictions of their parents for manslaughter.

Probation Service

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average weekly cost per case in report work for magistrates courts by the probation services in England and Wales, including local and central costs in the last year for which records are available;

(2) what was the total cost to the probation service in England and Wales, including both local and central costs, of report work for magistrates courts in the last year for which records are available; and how many such cases were handled in that year by probation officers.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No separate information is available on the cost of report work for magistrates courts. The estimated average cost per social inquiry report completed, which includes reports for magistrates courts, in 1988-89 was £210, which the average for other types of report was £860—"Probation Statistics, England and Wales 1989", table 12.3. In 1989, a total of 140,230 social inquiry reports were prepared for magistrates courts, 7,160 domestic inquiries about custody of and access to children, 1,990 conciliation cases and a number of other types of report—tables 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 of "Probation Statistics". The cost estimate was based on information collected in 1977 and will be updated when the results of the 1990 national probation survey are available.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average weekly cost per case in the provision of matrimonial supervision work by the probation service in England and Wales, including local and central costs, in the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The readily available information is the annual cost per domestic supervision case, which includes those cases resulting from matrimonial proceedings. In 1988-89 the average estimated cost per case was £610—"Probation Statistics, England and Wales, 1989" table 12.3. The estimate was based on information collected in 1977 and will be updated when the results of the 1990 national probation survey are available.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total cost to the probation service in England and Wales, including both local and central costs, of report work for divorce courts in the last year for which records are available; and how many such cases were handled in that year by probation officers;

(2) what was the average weekly cost per case in the report work for divorce courts by the probation service in England and Wales, including local and central costs, in the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No separate information is available centrally on the weekly or annual costs per case of report work for divorce courts. The costs are included in the estimated average cost per report for domestic reports, bail information means inquiries, inquiries for county courts and reports prepared on court appearance

for sentence after deferment. In the financial year 1988-89, the estimated cost per report completed was £860—table 12.3 of "Probation Statistics, England and Wales 1989". In 1989, the probation service dealt with 25,420 domestic inquiries concerning custody of and access to children—table 9.2. The cost estimate was based on information collected in 1977 and will be updated when the results of the 1990 national probation survey are available.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost to the probation service in England and Wales, including both local and central costs, of matrimonial supervision work in the last year for which records are available; and how many such cases were handled in that year by probation officers.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The available information is for the average cost per case receiving domestic supervision. In 1988-89 the estimated annual cost per case was £610; the number receiving domestic supervision following matrimonial proceedings was 3,240 in 1989—tables 1.2, 12.3 of "Probation Statistics, England and Wales, 1989". The cost estimate was based on information collected in 1977 and will be updated when the results of the 1990 national probation survey are available.

Durham Prison

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects slopping out to be discontinued in Her Majesty's prison Elvet, Durham; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Angela Rumbold: Slopping out is now planned to end at HM prison Durham late in 1994.

Crime, Blyth Valley

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the percentage change in the number of crimes in the borough of Blyth Valley for 1990-91;

(2) how many car thefts were reported in the borough of Blyth Valley in the last three years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is not collated centrally for the borough of Blyth Valley.

Deportation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many copies of form IM3A are distributed in each year by officers to persons stopped by them while on patrol and as to his policy on the issuing of each form to persons not guilty of any offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that he is not aware of any instances of such forms being distributed to persons stopped by officers on patrol.

Form IM3—notice as regards liability to deportation —and form IM3A—acknowledgement of receipt of form IM3—are normally served on persons who are not British citizens, at the police station and following charging with an imprisonable offence.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals from middle east countries issued with notices of intention to deport on national security grounds between November 1990 and January 1991 and who were removed from the United Kingdom following the making of a deportation order against them were so removed on or after 16 January.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Burglaries, Leyton

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many burglaries there were in Leyton in each of the last three years; and what percentage those were of all reported crimes in the area.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information available centrally is for Waltham Forest and is given in the table. Tables giving numbers of offences recorded by the police in each borough of the Metropolitan police district are placed in the Library quarterly.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in the Waltham Forest district of the Metropolitan police district

Year	*Number of offences of burglary*	*Percentage of all recorded offences*
1988	3,601	20
1989	4,352	22
1990	4,813	23

Bail

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a survey to determine the extent to which persons, who have been charged with an offence and subsequently released on bail, commit further offences prior to their cases being finalised by the courts.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We have no plans to undertake a national survey of this kind. A number of police forces have made studies of crimes alleged to have been committed by people on bail.

Drug-related Offences

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis outlining the standing policy of the Stoke Newington division in policing drug abuse and drug dealing in its area; and what assessment has been made of the effectiveness of the policy.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the Stoke Newington division pursues an active multi-agency approach to drug abuse and drug dealing. The arrest of drug dealers was one of the main objectives for the division in 1990, and remains a priority for 1991. The division liaises with the local authority, commercial concerns and community groups.

This approach has resulted in the arrest of 120 persons for dealing in drugs during 1990, and there are indications of a slow but steady reduction in the number of people to be seen dealing in drugs on the streets. There have also been many drug seizures, including a particularly significant seizure of 240 kg of cannabis.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies the Government have *(a)* made and *(b)* published concerning asylum seekers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: From time to time, and particularly in the context of their present review of asylum arrangements, the Government have made internal assessments of relevant issues. Published material on asylum seekers includes an annual Home Office statistical bulletin, most recently "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1989", issue 22/90, published last July, and specific chapters in the annual reports of the immigration and nationality department.

Mauritius

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been allowed entry into the United Kingdom from Mauritius in each of the last five years;

(2) how many students from Mauritius have been allowed entry into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table:

Numbers of Mauritian citizens admitted to the United Kingdom, 1986 to 1990

Year	Total	Students
1986	17,600	350
1987	20,100	440
1988	20,000	510
1989	21,700	570
1990	23,100	690

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from the island of Mauritius have been allowed the right of residence in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of Mauritian citizens accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom between 1986 and 1990 is given in the table.

Mauritian citizens accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, 1986-90

Year	Numbers
1986	270
1987	300
1988	280
1989	220
1990	320

Animal Welfare

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he gives to local authorities regarding the department in which the official with responsibility for animal welfare should be stationed; and what information he keeps on the number and location of those officials.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local authorities have a number of officers with responsibilities for animal welfare who, in turn, have links with a number of Government Departments. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary does not issue guidance about how local authorities should allocate duties to their staff; nor is any central record held of the number or location of the staff concerned.

TRANSPORT

European Community Transport Council

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the meeting of the European Community Transport Council on 27 March.

Mr. Rifkind: I attended the Council which made useful progress and prepared the ground for decisions on a variety of issues at the forthcoming Council on June 20 and 21.

On railways, Ministers reached broad agreement on greater autonomy from government for national railway undertakings, financial restructuring of those undertakings, public service obligations and the desirability of separate accounting for operations and for infrastructure. A range of views was also expressed on Commission proposals for access to railway networks by new operators for both domestic and international services. The presidency invited the committee of permanent representatives—COREPER—to consider the issues further in the light of the discussion with the aim of revised proposals being brought before the June Council.

In aviation, the Council adopted a measure which will enable quick action to be taken against air carriers engaging in predatory activity. This safeguard is a vital complement to the liberalised single market being developed in the Community.

In the course of a discussion about the effect of Gulf hostilities on air carriers, the Commission undertook to present to the Council a report on state aids. The Commission reported that negotiations on air services arrangements with Norway and Sweden had ended successfully and that a draft agreement would be presented to the Council shortly. The Council considered whether the air cargo regulation adopted at its previous meeting should be extended to additional carriers, and concluded that further work was needed.

The negotiations on alpine transit being conducted by the Commission with third countries on behalf of member states were discussed at length and included a lunchtime session with the Swiss and Austrian Ministers. It was concluded that the talks should continue along the lines of the existing mandate. The Commission was given additional flexibility to pursue, with Austria, the possibility of a system which would limit total gaseous emissions from transit vehicles and, with Switzerland, the possibility of exemptions from the Swiss 28-tonne limit for HGVs.

Turning to road safety, an agreement in principle emerged on roadworthiness testing for cars, but consideration was postponed until June. The Commission urged on member states the benefits to be gained from further safety measures, and stated that it would analyse the recently published Gerondeau report on road safety to see what scope there was for proposals to be made. Several member states stressed the importance of the Council giving careful consideration to the report. The presidency undertook to produce a draft resolution on the report for consideration in June. Talks on the Community driving

licence centred on the introduction of the new format in certain member states and provision for the testing of motor cyclists; the proposed second directive was referred back to COREPER for technical points to be further considered in preparation for a decision in June.

Finally, on a general note, the Transport Commissioner, Mr. Van Miert, said that he intended to draw up a white paper, setting out the Commission's broad approach to future Community transport policy, for discussion at a forthcoming Council.

Road Safety

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will set out the arguments on which Her Majesty's Government have based their view that article 75 of the treaty of Rome empowers the Council of Ministers to legislate on road safety matters;

(2) when Her Majesty's Government came to the view that article 75 of the treaty of Rome empowered the Council of Ministers to legislate on road safety matters.

Mr. Chope: The Government have always recognised that there is doubt whether a successful legal challenge could be brought against a Community measure on road safety based on article 75 of the treaty. The arguments on competence were most recently set out during the Standing Committee debate on 13 March 1991 in EC documents 9228/88 and 10333/90 on the compulsory use of seat belts.

MV Polly Anna

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken in response to the complaint made to his Department by Mr. S. Norman in January concerning the infringement of safety standards relating to the MV Polly Anna; what information he has on the whereabouts of the MV Polly Anna; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Following the complaint in December 1990, my Department placed the Polly Anna, which is not a UK-registered vessel, on the watchlist for inspection if it returned to the UK. However, in January the vessel was detained by the Gibraltar authorities because of its general condition, the condition of its equipment and its lack of proper certification.

The vessel broke the detention order by sailing from Gibraltar on 26 January. She was immediately placed on the watchlists of all other administrations which are signatories of the memorandum of understanding on port state control. It is now understood that shortly after this the vessel was detained in Greece, and abandoned by its crew. My Department has sought further details from the Greek authorities.

Stansted Airport Rail Link

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the projected rate of return on British Rail's Stansted airport link investment; and what is the rate of return *(a)* so far achieved and *(b)* estimated for the current year.

Mr. Freeman: The projected rate of return on investment when the Stansted express was approved was 5 per cent. The Stansted express has been operational for only one month so it is too early to comment on its performance so far or provide estimates for the current year.

Speed Limiters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which foreign countries require speed limiters to be fitted to cars.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any country which requires speed limiters to be fitted to cars.

A1, Northumberland

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any further plans for improvements to the A1 in Northumberland.

Mr. Chope: Initial investigations by the joint A1 steering group identified a number of low-cost safety schemes for the route in Northumberland which have now been included in the regional programme. Any further proposals must await the final report of the steering group.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when direct passenger trains will start to run through the channel tunnel *(a)* from London to Paris, *(b)* from Leeds to Paris and *(c)* from Edinburgh to Paris.

Mr. Freeman: Day services from London to Paris will commence when the tunnel opens. Negotiations are continuing between British Rail and the manufacturers to overcome technical difficulties relating to the day trains for direct services from cities north of London. No timetable for the delivery of these trains has yet been agreed, but they are unlikely to enter service before 1994. British Rail still plans to run night services both from London and direct from cities north of London when the tunnel opens.

Chelmsford Roads

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department is taking to tidy up litter along the A12 Chelmsford bypass and other roads in the parliamentary constituency of Chelmsford which come under his Department's responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: As from 1 April 1991, the responsibility for clearance of litter from trunk roads was passed to the district and borough councils under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on the widening of the A12 Chelmsford bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We hope to let a design commission this summer and announce our preferred option in 1993.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress on the building of the proposed M12 from the M25 to Chelmsford.

Mr. Chope: Design consultants were appointed at the end of 1990. The target for announcement of a preferred route is 1993.

Smoke Hoods (Aircraft)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet reached a view on the mandatory provision of smoke hoods in aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The CAA is today publishing a report on "Improving Passenger Survivability in Aircraft Fires—a Review" (CAP 586). In that document it reports its view that after a prolonged investigation of this matter, it believes that the compulsory provision of smokehoods would on balance not be in the interests of safety.

I have noted that the majority of expert opinion including the aviation safety authorities of other countries who have looked into this matter, share the CAA's conclusion. However, other views have been expressed and I welcome the CAA's assurance that it will keep under review all technological developments both in smoke-hoods and other survival techniques.

Transpennine Road

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the consultant's report on the transpennine road crossing.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* We expect to receive the final report shortly. We shall make an announcement after assessing its findings and recommendations.

EMPLOYMENT

Docks (Accidents)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of accidents and injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive in each of the former national dock labour scheme ports in each year since 1979 by port.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria were used in training and enterprise councils making application for a share of the extra £120 million awarded to the employment training programme; what criteria were used by the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate in distributing the funds; and whether any training and enterprise councils have complained to the regional director about the amount they have received.

Mr. Jackson: The additional £120 million for employment training in the current financial year was made available to allow ET to make the same contribution to assisting the long-term unemployed as had been expected when original budgets were allocated to training and enterprise councils in November 1990.

Additions to ET budgets were agreed with TECs to help ensure that the Government's guarantee of an offer of an opportunity to 18 to 24-year-olds unemployed between six and 12 months and the Government's aim of an offer of an opportunity to 18 to 49-year-olds unemployed for two years or longer were met. Additional resources were also allocated to enable TECs to assist other long-term unemployed people, especially those with special training needs. TECs have welcomed these additions to their ET budgets.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the extra funds awarded to the employment training programme has been specifically targeted by training and enterprise councils to enhance the unit price of training for people with disabilities and learning difficulties; and if he will give an analysis of where the £120 million was distributed by TECs.

Mr. Jackson: It is not possible to identify separately the proportion of the additional £120 millions made available for employment training in the current financial year which has been targeted by training and enterprise councils on provision for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. The extra money has been incorporated in TEC business plans which are commercially confidential.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

14. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he now proposes to take to promote arms control in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: We want to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the missiles used to deliver them. We will work through the nuclear suppliers group, the Australia group and the missile technology control regime to choke off the supply of the materials, components and technology needed to manufacture such weapons.

We will also pursue a more responsible approach internationally to conventional weapons transfers, including through a UN register of arms transfers to monitor the scale of arms build-up in any country.

29. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on recent efforts by Her Majesty's Government to promote the peace process in the middle east.

31. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by Her Majesty's Government towards the convening of an international conference on the middle east.

38. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made since the end of the Gulf war towards a comprehensive peace settlement in the middle east.

39. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current stage of the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the end of the Gulf conflict the United States Secretary of State has launched a new

initiative aimed at starting peace negotiations between Israel and her neighbours, including the Palestinians. He has visited the area three times. We support his efforts to secure agreement from the parties to attend a regional conference, and are encouraging them to do so. Our European partners are in agreement with this approach. We still think it likely that an international conference under United Nations auspices will be needed at a later stage.

Kuwait

18. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the authorities in Kuwait about the treatment of Palestinians in that country since the end of the Gulf war.

Mr. Hurd: I expressed concern to Kuwaiti Ministers, even before the liberation of Kuwait, that the rule of law should be re-established as quickly as possible after the Government's return. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence both raised the treatment of Palestinians during their visits to Kuwait soon after liberation. Our ambassador has reinforced this message. I expect to visit Kuwait myself very soon.

British Hostages

19. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate what recent action has been taken to obtain the return of the hostages in the Lebanon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to make every effort in our contacts with the Iranian authorities, who we believe to have a decisive influence, to secure the release of the hostages. We have also contacted other countries, and the EC troika, to reinforce the point in their own dealings with Iran.

Most recently, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development raised the matter with the Iranian Foreign Minister on 20 April.

Moscow Human Rights Conference

20. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is Her Majesty's Government's intention to attend the human rights conference in Moscow in September.

Mr. Hurd: We shall decide somewhat later.

South Africa

15. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to meet the new South African ambassador.

16. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit South Africa to discuss recent political developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I met Mr. Kent Durr, the new South African ambassador, on 18 April. I hope to visit South Africa in the summer.

21. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure the implementation of the United Nations declaration on South Africa, adopted in December 1989.

32. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure implementation of the United Nations declaration on South Africa, adopted by the 16th special session of the general assembly in December 1989.

34. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure implementation of the United Nations declaration on South Africa adopted in December 1989.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We continue to encourage all sides in South Africa to maintain progress towards the aims set out in the United Nations declaration—the end of apartheid and the adoption of a non-racial democratic constitution arrived at by peaceful means through negotiation.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure the implementation of the United Nations declaration on South Africa adopted at the 14th special session in December 1989.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to encourage all sides in South Africa to maintain progress towards the aims set out in the United Nations declaration—the end of apartheid and the adoption of a non-racial democratic constitution arrived at by peaceful means through negotiation.

Lithuania

22. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in connection with Lithuania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We were encouraged by the news that negotiations took place between Lithuanian and Soviet authorities on 4 April. We shall continue to urge both sides to negotiate constructively to reach a solution acceptable to both sides.

EC Legislative Competence

23. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ask the European Commission to make a declaration of the areas of legislative competence over which the EC will choose not to claim competence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Areas of Community competence are defined by the Community treaties, as interpreted by the European Court of Justice. The extent of Community competence is one of the questions under discussion in the intergovernmental conference on political union. But my hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that Her Majesty's Government are not convinced of the need for any significant extension of Community competence.

Poland

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to send medical aid to Poland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have already done so, together with European Community partners. The EC provided £2·8 million of medical aid in 1990. The United Kingdom

share was about 18 per cent. The EC has received no further requests for medical aid from the Polish Government.

Our bilateral health co-operation agreement with Poland promotes wide-ranging medical contacts. We have also supported several medical training projects under the know-how fund.

Vietnam and Cambodia

25. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed Vietnam or Cambodia with the American Secretary of State.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed Cambodia with Mr. Baker in New York in September 1990 and the Vietnamese boat people issue in Washington on 28 February. Indo-China issues are regularly discussed with the Americans at senior official level.

Syria

26. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Syria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since resumption of relations, the Syrian Foreign Minister visited London in February and last month I met President Assad in Damascus. Syria has an important role to play in regional security and the peace process.

The Gulf

27. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on how many countries have made contributions in cash or in kind to the United Kingdom's military and logistical effort in the Gulf.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Cash contributions promised so far include about £660 million from Kuwait, £565 million from Saudi Arabia, £275 million from Germany, £250 million from UAE, £183 million from Japan, £15 million from Belgium, £15 million from Hong Kong and £8 million from Denmark. We have also received assistance in kind worth about £250 million from some 16 countries.

Yugoslavia

28. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not yet visited Yugoslavia. I visited Belgrade and Zaghreb on 25 to 28 February.

Human Rights

30. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reaction was given by the United Nations committee on human rights to the presentation of the United Kingdom's third periodic report on 1 and 2 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The human rights committee considered the United Kingdom's report at six public meetings on 1 to 3 April. There was a detailed and constructive dialogue. While individual members of the committee expressed a number of specific concerns, there was general satisfaction with the report and the manner in which the dialogue took place.

Political Union

33. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's proposed definition of subsidiarity in the context of the intergovernmental conference on political union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We should like to see a clear definition of subsidiarity in the treaty, as a general provision covering all areas of Community activity. The definition would clarify the division of responsibilities between member states and the Community. It should make clear that action should be taken at the Community level only when the objective in question cannot be satisfactorily achieved at member state level.

Nicaragua

35. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Nicaragua.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I visited Nicaragua from 18 to 20 March, mainly to attend the seventh annual "San José" meeting between Foreign Ministers of the Twelve, central America, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela. This was a successful meeting, which discussed a wide range of political and economic issues. I also had a brief bilateral programme in Nicaragua, including a meeting with the Foreign Minister and the signing of an agreement allowing the Commonwealth Development Corporation to operate in Nicaragua.

Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty

36. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in the implementation of the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our NATO partners are continuing to press the Soviet Union to ensure the full and early implementation of the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

United States of America

37. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the President of the United States and Secretary Baker to discuss United Kingdom/USA relations.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend is regularly in touch with Secretary Baker. He expects to meet him and President Bush again next month.

Sudan

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to persuade the Sudanese Government to allow human rights and freedom of worship to prevail in Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We take every opportunity to impress on the present Government of Sudan the need for

all the people of Sudan to enjoy a full range of human rights. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development last did so on 18 April when she saw the country's Finance Minister. Regrettably, none of the representations made to the Sudanese authorities have so far borne fruit. Sudan's record on human rights remains deplorable.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 April, why at the meeting between General Schwarzkopf and the Iraqi military authorities no consideration was given to placing of limitations on the use of helicopters.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Iraqi use of helicopters was considered at the meeting between General Schwarzkopf and the Iraqi military authorities on 3 March on the suspension of hostilities. No limitation was placed on their use.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the meeting between Her Majesty's ambassador in Tunis and a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Mr. Hakam Balawi; and whether the ambassador conveyed to Mr. Balawi Her Majesty's Government's expressed concern at the support given to Saddam Hussein throughout the Gulf war by the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's ambassador in Tunis has frequent meetings with PLO officials, including Hakam Balawi, whom he last saw on 15 April. He has made quite clear to the PLO our strong disapproval of its equivocal policy on the Gulf crisis.

SCOTLAND

Homes for the Elderly

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for each local authority, the number of homes they run for the elderly which have *(a)* closed and *(b)* transferred out of the local authority sector, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in precisely the form requested is not held centrally. However, I am aware of one home which has transferred from local authority ownership and information on the closure of homes derived from a comparison of local authority returns is set out in the table.

Closures of local authority homes for the elderly

Authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*Total*
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
Central	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
Grampian	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Highland	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Lothian	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Strathclyde	0	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	2	4	12
Tayside	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	1	0	4	3	1	1	4	1	3	8	26

In addition 56 new local authority homes were opened, giving a net increase of 30.

Underspends

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which Departments under his responsibility will have an underspend of over £500,000 in the past finacial year.

Mr. Lang: Wholly reliable estimates of outturn for 1990-91 are not yet available. The best estimates currently available are published in the "Summary and Guide to the 1991-92 Supply Estimates"—Cm. 1454—and the estimates themselves.

Provisional outturn for 1990-91 on cash-limited expenditure will be reported to Parliament through a White Paper as soon as possible. Details of outturn on non-cash limited voted expenditure will be available in the appropriation accounts in the normal way.

Departmental Service

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission a survey of customer satisfaction with the Scottish Office on the same basis as that recently conducted for East Lothian district council; and if he will make a statement on public perceptions of the quality of service provided by his Department.

Mr. Lang: No.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy for the storage of used fuel from nuclear installations in Scotland after 1993.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Questions about operational aspects of nuclear installations in Scotland, such as spent fuel storage, are a matter for the operators concerned. Scottish Nuclear Ltd. has recently put forward proposals for the long-term storage of spent fuel at both Hunterston and Torness; these proposals are currently being evaluated.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the sources of separate expenditures on renewable energy programmes in or for Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Government support for programmes of research and development into renewable energy sources is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list his Department's current and planned renewable energy programmes in Scotland by type, cost, site location and capacity.

Mr. Allan Stewart: These programmes are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Teachers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates or figures he has on the total cost of the insurance premiums paid and the claims made by education authorities in Scotland in relation to teacher absence through sickness in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that no education authority in Scotland has taken out insurance for this purpose.

Schools

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1980 the number of children in each local authority region in Scotland transferred from special schools to mainstream schools, expressing this *(a)* as a proportion of the special school population in each region and *(b)* as a proportion of children in each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many primary school boards within the Paisley, South constituency have communicated with him directly on the subject of national testing; how many indicated opposition to his proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Two school boards have written letters recounting parental concern expressed at public meetings.

Unemployed Young People, Renfrew

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under 18 years there are in Renfrew district who are not employed and have not had a youth training opportunity offered to them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Sixty.

Community Care

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to bring community care currently undertaken by social work departments within the scope of fund-holding general practitioner practices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: General practitioners already play a major part in supporting community care services. I shall be giving further consideration in due course to how fund-holding practices in Scotland might be further involved.

Trunk Roads

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress on trunk road schemes during 1990-91 and those proposed to start in 1991-92.

Mr. Lang: Details of major scheme starts in 1990-91 and expected scheme starts in 1991-92 are as follows:

Schemes with an estimated cost of over £1 million started since 1 April 1990

A74 Upgrading Millbank—Nether Abington
A74 Upgrading Elvanfoot—Paddy's Rickle Bridge
A74 Upgrading Kirkpatrick Fleming—Gretna
M74 Maryville—West of Fullarton Road (Advance works)
A96 Nairn Railway Bridge Replacement
A75 Carrutherstown—Hetland
A77 Bennane Hill
A1 Tower—Dunglass

These schemes have a total value of £122 million.

Schemes with an estimated cost of over £1 million expected to start by 31 March 1992

A74 Upgrading Nether Abington—Elvanfoot
M74 Maryville—West of Fullarton Road
M8 St. James Interchange
A96 Bucksburn Diversion
A9 Greenloaning—Blackford
A929 Tarbrax—Forfar
A94 Brechin Bypass (Dualling)

These schemes have a total value in excess of £130 million. I have made a further £4 million available in 1991-92 over the public expenditure provision I announced in November to accommodate the substantial programme.

In addition, I expect good progress to be made with the route action plans being developed on the A96 Aberdeen-Inverness; the A85 Perth-Dundee; the A7 south of Hawick; and—jointly with the Department of Transport—on the A1 Newcastle-Edinburgh routes. I expect to be able to give a more detailed account of the full extent of our proposals for Scottish roads in a policy document to be issued later this year.

As to completions of major schemes, 10 were completed in 1990-91 and 11 are expected to be completed in 1991-92.

Haemolytic Anaemia (Kuwait)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from WHO, UNICEF and the Red Cross about alleviating haemolytic anaemia in Kuwait.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* There have been no representations from these organisations to my right hon. Friend about haemolytic anaemia in Kuwait. If the hon. Member has a particular concern about this matter, he may wish to write to me about it.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis for the years 1966-67 to 1990-91, otherwise identical in format to table 2 of "Scottish Local Government Financial

Statistics: Summary Volume 1975-76 to 1987-88", of rate fund services revenue account but which distinguishes domestic rate revenue from non-domestic rate revenue.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 April 1991]:* Table 1 gives figures for 1966-67 to 1974-75. Due to differences in the form of the data collected prior to 1975-76 the format of this table differs slightly from that published in "Scottish Local Government Financial Statistics: Summary Volume 1975-76 to 1987-88". Table 2 gives an estimated breakdown of rate income into domestic and non-domestic income for the years 1975-76 to 1987-88, consistent with the figures published in the summary volume. Table 3 gives figures for 1988-89. Figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are not yet available.

Table 1
Summary analysis of rate fund revenue account 1966-67 to 1974-75[1]

	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75
Expenditure (£ million)									
General expenditure	274	298	321	350	411	477	567	681	930
Loans charges	96	107	125	152	168	177	199	256	325
Total expenditure	370	495	446	502	579	653	766	938	1,254
As a percentage of total expenditure (per cent.)									
General expenditure	74	74	72	70	71	73	74	73	74
Loans charges	26	26	28	30	29	27	26	27	26
Total expenditure	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Income (£ million)									
Rates[2]	149	151	163	177	198	227	240	267	304
of which domestic rates[3]	72	71	75	80	87	105	110	120	131
non-domestic rates[3]	77	80	88	98	111	122	130	147	174
Government grant RSG (a) Needs element[4]	125	114	121	138	165	192	224	287	395
(b) Resources element	—	38	40	46	55	64	75	96	132
(c) Domestic element	—	3	6	9	13	15	17	22	26
(d) Specific grants and subsidies	49	40	41	48	58	65	86	116	160
Total aggregate government grants (a)+(b)+(c)+(d)	174	196	209	242	291	336	403	520	713
Special domestic rate relief	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Rate rebate grants[2]	—	—	1	1	2	2	2	2	10
Fees and charges	54	59	68	81	93	104	125	160	186
Total income	376	406	441	501	584	669	770	950	1,215
Income less expenditure (£ million)	6	1	−5	−1	5	16	4	12	−39
As a percentage of total income (per cent.)									
Rates[2]	39	37	37	35	34	34	31	28	25
of which domestic rates[3]	19	18	17	16	15	16	14	13	11
non-domestic rates[3]	20	20	20	19	19	18	17	15	14
Government grant RSG (a) Needs element[4]	33	28	28	28	28	29	29	30	33
(b) Resources element	—	9	9	9	9	10	10	10	11
(c) Domestic element	—	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
(d) Specific grants and subsidies	13	10	9	10	10	10	11	12	13
Total aggregate government grants (a)+(b)+(c)+(d)	46	48	47	48	50	50	52	55	59
Special domestic rate relief	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Rate rebate grants[2]	—	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Fees and charges	14	15	15	16	16	16	16	17	15
Total income	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[1] Totals may not be exactly equal to the sum of their constituent parts due to rounding.
[2] Rates figures for 1966-67 and 1967-68 include rate rebate grant.
[3] The breakdown of rate income into domestic and non-domestic rate income is estimated pro-rata to rateable values.
[4] The RSG figure for 1966-67 comprises general grant, echequer equalisation and transitional grants.

Table 2
Rate income 1975-76 to 1987-88[1]

Year	Total £ million	Domestic £ million	Non-domestic £ million
1975-76	389	165	224
1976-77	448	185	263
1977-78	522	213	309
1978-79	589	196	393
1979-80	683	222	461
1980-81	930	305	625
1981-82	1,205	395	810
1982-83	1,387	452	935
1983-84	1,321	380	941
1984-85	1,361	392	969
1985-86	1,543	458	1,085
1986-87	1,653	505	1,148
1987-88	1,868	580	1,288

[1] The breakdown of rate income into domestic and non-domestic rate income is estimated pro-rata to rateable values.

Table 3
Summary analysis of rate fund revenue account: 1988-89[1]

	1988-89
Expenditure	£ million
Staff costs	2,812
Running expenses	1,616
Loans charges	539
Revenue contributions to capital	12
Rate fund contributions to housing and trading services[2]	105
Adjustment[3]	−312
Total expenditure	4,772
As a percentage of total expenditure	Percentage
Staff costs	59

	1988-89
Running expenses	34
Loans charges	11
Revenue contributions to capital	0
Rate fund contributions to housing and trading services[2]	2
Adjustment[3]	−7
Total expenditure	100
Income	£ million
Rates[4]	1,973
of which domestic rates[5]	669
non-domestic rates[5]	1,304
Government grant RSG[6]	
(a) needs element	1,690
(b) resources element	216
(c) domestic element	92
(d) specific grants and subsidies[7]	257
Total aggregate government grants (a)+(b)+(c)+(d)	2,255
Rate rebate grants	190
Sales	29
Rents, fees and charges	288
Other income	92
Total income	4,826
Income less expenditure as a percentage of total income	Percentage
Rates[4]	41
of which domestic rates[5]	14
non-domestic rates[5]	27
Government grant RSG[6]	
(a) needs element	35
(b) resources element	4
(c) domestic element	2
(d) specific grants and subsidies[7]	5
Total aggregate government grants (a)+(b)+(c)+(d)	47
Rate rebate grants	4
Sales	1
Rents, fees and charges	6
Other income	2
Total income	100

[1] Totals may not be exactly equal to the sum of their constituent parts due to rounding.
[2] Excluding contributions to transport undertakings.
[3] Inter-account and inter-authority transactions deducted.
[4] Excluding rate rebates and domestic element of rate support grant. Includes net cost of collection of rates.
[5] The breakdown of rate income into domestic and non-domestic rate income is estimated pro-rata to rateable values.
[6] Near final figures as prescribed in RSG (Scotland) (No. 2) Order 1989.
[7] As defined in appendix C of the report on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987 and as returned by local authorities.
[8] Includes rate rebates (DSS), disabled persons rebates, enterprise zones rebates and revaluation rebates.

THE ARTS

Arts Funding

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress has been made in implementing the reforms in the structure of arts funding.

Mr. Renton: Good progress has been made since my statement to the House on 19 December, (*Official Report*, columns 300-01).

The chairs of seven of the 10 new regional arts boards have now been appointed with my consent, and a good start has been made in appointing other board members. All the new boards are on target to be in place and operational from 1 October.

The Arts Council has also submitted the advice that I called for on the staffing structures for the new system, and on the initial stage of delegation of clients to the new boards from 1 April 1992. I have today written to the chairman of the Arts Council setting out my conclusions on these matters, and a copy of my letter has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I am confident that the process of reform on which my predecessors and I have embarked will produce a system which delivers a better service to the public through a clearer definition of responsibilities. I am anxious to ensure that one of the original aims of the reforms—that of securing administrative savings—is also achieved.

I have therefore asked the chairman of the Arts Council to build on the work already done by the Arts Council and the regional bodies to ensure that this is realised. To assist in this process I have set as a guideline the achievement of a progress administrative saving of at least £1 million per annum in current terms by 1993-94, by which time the present reforms will have been substantially implemented. This represents around 10 per cent. of current staff costs. I have every confidence that the Arts Council and the regional bodies will be able to achieve a saving of this order. It is a challenging but attainable target. It is most important that the public throughout the country get the opportunity to see more performances of quality and that arts organisations get a greater share of the public subsidy.

I have asked the Arts Council to ensure that the necessary further work is undertaken quickly to ensure that the new boards are fully operational from 1 October 1991 as planned.

I have also approved an initial list of bodies for delegation from the Arts Council to the new regional arts boards on 1 April 1992. As I said in my earlier statement, further significant delegation from 1993 will need to await the outcome of work on the national arts strategy, due for completion in the middle of next year. The Arts Council has proposed that there should be some scope for further delegation in the meantime.

I would see this happening on only a fairly limited scale, and where it is clear to all parties that this would be beneficial. The Arts Council has also proposed, and I have accepted, that the new boards should be involved now in the joint assessment of clients who in due course may be administered by them. This will be most important in building up the confidence of clients in the ability of the new boards.

A great deal of work has also been done to improve still further present systems of planning, budgeting and control. I have asked the Arts Council to ensure that this work is translated into a clear statement of policy objectives for all parts of the system, and that management systems, including an appropriate range of performance indicators, are developed to ensure that these objectives are achieved. These indicators will also need to assess customer satisfaction. I shall expect to see the results of this work reflected in the Arts Council's corporate plan for 1992-93, and in the corresponding corporate plans for the new regional arts boards.

I expect these decisions to lead to a better structured and leaner arts funding system which will be able to

manage the further delegation of clients with a corresponding benefit to the ultimate beneficiaries, the clients and the general public.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Uprated Benefits

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* widows and *(b)* recipients of income support, who are liable to pay an increase in their council rents from 1 April will not receive their uprated benefit until 9 and 15 April respectively.

Miss Widdecombe: People in receipt of housing benefit have their entitlement recalculated to take account of any rent increase from the date on which the increase takes effect. Those in receipt of income support are entitled to maximum housing benefit which can meet up to 100 per cent. of their eligible rent.

The most recent information available shows that, in May 1989, there were 48,000 women in receipt of state widows' benefits and pensions, but not income support, who were also in receipt of housing benefit and living in local authority accommodation.

In February 1990 there were 1,760,000 people in receipt of income support who were also living in local authority accommodation.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money is saved by the Government as a result of the arrangements for payment in arrears of widow's benefit and income support to those whose council rents were raised on 1 April.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Injury

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases of compensation for industrial injury have been discounted under the 14 per cent. rule in each year from 1986 to 1990.

Mr. Scott: Available information for such disallowances is as follows:

Period	*Claims disallowed*
December 1986 to March 1987	12,348
April 1987 to March 1988	47,234
April 1988 to March 1989	41,755
April 1989 to March 1990	41,741
April 1990 to February 1991 (latest date available)	36,213

Adjudication Regulations

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total amount awarded by his Department under regulation 72 of the Adjudication Regulations for each year since 1987; and what was the average and median amount awarded in each case for each year, adjusted for 1991 prices.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases regulation 72 of the Adjudication Regulations has been used in each year since April 1987 for each *(a)* type of benefit and *(b)* claimant category.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what facilities he has made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Miss Widdecombe: We have not made any special arrangements for staff to contribute to this appeal. However, it is possible for staff to contribute to St. John Ambulance under our arrangements for payroll giving to charities.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many people in England and Wales lost their entitlement to the reduced community charge rate of 20 per cent. as a result of receiving an award of criminal injuries compensation during 1990-91;

(2) in how many cases his Department was notified by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board of a compensation award to an individual receiving social security benefits;

(3) in the last year for which figures are available, how many claimants of social security benefits ceased to receive benefits, or had their benefits reduced, as a result of receiving an award of criminal injuries compensation.

Mr. Scott: Reduction in benefits resulting from an award of criminal injuries compensation is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. I understand from him that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of income support claimants in Leicestershire are repaying social fund loans; and how much money is outstanding.

Mr. Scott: The administration of income support and the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. and learned Member with such information as is available as soon as possible and copies will be placed in the Library and the public information office.

Pensions (European Community)

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the Government have received a reply from the European Commission to the letter of 9 October 1989 from the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Communities seeking its views on the position of bridging pensions in the context of directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment in occupational social security systems.

Miss Widdecombe: A reply was received from the head of directorate general 5 of the European Commission on 17 April 1991. I am arranging for copies of his reply to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and to be sent to those organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in the issue.

Low Incomes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he makes, on the best available evidence, of the numbers of persons, and the percentage of the total population, who were living on incomes less than 60 per cent. of the national average in 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990, or in those years nearest to these dates where the relevant information is available.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 6 December 1990]:* Information in precisely the form requested is available only for the years for which "Households Below Average Income"—HBAI—has been published. Other information is available for earlier years, but the methodologies and definitions used differ substantially and it is therefore not appropriate to make direct comparisons throughout the whole period.

It is also important to remember that real personal disposable income per head in the United Kingdom has risen substantially during this period. The percentage of the population who were living on incomes below any constant threshold has fallen. Thus, for example, the numbers of people living below 60 per cent. of the 1979 national average equivalised income, before housing costs, fell from 9 million in 1979 to 6·9 million in 1987.

Sources are the CSO's annual redistribution of income —ROI—articles and the published family expenditure survey—FES—reports; the estimates listed in the table are made from the most appropriate published source for each year. All the pre-HBAI analyses are in terms of numbers of households rather than population, and none of them used equivalisation to adjust for differing household sizes and compositions. Various different definitions of income have been used, and the one from the FES reports in 1960-61 and 1965-66 is a pre-tax gross income measure.

All the figures are derived from the family expenditure survey and thus cover only the household population.

Source	*HBAI*	*RoI*	*RoI*	*FES Report*
Income measure	Equivalised household disposable	Household disposable	Household final	Household gross
Unit analysed	Persons	Households	Households	Households
Coverage	Great Britain	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
Percentage with less than 60 per cent. of mean income				
1987 (13·8 million people)	25·5	—	—	—
1985 (10·9 million people)	20·1	34	—	—
1980 (9·4 million people)	17·8[1]	30	—	—
1975	—	28	27	—
1970	—	—	28	28
1965-66	—	—	—	26
1960-61	—	—	—	26

[1] Average of figures for 1979 and 1981.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Late Payment Charges

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the revenue coming to the Exchequer from charges and penalties for late payment of *(a)* VAT, *(b)* income tax, *(c)* national insurance and *(d)* corporation tax in each financial year since 1979; and what was the number of individuals and companies paying such penalties in each year.

Mr. Maude: Information is not available on the total numbers paying penalties or charges for late payment of tax, nor on receipts for all the years requested. The available information is:

Receipts from interest charges and penalties for late payment (£ million)

Year	*VAT*[1]	*Income tax*[2,3]	*Corporation tax*[2]
1983-84	—	77·8	43·0
1984-85	—	86·9	50·6
1985-86	—	100·5	53·7
1986-87	—	117·6	64·7
1987-88	24·8	133·8	77·4
1988-89	71·2	156·7	92·8
1989-90	82·1	187·1	131·1
1990-91	83·2	—	—

[1] No charges or penalties for late payment of VAT prior to introduction of VAT default surcharge from 1 October 1986; negligible receipts in 1986-87.

[2] Information for 1990-91 is not yet available.

[3] Includes small sums in respect of class 4 (self-employed) national insurance contributions. Penalties generally for late payment of NICs were introduced in the Social Security Act 1990, with effect from 1990-91.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the balance of trade *(a)* in manufactures and *(b)* in manufactures, less erratics, with the EC at current prices on a balance of payments basis in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Mellor: Information on trade in manufactures with the EC on a balance of payments basis is available on the Central Statistical Office database which may be accessed through the Library of the House. The information requested for manufactures less erratics is not available on a balance of payments basis.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the balance of trade in manufactures, less erratics, on a balance of payments basis for each year since 1970 in terms of 1990 prices together with the corresponding figures for imports and exports.

Mr. Mellor: Information from which trade in manufactures less erratics at 1990 prices may be derived is available on the Central Statistical Office database which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the balance of trade in finished manufactures, less erratics, on a balance of payments basis for each year since 1970 in terms of 1990 prices, together with the corresponding figures for imports and exports.

Mr. Mellor: Information from which trade in finished manufactures less erratics at 1990 prices may be derived is available on the Central Statistical Office database which may be accessed through the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the balance of trade in manufactures, less erratics, with the EEC Twelve on a balance of payments basis for each year since 1970 in terms of 1990 prices, together with the corresponding figures for imports and exports.

Mr. Mellor: Information on trade with the EC is not available at constant prices.

Pensions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the national income was spent on retirement pensions in each year since 1975.

Mr. Mellor: Retirement pensions paid out by the national insurance fund, together with pensions and other benefits paid by public and private sector occupational pension schemes are estimated to have amounted to the following percentages of national income:—

	Per cent.
1975	10·9
1976	11·1
1977	11·3
1978	11·3
1979	11·4
1980	12·2
1981	13·7
1982	14·1
1983	14·2
1984	14·2
1985	14·4
1986	15·2
1987	15·2
1988	14·2
1989	14·2

Consumer Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing consumption of consumer goods other than food and fuel as a percentage of gross domestic product in each year since 1961 together with his estimate of the proportion supplied by imports.

Mr. Mellor: Information requested for the first part of the question can be derived from data on the CSO's database, which may be accessed through the Library. The database identifiers are:

GDP at market prices (CAOB)

Consumers' expenditure on goods other than food and energy products

Sum of:
Durable goods (AIIL)
Alcohol and tobacco (CDFH)
Clothing and footwear (CDDE)
Other goods (CCED)

In respect of the final part of the question, information on the proportion supplied by imports is not available. Such information as is available on the import content of demand is given in CSO's periodic input-output tables, for example, tables 2 and 3 of the 1984 tables. Information on import penetration has also been provided in "Business Monitor" MQ12.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the gross output of manufacturing industry, excluding inter-industry transfers, in 1970, 1973, 1979, 1985, 1988, 1989, and a forecast for 1990.

Mr. Mellor: The information on gross output for manufacturing is published annually at current prices in "Business Monitor 'PA1002' Report on the Census of Production" summary volume. Copies of this volume up to 1988 are available from the Library. Transfers of goods produced by a business to departments not covered by the census, including other businesses in the same enterprise group, are treated within output as sales, valued as if sold to an independent buyer. Forecasts of gross output are not available.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Central Office of Information in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his estimate for 1990-91 and budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Maples: No fees have been paid by the Central Office of Information in the furtherance of privatisation. However, the COI has been involved in privatisation publicity campaigns. Details for years 1979-80 to 1989-90 were given at column 167 on 13 March 1990. Details for the year 1990-91 are as follows:

December 1990 Electricity: Distribution companies
March 1991 Electricity: Generators

The costs of these campaigns have been included in answers provided by the Government Department concerned.

Current Account

Mr. Lawson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing, for each year from 1970 to 1990, inclusive, together with the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" forecast for 1991, the current account payment surplus or deficit expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested is as follows:

United Kingdom current account balance as a percentage of money GDP

	Per cent.
1970	1·6
1971	1·9
1972	0·3
1973	−1·3
1974	−3·8
1975	−1·4
1976	−0·6
1977	—
1978	0·7
1979	−0·2
1980	1·2
1981	2·6
1982	1·7
1983	1·2
1984	0·6
1985	0·8
1986	—
1987	−1·0
1988	−3·3
1989	−3·9
1990	−2·4
[1]1991	−1·0

[1]FSBR forecast.

British Telecommunications (Government Shareholding)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he proposes to sell the Government's residual shareholding in British Telecommunications plc.

Mr. Maude: As my right hon. Friend announced in his Budget speech on 19 March, the Government intend to sell part of their residual shareholding in BT in the coming year. No decisions have been taken about the precise timing and the number of shares to be sold. We have, however, begun to appoint advisers to certain of the key roles.

Preliminary and main expenses incurred in connection with the sale of shares will be met from receipts from the sale. Parliamentary approval of the expenditure will be sought in a token new estimate in the summer supplementary estimate round. Expenses incurred in advance of the sale will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Once the sale is complete and the final costs are known, a supplementary estimate will be presented to provide substantive provision for the main sale expenses of the sale and a compensating increase in appropriations-in-aid. The balance of the receipts will be paid into the consolidated fund.

Crown Property (Rates)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have for the payment of contributions in lieu of rates on property occupied by the Crown; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: My right hon. Friend the former Prime Minister announced on 15 December 1989 at column *834* that responsibility for the valuation of the Government's estates for rating purposes would be transferred to the Inland Revenue valuation office from April 1991. The Government have since decided that, for reasons of efficiency and economy, the other responsibilities of the Rating of Government Property Department should also be transferred to the valuation office. The valuation office is, in consequence, responsible for the payment of contributions in lieu of rates on Government property and recovery from occupying Departments. It is also responsible for payment of rates and diplomatic property as well as for recovery of a portion of the community charge and rates from foreign missions and international organisations.

Taxes

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proportion of total central Government revenue is raised by corporation tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany;

(2) what proportion of total central Government revenue is raised by income tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Figures for tax revenues disaggregated by tax for the United Kingdom, France and Germany on a comparable basis are published in "Revenue Statistics of OECD Member Countries" which can be found in the Library.

Food and Drink

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the United Kingdom's trade in *(a)* food and *(b)* drink is forecast to be in deficit in 1991.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* The Treasury does not forecast trade balances in food and drink. The Budget forecast is for the overall visible trade deficit to fall from £18 billion in 1990 to £12 billion in 1991.

HEALTH

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of decayed, missing or filled teeth among 12-year-olds in the South and East Cumbria health authorities' areas; which of the Northern region's 16 authorities had a higher figure; and if he will estimate the reduction which might ensue if South and East Cumbria's whole population received water at optimum fluoride levels, if the response was similar to that over the United Kingdom as a whole where water supplies had been brought to the World Health Organisation's optimum level.

Mr. Dorrell: The most recent survey of caries prevalence conducted for the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry in 1988-89 showed the following results in the 16 health districts in the northern region:

District	*Decayed, missing and filled permanent teeth*
South Cumbria	1·82
South Tees	1·80
North Tees	1·64
Northumberland	1·55
East Cumbria	1·53
Darlington	1·39
South Tyneside	1·38

District	Decayed, missing and filled permanent teeth
Durham	1·38
South West Durham	1·36
West Cumbria	1·32
North West Durham	1·32
Sunderland	1·30
North Tyneside	1·25
Newcastle	1·22
Gateshead	0·91
Hartlepool	0·71

In the north-west Durham, Newcastle, Gateshead and Hartlepool districts all 12-year-old schoolchildren are likely to have received fluoridated water at a level of 0·7 parts per million and over since birth. The incidence of decayed, missing or filled teeth in those districts which are similar to other districts where water fluoridation has been introduced at the World Health Organisation optimum level, is an indication how the dental health of schoolchildren in south and east Cumbria could be improved. Hartlepool has the best record in England and Wales.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the results of the public health laboratory service survey for salmonella in eggs carried out on samples collected from high street outlets during February.

Mr. Dorrell: The public health laboratory service's survey involves the testing of some 43,000 United Kingdom-produced eggs that will be purchased from various retail outlets. It is intended that 15 PHLS laboratories will each test eggs in four seperate months spaced throughout the year, the last being in November. The survey has been structured to include investigation of any seasonal variations that might exist. When the investigation is completed at the end of 1991, the data will be collated and analysed.

Smoking

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the yearly mortality in the United Kingdom attributable to *(a)* heavy passive smoking and *(b)* average active smoking.

Mr. Dorrell: The independent scientific committee on smoking and health has concluded that the number of deaths from lung cancer among non-smokers associated with a lifetime's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke might amount to several hundred in the United Kingdom each year. The number of deaths caused by active smoking is estimated at around 110,000 in the United Kingdom each year. This figure represents the death toll for all smokers, but the vast majority of deaths occur among regular smokers with a long-standing history of tobacco use.

Renal Services

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to improve the coverage and delivery of renal services.

Mr. Dorrell: The planning and provision of renal services is a matter for health authorities to decide, taking into account local needs and priorities.

Cholesterol Testing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department will establish a national campaign to encourage medical practitioners to test all patients who have high blood pressure for blood cholesterol levels.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 19 April at columns *282-83*. Decisions about cholesterol testing will be taken in the light of the outcome of consultations on the Standing Medical Advisory Committee's report.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Health Education Authority/Health Education Council in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his estimate for 1990-91 and budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Donald Maitland, the chairman of the Health Education Authority, for details.

Policy Objectives

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he is yet in a position to announce his Department's policy objectives for 1991-92.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have agreed a statement of the mission, goals and priorities for my Department for 1991-92 and the following three years. It identifies specific aims for the different areas of the Department's business. The NHS policy board has agreed a separate statement of the strategic goals for the NHS management executive for 1991-92, which flow from those departmental aims. Copies of both statements have been placed in the Library.

Research and Development (NHS)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for research and development in the NHS following the White Paper "Priorities in Medical Research" and the appointment of his Department's first director of research and development.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to announce a major initiative for research and development. A new R and D strategy and programme for the NHS will be introduced to provide a firm scientific basis for improving health. It will focus on the introduction of improved methods of health care arising from research and on the cost-effective use of resources.

Because of the importance I attach to the development of a research base for the health service I believe it is important to move towards the use of up to 1·5 per cent. of NHS expenditure to be used for research and development.

The key principles of the R and D strategy are:

1. That research and development is a prerequisite for achieving a cost effective service responsive to changes in health needs and innovation;

2. Accordingly, the NHS should invest at an appropriate level to achieve a coherent R and D Programme;

3. Responsibility for R and D needs to be devolved as far as possible to regional and local level with accountability for performance;

4. A mechanism is required to achieve overall balance and coherence;

5. R and D priorities which merit national rather than purely regional attention need to be set;

6. NHS—university collaboration needs to be ensured as well as close links with the Medical Research Council, charities and industry.

The R and D strategy will have the following main elements:

i. a planned and managed approach by the NHS to health research to provide a scienfic basis for action to improve health;

ii. a new countrywide R and D programme to be carried out by regional health authorities within a national framework;

iii. the setting of national R and D priorities;

iv. the setting up of a Central Research and Development Committee chaired by the Director of Research and Development;

v. a requirement of regional health authorities to prepare, publish, resource, and implement (and be held to account for) research and development plans;

vi. information systems on research outcomes for purchasers and providers of health care, for health policy and planning;

vii. emphasis on practical developments arising from research, the prompt introduction of cost-effective developments into the NHS;

viii. challenging but manageable national and regional expenditure targets;

ix. collaboration with other research funding bodies to address issues of agreed national priority.

An announcement giving further details, including preliminary information about the subject matter and the management arrangements for the programme will be made towards the end of 1991.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. Gerard Clarke

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement in respect of Gerard Clarke, a prisoner in Crumlin Road gaol as to what reason he gave for going on hunger strike at the end of March; and if it is still continuing.

Dr. Mawhinney: Gerard Clarke has been refusing prison food since 27 March and continues to do so. He is protesting about his removal from association with other prisoners under prison rule 25 (Northern Ireland) 1982.

Northern Ireland Electricity

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the PJR report on Northern Ireland Electricity; and what was the purpose of the report.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 April 1991]*: The PJR report cost £52,225. PJR's remit was to examine the appropriateness of management structure of Northern Ireland Electricity in the light of its proposed privatisation.

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how long it usually takes for information to be made publicly available as to whether a driver had taken alcohol before driving and being killed.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

Information as to whether a driver had taken alcohol before driving and being killed is made publicly available on the hearing of a coroner's inquest. The time taken to release this information varies and no records are kept.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Regulation and Codification

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from farmers regarding the increase in regulation and codification of agriculture; and what response he has made.

Mr. Curry: I have received no recent representations from farmers regarding the increase in regulation.

Milk

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support the maintenance of the EC safety net intervention for beef cattle in order to help mitigate the effects of further cuts in milk quotas.

Mr. Curry: We recognise that any cut in milk quotas will increase the volume of beef coming on to the market in the short term. However, we do not believe that it is sensible to turn a high-value product like beef into a low-value product by freezing it for intervention and to build up large stocks which then overhang the market. It is not justifiable to continue provisions which permit uncontrolled access to intervention at prices considerably in excess of the market price. In the negotiations currently in progress we are arguing that dependence on intervention must be reduced, and that strict controls are needed both on the quantity purchased and on the prices paid for it.

Abbatoirs

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many abattoirs in England have gone out of business in the last 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: All abattoirs in England and Wales operate under licences granted by local authorities. With the exception of abattoirs approved for intra-Community trade, records are not routinely maintained on the operational status of individual abattoirs. However, annual statistics derived from state veterinary service visits indicate that numbers of non-export abattoirs in England and Wales dropped from some 720 to around 640 in 1990. Of the abattoirs approved for EC exports, two have ceased trading in the last 12 months. We do not have information on the reasons for closure.

Livestock Production

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the National Cattle Breeders Association code of practice for livestock production.

Mr. Maclean: We are aware that the association has prepared a code of practice which it is discussing with

other farming organisations. We understand that the details have not yet been finalised, but in principle we welcome initiatives by the industry to improve the marketing of British produce.

Livestock Diseases

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has made for the continuation of diagnostic analysis for bovine spongiform encephalopthy and other livestock diseases currently being carried out at the veterinary investigation centres he is proposing to close.

Mr. Maclean: The histopathological diagnosis of BSE by the veterinary investigation service is currently organised on a national basis and will not be adversely affected by the closure of veterinary investigation centres. As indicated in the announcement of the outcome of the review, where centres are to be closed diagnostic and other work will be transferred to one of the remaining centres.

Common Agricultural Policy Budget

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek an increase in the CAP budget ceiling to allow for the impact on the common agricultural policy of the costs related to eastern Germany.

Mr. Curry: The amended 1991 budget for the common agricultural policy already includes 1,315 mecu—£920 million—to cover increased market support costs arising from German unification and all member states agreed last October that this amount could be accommodated within the guideline. Other factors are now leading to higher than predicted levels of CAP expenditure, but it remains Government policy to seek an agreement on the Commission's 1991 agricultural price proposals that is fully compatible with the guideline.

Growth Promoters

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ban imports of beef from those countries where testing indicates that the use of hormones and other illegal growth promoters is widespread.

Mr. Maclean The use of growth-promoting hormones in beef production in the European Community is illegal. All imports of beef from third countries must be accompanied by suitable guarantees to the effect that hormones have not been used in their production.

All beef-exporting countries are required to establish a residue testing programme approved by the EC standing veterinary committee and their meat plants are subject to inspection by Commission officials. Testing programme results are then subject to further scrutiny at Community level to ensure that compliance with EC standards is maintained.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to increase the proportion of imported beef which his Department tests for hormones and other illegal growth promoters.

Mr. Maclean: The Ministry already has a very extensive programme of surveillance for veterinary drug residues, including the banned hormones and other illegal growth promoters, and both home-produced and imported meats are covered. None the less, the surveillance programmes are under continuing review and if there is evidence of a particular problem we will of course consider whether the level of monitoring in that area should be increased.

Baby Milk

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the new European directive on baby milk to be adopted; if he will take steps to ensure the retention of the United Kingdom's existing voluntary agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Publication of the infant formulae and follow-on formulae directive agreed in Brussels on 15 March 1991 is expected to appear in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities shortly. The Government will aim to maintain existing arrangements when considering implementation of the directive in United Kingdom law.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what facilities have been made available for staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Curry: No special facilities have been set up for single donations to the St. John Ambulance Brigade appeal, but anyone who wishes to contribute regularly may do so by using the departmental facilities for payroll giving to charities.

Calf Imports

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek limitations by the European Commission on the number of calves being imported into the European Community from eastern Europe.

Mr. Curry: The Commission has already made it clear to the Agriculture Council that it intends to limit the import of calves in 1991 to 425,000 head, the average of the three years 1987-89. Negotiations to this end are in progress with third countries.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects bovine somatotropin to be licensed for commercial use in the United Kingdom; and if he has assessed there to be a socio-economic appraisal of the consequences of the drug's approval.

Mr. Maclean: Under the provisions of Community law, no BST product may be licensed in any member state, before 1 January 1992. No product will be licensed in the United Kingdom thereafter unless our independent scientific advisers tell us that it fully meets all the criteria set down in the Medicines Act and Community legislation. I cannot say when or whether that will happen. The Commission is examining the socio-economic implications of licensing BST and should present a report before October.

Wildlife Poisoning

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of his pesticide safety division report into the use of strychnine for the poisoning of wildlife in April 1990 on the Fermor-Hesketh estate.

Mr. Maclean: On 11 April 1990 a dead fox was found at Kirby farm, Pury End, Northants, together with the remains of pigeons and rabbits. As is normal in such incidents, a post mortem examination was carried out by this Department. Laboratory analysis of the stomach contents revealed the presence of a residue of strychnine. Despite detailed inquiries by a departmental investigation officer it has not proved possible to identify who was responsible. The pesticides safety division has not produced a report on the incident.

Agriculture Council

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 22 and 23 April.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting together with my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

Discussion concentrated on the Commission's proposals for 1991-92 farm prices. I reiterated the United Kingdom position on the lines that I recently explained to the House. Discussion is currently scheduled to resume on 21 May.

WALES

Community Care

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans for the introduction of improved arrangements for community care.

Mr. David Hunt: The phased programme of implementing the reforms of community care in Wales from 1 April 1991 to 1 April 1993 will continue as planned with managing of social services the responsibility of local government.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Public Houses

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals to provide compensation for public house tenants displaced as a result of brewers conforming to the 1989 Tied Estate Orders; what representations he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer, the Government introduced the Landlord and Tenant Act 1990 in response to concerns about security of tenure for pub tenants. The Act extends to pub tenants the same protection as other business tenants and for the first time requires brewers to pay statutory compensation to tenants whose pubs are taken back into management. Tenancies entered into after 10 July 1989 are already protected by the Landlord and Tenant Act while those entered into before that date will be protected by July 1992 at the latest. The Government are naturally concerned about current threats by certain national brewers to issue "notices to quit" to tenants who are not yet protected by the Act. We understand that most of these notices will be issued for the purpose of renegotiating the terms of tenancy agreements and will not ultimately lead to evictions.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the total number of public houses which are owned by the regional brewers.

Mr. Redwood: The latest information we have is the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer published in March 1989 which found that regional brewers owned just over 7,000 public houses. As a result of the measures introduced in response to that report, in particular the requirement that national brewers should free from ties half their pubs in excess of 2,000, the total number of pubs owned by regional brewers is likely to change. The Director General of Fair Trading will be looking at the number of pubs owned by regional brewers when he conducts his review of the effectiveness of the measures introduced in response to that report in 1993-94.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has of the number of public houses which are currently being put on the market for sale by the major brewers in order to comply with the 1989 Supply of Beer Orders; what representations he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order which was introduced in response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer requires the national brewers to release from ties half of the pubs they own in excess of 2,000 by November 1992. As a result, approximately 11,000 pubs will be freed on an industrywide basis. There are a number of ways in which national brewers can do this including leasing free of ties, selling to another brewer or selling to a sitting tenant. The steps so far taken by the national brewers suggest that they are using a mixture of these options to meet the requirement in the order. It is up to each brewer to decide how many premises to sell and how many to lease free of ties and we do not have figures for the total number of pubs which the national brewers currently have on the market. However, the Director General of Fair Trading will be looking at the number of pubs sold by national brewers when he conducts his review of the effectiveness of the measures introduced in response to the MMC report in 1993-94.

Marinas

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to extend the fair trading and monopolies legislation to marinas.

Mr. Redwood: Under the Fair Trading Act 1973 it may in certain circumstances be possible to make a monopoly reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of

services provided by marina owners. I have no plans at present to amend the Fair Trading Act to include special provisions relating to marinas.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish a table showing the volume of manufactured exports, less erratics, each year since 1970, and for each quarter since 1 January 1986, relative to the increase in the volume of manufactured exports in Germany, France, Italy, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Sainsbury: A series showing the United Kingdom's volume of exports of manufactured goods, less erratics, is published in table B8 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", which is held in the House of Commons Library. Comparable figures for other countries are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of trade-weighted index of competitiveness of United Kingdom exports on 8 October 1990 relative to that of West Germany.

Mr. Sainsbury: Between 1985 and the second half of 1990 the United Kingdom's trade-weighted index of unit labour costs had increased by 5 per cent. compared with a 28 per cent. increase in Germany. Data for trade-weighted unit labour costs are calculated quarterly and are therefore not available for 8 October 1990.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the base year used to get the trade-weighted average index of United Kingdom export competitiveness for manufacturers in the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics; what is the corresponding International Monetary Fund figure; and whether the International Monetary Fund figure for the United Kindom is based on the weight for the United Kingdom trade with the other 15 countries or the weight of those countries globally.

Mr. Sainsbury: The base year used in the trade-weighted index of unit labour costs, as published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" is 1985. This series is produced by the IMF and hence the base year for the IMF series is the same. The trade weights used to construct the United Kingdom's index of relative unit labour costs are based on the exports, in 1980, to the United Kingdom from the other 16 countries covered.

Paint Exports

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of British paint exports for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for 1986 and 1981.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is available in "Overseas Trade Statistics", which is available in the House of Commons Library. Trade in paints is recorded under SITC 533.41-43.

Security Interests

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is in a position to make a statement on his response to part II of the report of Professor A. L. Diamond reviewing the law on security interests in property other than land.

Mr. Lilley: Yes. Professor Diamond's report was published in January 1989. Part II recommended a radical reform of the law on security interests. The recommendations were numerous and covered complex issues where changes to the law could have significant implications for the raising of business finance. We therefore allowed an extended period of public consultation.

A clear majority of those representing interests governed by English law argued against major reform. Reform would be complex and, in view of the proposed registration arrangements, potentially costly to the Government and business. It could be contemplated only if there was a strong commercial justification. That did not emerge from the consultation and I have therefore decided not to accept the recommendations in part II of the report for England and Wales. However, the report served a useful purpose in airing these important issues.

Some of those responding to the consultation supported some limited changes to the law relating to security interests and the acquiring of title to goods and I am giving these suggestions further consideration.

There was, on the other hand, a call for action to facilitate the granting of security interests in Scotland. Scots security law differs from English law in that it is impossible, except in limited circumstances, to create an adequate and workable security over moveable property without the creditor taking possession. Respondees to the consultation argued that this puts Scottish business at a severe disadvantage. This is clearly an issue which needs to be explored further. The Department's Scottish solicitors will therefore prepare a draft of a Bill introducing new forms of security over moveables into Scots law which will form the basis of further public consultation. The draft should be ready for consultation in about 12 months' time.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Facsimile Communications

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Lord President of the Council, further to his answer of 19 February to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), *Official Report*, column *120*, what proposals he has for better arrangements for the transmission of facsimile communications for members of the United Kingdom delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Assembly of the Western European Union.

Mr. MacGregor: Following the agreement of the House of Commons Commission on 25 March, free direct dialling from the Palace of Westminster to the Council of Europe and the Western European Union is now possible. Guidance issued to Members by the Serjeant at Arms includes details of the transmission of facsimile messages under these new arrangements.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current level of additional allowances paid to RAF personnel at Dhahran;

(2) what changes have occurred to the additional allowances paid to RAF personnel at Dhahran in the last six months;

(3) if he will provide details of all the additional allowances that are currently being paid to service personnel in the Gulf region; and what changes have occurred to those allowances in the last six months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current estimate of the total cost arising from British military involvement in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest estimate for the additional defence costs, to be spread over several years, is that they are expected to be of the order of £2·5 billion.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide his latest estimate of the cost of military equipment lost and damaged during the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The value of major equipments lost and munitions consumed in the conflict and in associated training is currently assessed as approaching £450 million.

Air Electronic Operators

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether new tasks arising from the deployment of new apparatus will be taken into account in revaluating the jobs of air electronic operators;

(2) when the next job evaluation of air electronic operators is to take place;

(3) whether independent scrutiny will be carried out in any future evaluation of the jobs of air electronic operators.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A job evaluation of air electronic operators, involving an independent consultant, is taking place and will take account of all apparatus used in their peacetime role.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air electronic operators were down-banded arising from the regrading exercise carried out by the joint services job evaluation team in 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 354.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the factor scoring plan in accounting for the operational supervisory roles of air electronic operators; and if he has any plans to revise it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The factor plan used for all RAF trade groups is considered to be flexible enough to meet the supervisory responsibilities of air electronic operators. It is kept under regular review.

Iraq (Nuclear Weapons)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's current assessment as to when Iraq will be able to produce nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 12 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *430*.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department has as to the movement of Iraqi safeguarded material out of the nuclear facilities prior to them being attacked by allied forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We do not know whether the Iraqis moved safeguarded material out of the Tuwaitha nuclear research centre near Baghdad prior to the attack by allied forces. The material was inspected by the IAEA in November 1990 and was reportedly all accounted for. Inspections of Iraq's nuclear facilities to be carried out in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 687 adopted on 3 April should provide an opportunity to determine the location of the safeguarded material.

Battle Stress

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of service men suffering battle stress; and what contribution his Department is making to deal with this problem.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Casualty figures, our own research and medical reports and information from other sources indicate that the level of battle stress among participants in Operation Granby is modest and manageable. This can be largely attributed to the education programme, the provision of a network of psychiatric support particularly in operational areas and the targeting of extra support to personnel who have been exposed to exceptional stress.

Birmingham Arms Fair

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is taking part in any way in the forthcoming Birmingham arms fair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Representatives from my Department will be participating in the defence components and equipment exhibition to be held in Birmingham next month.

Unix Computers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the uses to which the Unix computers, supplied under the contract recently won by ICL, will be put.

Mr. Alan Clark: These machines will be used for a wide range of non-operational, administrative support functions.

Soviet Union (Information Exchange)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times in the last two years personnel serving in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Royal Navy have met their Soviet counterparts to exchange information.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are regular meetings, in both bilateral and multilateral fora, between the United Kingdom armed forces and representatives of the Soviet armed forces, involving all three services. A considerable number of such contacts have already taken place and others are planned. We do not maintain a central record of the number of times members of the three services have met their Soviet counterparts.

Services Accommodation

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the provision of accommodation for those service personnel and their families who will leave the services as a result of "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are continuing to examine ways of meeting the housing needs of service personnel in the light of changing circumstances.

Environmental Improvements (Germany)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to carry out environmental improvements to the land and buildings currently being used by the British Army of the Rhine and RAF Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is a continuing programme of improvement works and maintenance on the sites occupied by British forces in Germany. This programme takes into account commitments entered into with the German authorities and Her Majesty's Government's own environmental initiatives.

Service Personnel (Training)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the provision of training for those service personnel who will leave the services as a result of "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 12 June 1990 at columns *142-43* and to that which I gave the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) on 28 March 1991, at columns *568-69*.

Direct Fire Weapons Effect System

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current status of the planned procurement of a direct fire weapons effect system for the British Army;

(2) what companies have expressed an interest in supplying the British Army with a direct fire weapons effect system;

(3) what effect the "Options for Change" study has had upon the planned procurement of a direct fire weapons effect system;

(4) what is the approximate quantity of direct fire weapons effect systems that the British Army will require.

Mr. Alan Clark: Several companies have submitted tenders for the direct fire weapons effect system. These are still being considered. It is not our normal practice to reveal the names of the companies concerned at this stage in a competition. Actual numbers of equipment to be procured are classified, but quantities have been adjusted to take account of "Options for Change".

US Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart regarding the withdrawal of United States forces from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has had a number of discussions with the United States Secretary of Defense on the future of United States forces in this country.

"Options for Change"

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the "Options for Change" study has had on the defence procurement budget to date.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am not in a position to add to my answer to the hon. Gentleman of 19 December last year, at column *212*.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which budget vote sub-headings have been affected by the "Options for Change" process; and by what amount.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The effect of "Options for Change" on vote sub-heads will depend on decisions on the final size and shape of the armed forces, which have yet to be taken. Even when decisions are taken, it will not be possible to identify the effects on individual sub-heads without disproportionate effort.

Military Budget

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library copies of information on the British military budget to be provided as part of the agreement reached on the Vienna confidence and security-building measures document.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom budget information, in the format specified by the Vienna document, will be placed in the Library when it is released in Vienna.

Weapons (Exchange of Information)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the North Atlantic Assembly's resolution to consider the exchange of information on the production of weapons and equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: All the resolutions adopted by the North Atlantic Assembly during 1990 have been discussed in the North Atlantic Council and, following normal practice, comments on them forwarded by the NATO Secretary-General to the secretary-general of the assembly.

Tanks

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the suitability of the British Challenger II tank as a replacement for Chieftain tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department is making a full assessment of the suitability of Challenger II as equipment for our future main battle tank fleet.

India (Arms Sales)

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of arms sales by British companies to India during 1990.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to provide such information as it relates to specific countries.

CFE Treaty

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from his United States counterpart regarding concerns over Soviet compliance with the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

We continue to be in close touch with the United States and with other allies about our mutual concerns over Soviet compliance with the provisions of the CFE treaty. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised these issues personally with Mr. Gorbachev in March. NATO is agreed that it is for the Soviet Union to resolve these concerns.

Military Equipment (Exports)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts regarding a possible increase in the export of military equipment resulting from the CFE treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

During the negotiations, NATO secured agreement to provisions in the CFE treaty that require any equipment of types limited by the treaty in excess of the treaty limits to be destroyed or converted to non-military use according to internationally agreed procedures.

Conflict Prevention Centre

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what resources he is planning to make available to the conflict prevention centre to be established by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 15 April at column *105*.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 25 April 1991

ENVIRONMENT

Solihull Urban District Plan

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines on the release of land concerning the type of houses identified to meet demand in the urban district plan for Solihull.

Mr. Yeo: Solihull's deposited unitary development plan includes a policy on the type of dwellings to be allowed on housing sites with the aim of providing a mix of types of dwellings to cater for different needs.

The Secretary of State's strategic guidance for the West Midlands (PPG10) does not include guidelines on the release of land for different types of houses. He will, however, consider the need for advice on this subject in the forthcoming West Midlands regional guidance.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the number of houses identified to meet demand and over the next 20 years in the urban district plan for Solihull.

Mr. Yeo: The housing figure of 7,500 included in the Solihull unitary development plan is that recommended in the West Midlands strategic guidance published in February 1988. The Secretary of State does not propose to review that figure, as the guidance provides a policy package for the whole period 1988-2001 and to change any element of it could be prejudicial to the success of the package. Regional guidance for the West Midlands region, which will incorporate a review of strategic guidance, will be produced over the next two to three years, and this will provide an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the guidance policies and make any necessary changes.

Compulsory Purchase Compensation

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of extending the 10 per cent. addition to compulsory purchase compensation to the compulsory purchase of agricultural land.

Mr. Yeo: Figures relating exclusively to the compulsory acquisition of agricultural land are not collected centrally.

Starter Homes

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what encouragement he has given to an increase in the number of starter homes.

Mr. Yeo: For the most part it is for the building industry to offer homes at a price people can afford. We have asked planning authorities to deal promptly with planning applications and streamlined appeal procedures. We encourage local authorities to make land available for all forms of low-cost home ownership, one aspect of which is our initiative to secure the release of sites for local needs in rural areas. Through the Housing Corporation we have invested nearly £400 million since 1983 in shared ownership schemes, which has brought home ownership within the reach of over 20,000 first-time buyers.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what definition his Department uses for a public good when determining non-financial benefits under the proposed countryside stewardship scheme; and whether it includes the conservation of wildlife and habitats.

Mr. Baldry: It is intended that under the countryside stewardship scheme payments will be made to land managers and farmers to protect and enhance key landscapes and habitats which are valued by the public; and to improve public enjoyment of them through the sensitive provision of access. Benefits to wildlife will be derived from the protection and enhancement of the habitats on which it is dependent.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what organisations he has consulted over the implementation of the countryside stewardship scheme.

Mr. Baldry: The Countryside Commission has been developing countryside stewardship in conjunction with my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Nature Conservancy Council, now English Nature, and English Heritage. Discussion has taken place with a large number of organisations including the British Council for Archaeology, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Country Landowners Association, the Farming and Wildlife Trust, the National Farmers Union, the national park authorities, the National Sheep Association, the National Trust, the Open Spaces Society, the Ramblers Association, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Tenant Farmers Association and the World Wide Fund for Nature UK. There has been substantial correspondence with many others.

Severn Estuary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has regarding the formal designation as a special protection area under the 1979 EC Wild Birds Directive of the inter-tidal areas on the English bank of the Severn estuary so far proposed for designation by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Baldry: The Nature Conservancy Council's proposal for the designation of the Severn estuary as a special protection area is under consideration.

Benzene

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are taken to monitor the levels of benzene in drinking water in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible only for drinking water quality in England. I am, however, answering these questions with the agreement of the Secretary of State for

Wales. Drinking water quality in Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the respective Secretaries of State.

I am not aware of benzene being found during 1990 in public water supplies in England and Wales.

Benzene is not likely to be found in drinking water except as the result of pollution. If a water company suspected that benzene or other hydrocarbon was present in its supplies it would be required to monitor in accordance with regulation 14 of the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 and as advised in the publication "Guidance on Safeguarding the Quality of Public Water Supplies" issued by the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office.

Right to Repair Scheme

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the right to repair scheme.

Mr. Yeo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 31 October 1990 to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), *Official Report*, column *535*. The number of claims under the right to repair scheme continues to be low.

Housing Stock

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will produce a table giving, for each of the local authorities that have undertaken large-scale voluntary transfer of their housing stock to other bodies, *(a)* at the time of the transfer, the local authority's outstanding loan debt on its housing stock, *(b)* the actual price paid for the transfer, *(c)* the estimate of right to buy receipts included in the valuation price, *(d)* the amount of the purchase price used by the local authority to repay debt incurred for local housing purposes, *(e)* the amount of the receipts so far re-invested in housing improvement or development either (i) with the body purchasing the stock, or (ii) registered housing associations not involved with the purchase, or (iii) other outside bodies, or (iv) by the local authority itself, *(f)* where such re-investment is with a registered housing association, the amount reclaimed by the local authority from the housing corporation as housing association grant and *(g)* an estimate of the total number of new dwellings built or planned as a result of the re-investment so far undertaken.

Sir George Young: The table gives the information requested except for *(d)*, *(e)*, *(f)* and *(g)*. On *(d)*, local authorities must set aside either 75 per cent. of the receipts from large-scale voluntary transfers or whatever is required to cover the debt on the transferred housing up to 100 per cent. of the receipts, whichever is the greater. The exact amounts of the receipts which were used to repay the debts on other housing expenditure are not available centrally. On *(f)*, housing association grant for local authority sponsored schemes is claimed by housing associatitons, not by local authorities. Although the grant is used to repay development loans from local authorities, neither the Housing Corporation nor the Department is in a position to know whether the loans have been funded from voluntary transfer receipts or from other sources. On *(e)* and *(g)*, local authorities are required to inform the Department of their expenditure, but the proceeds of large-scale voluntary transfers reinvested in local housing are not separately identified.

£ million

Local Authority	*Loan Debt on Housing Stock*	*Price paid for Transfer (gross)*	*RTB Receipts included in Valuation*
Chiltern	20·738	32·90	16·32
Sevenoaks	25·768	65·50	31·58
Newbury	43·000	47·00	22·29
Swale	37·056	55·15	13·10
Broadland	18·042	25·08	10·34
North Bedfordshire	45·228	63·50	8·93
Medina	17·300	27·85	3·93
Rochester	53·200	76·96	22·19
South Wight	16·200	22·84	3·83
Mid Sussex	24·914	44·19	20·45
East Dorset	11·200	21·63	3·01
Tonbridge and Malling	22·300	54·40	14·16
Ryedale	13·520	28·29	5·54
South Bucks	16·300	35·27	6·50
Christchurch	7·200	14·10	0·30

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 12 December 1990, *Official Report*, c. *442*. Information relating to financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85, inclusive, is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. The provisional outturn for 1990-91 is £7·9 million and the provisional budget for 1991-92 is £6·6 million; the latter figure excludes PSAs, the Building Research Establishment Agency and the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre where budgets have not yet been finalised.

Plankton

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his response to the conference in Plymouth, on the role of plankton in climate change, at which he was represented.

Mr. Baldry: The symposium on the biological consequences of global warming, held at the polytechnic of the south west, Plymouth, was a scientific meeting at which Government Departments were not represented. The role of plankton in the global carbon cycle is among the topics to be further reviewed by the intergovernmental panel on climate change, for which the United Kingdom continues to lead the scientific assessment under the chairmanship of Dr. John Houghton, chief executive of the Meteorological Office.

Biodiversity Convention

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his response to the policy conclusions of the recent biodiversity convention, at which he was represented.

Mr. Baldry: My Department was represented, along with officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration, at a meeting of legal and technical experts on biological diversity convened in March by the United Nations Environment Programme. This was largely concerned with deciding the necessary procedures to enable negotiation of a global convention to begin at the next meeting which will be held in Madrid from 24 June to 3 July.

Halon

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to identify the extent of and need for halon use within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Under the amendments to the Montreal protocol that were agreed in London last June, the production of halons is to be phased out by 2,000, subject to limited exemptions for essential uses. The parties to the protocol are to agree an initial list of essential uses next year. Halons cause serious damage to the ozone layer, but they are at present widely used for firefighting. In order to establish a clear picture of halon use within the UK my Department has decided to commission a detailed study by C. S. Todd and Associates. This will seek to identify those uses for which substitutes are already available, what can be done to help this substitution, and those uses which appear likely to be essential at present.

Air Pollution

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue general guidance to local authorities on procedural and other aspects of the new local authority air pollution control system established under part I of the Environment Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Trippier: We have issued today a set of five guidance notes which are intended to serve as a manual for local authorities on the operation of the new local authority air pollution controls under the Environmental Protection Act, which came into force on 1 April. I also commend the notes to operators of processes which are affected by the controls and to others with an interest in how the new system will work.

The notes are: "Introduction to Part I of the Act," "Authorisations," "Applications and registers," "Interpretation of terms used in process guidance notes," and "Appeals."

A set of the notes has been placed in the Library of the House.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the results of research into the effects of competitive tendering for local authority services.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today published the full report of the first year's research into the impact of competitive tendering under the Local Government Act 1988 which has been carried out for us by the Institute of Local Government Studies. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The research confirms that competitive tendering has brought about improvements in the efficiency with which services are provided, combined with a renewed emphasis on the quality of service. In particular, it shows in the authorities studied that an average saving of 6 per cent. in the annual value of contracts subject to competitive tendering has been achieved, with savings often accompanied by improvements in service standards; that productivity improvements through manual staff reductions of the order of 17 per cent. to 26 per cent. have been secured in services subject to keenest competition; and that many local authorities are considering the methods and standards of service provision in a much more systematic way.

The research is continuing for a further two years to permit a thoroughgoing analysis of contract performance and developments in local authorities over time.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Conciliation Services

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Attorney-General what provision his Department will be making for funding of family conciliation services in 1991-92.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 18 April 1991 at column *221*.

Arbitration Figures

Mr. Alton: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the Lord Chancellor's proposals to raise arbitration figures to £1,000 and to include claims for personal injuries in this figure; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have received no such representations.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has, however, received numerous representations both prior to and since the publication of the report of the review body on civil justice (Cm 394), which recommended that the arbitration limit be increased to £1,000. The existing limit of £500 was set in 1981 and the new limit, which will have effect from July 1991, restores the financial level below which cases are automatically referred to arbitration to a realistic level, enabling the small claims procedure to continue to provide an efficient and accessible means of redress for small litigants.

The civil justice review body also found that the cost of legal representation in small personal injury cases was often disproportionate to the amount in issue, and recommended that they be dealt with under the small claims arbitration procedure. The Lord Chancellor has received representation on this issue from the Law Society, the Trades Union Congress and the National Consumer Council. The Lord Chancellor is currently considering the way forward in the light of the civil justice review's recommendation and the representations that have been made.

Court Proceedings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General what likelihood of success the Director of Public Prosecutions requires before proceeding *(a)* against a police officer and *(b)* against a member of the public.

The Attorney-General: When deciding whether or not to prosecute, the code for Crown prosecutors issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions in accordance with section 10 of the Prosecution of Offence Act 1985 stipulates two general criteria for the institution of criminal proceedings. They are, first, that there must be admissible, substantial and reliable evidence to offer a realistic prospect of conviction; and, secondly, that the public interest requires a prosecution.

No distinction is drawn between cases involving police officers and members of the public.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by the Lord Chancellor's Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

The Attorney-General: The following tables show the number and location of all new buildings or extensions where construction contracts were let by the Lord Chancellor's Department, and construction commenced, from 1986 to 1990 inclusive, which had contracts each worth *(a)* between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* more than £5 million.

Between £3 million and £5 million

1986	
Grimsby	[1]Combined
Guildford	Crown
1987	
Doncaster	Crown

Over £5 million

1986	
Coventry	Combined
Derby	Combined
Truro	Combined
Wood Green	Crown
1987	
Newcastle, Quayside	Combined
RCJ (12 additional courts)	High Court
Wolverhampton	Combined
1988	
Harrow	Crown
Hull	Combined
Luton	Crown
Manchester (Crown Sq)	Combined
Northampton	Combined
Stoke	Combined
Teesside	Combined
1989	
Bradford	Combined
Chester	Crown
Newport (Gwent)	Crown
Stafford	Combined
Warrington	Combined
Woolwich	Crown

Between £3 million and £5 million

1990	
Borough	Crown
Bristol	Crown
Carlisle	Combined
St. Albans	Crown

[1]Combined Crown and County Court.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Watson: To ask the Attorney-General in relation to immigration appeals in Scotland, during the years 1988, 1989 and 1990 how long, on average, was the lapse between the appeal being lodged and the hearing taking place; and what percentage of cases were successful.

The Attorney-General: The immigration appellate authorities do not record details of the average time taken for appeals to come before an adjudicator from the time the appeal is lodged. However, it is estimated that for the period 1988 to 1990, the average time taken for appeals to come before an adjudicator in Scotland from the date the parties indicated readiness to proceed to a hearing was six to eight months.

The IAA do not record details of the percentage of successful cases at individual hearing centres.

THE ARTS

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Tim Renton: During the past five years, the Office of Arts and Libraries has commissioned only one building project, the completion phase of the new British library building at St. Pancras. The anticipated contract value of this project in cash terms is £150 million.

ENERGY

Home Energy Efficiency

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the network installers appointed by the Energy Action Grants Agency to administer the home energy efficiency scheme; and if he will indicate the area covered by each network installer.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have today placed copies of a list of network installers registered under the home energy efficiency scheme in the Library of the House.

I understand that, in the case of Scottish area 14, which covers the highlands, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland, full coverage has yet to be reached. The Energy Action Grants Agency has had discussions with the registered network installer for that area and will be making proposasls to my Department shortly on how the benefits of the scheme can best be brought to the whole area.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the reasons for the shut-down of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; how long it was out of commission; what was the cost to the nation's power supply; and what was the cost of repair.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The two reactors at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station were shut down by Nuclear Electric plc (NE) at the beginning of February to make adjustments to operate them at a lower coolant gas pressure. This decision was taken in the light of the latest data on the irradiated properties of the steel used in the pressure vessel. Operation at reduced pressure is intended to maintain the very high margins of safety required by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

The NII was kept fully informed of NE's decision and supported the action taken by NE. The reactors will not be restarted without the agreement of the NII.

The commercial flexibilities open to NE and the regional electricity companies mean that this is unlikely to have any effect on the cost of electricity supplies to the RECs, or on the fossil fuel levy.

The cost to NE of adjustments to its reactors is an operational matter for the company.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what facilities he is making available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has arrangements which enable staff to contribute by deduction from pay to charities of their choice. It has no plans to provide further facilities for the appeal mentioned by the hon. Member.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when plutonium material extracted from spent nuclear fuel in the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield will start to be returned to European customers; whether the plutonium materials will be transported to European destinations by land or sea; which British seaports or airports will be used; and if he will make a statement about current intentions with regard to the transport of plutonium to overseas customers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: British Nuclear Fuels plc expects to return plutonium extracted from spent fuel in its thermal oxide reprocessing plant to its customers in Europe from the mid-1990s onwards. Plutonium arising from reprocessing in this country is returned to its country of origin or to any other destination only subject to application of safeguards and on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, physical protection and controls on re-transfer. Its transport must be made in compliance with stringent national and international regulations. I understand that the options for returning the plutonium referred to by the hon. Member are still under consideration.

Domestic Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the percentage of domestic electricity consumption which is used in lighting, space heating, refrigeration, water heating, washing machines and driers and cooking, respectively.

Mr. Wakeham: An estimated breakdown of domestic electricity consumption by end use for 1986-87 for England and Wales only is given in the table:

	End use Percentage
Lighting	8·9
Space heating	22·2
Water heating	14·2
Cooking	9·3
Kettles	5·3
Washing machines	4·2
Tumble driers	2·2
Refrigerators and freezers	18·9
Television	5·7
Other[1]	10·1
Total	100·0

[1] Other includes irons, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, hi fi and small electrical appliances.

Source: Electricity Association.

Data for later years are not yet available.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total of fees paid to underwriters and sub-underwriters involved in the flotation of National Power and PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: Primary underwriters were not appointed for this flotation. A total of £14·9 million was paid to United Kingdom sub-underwriters and a further £6 million was paid out in commission to overseas underwriters.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the areas of responsibility of *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the Office of Electricity Supply and *(c)* the Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency Ltd. in respect of determining the mechanism by which prices are paid to renewable electricity generators under the Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The division of functions under the legislation is set out in my Department's "Renewables Energy Bulletin No. 4", a copy of which I placed in the Library of the House in December. As that explains, responsibility for making arrangements to comply with an order setting a non-fossil fuel obligation lies with the regional electricity companies on which the obligation is placed and for which the Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd. acts. However, in view of the role of the Director General of Electricity Supply in examining the arrangements made, the NFPA developed its pricing mechanism in close consultation with the Office of Electricity Regulation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the number of tenders received by the

Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency Ltd. for inclusion within the 1991 renewable tranche for each of *(a)* wind power, *(b)* hydro, *(c)* landfill gas, *(d)* municipal waste incineration, *(e)* general industrial waste incineration and *(f)* others; and what is the total capacity tendered in megawatts for each category.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency Ltd. has adopted a competitive tendering procedure for selecting the projects to be contracted under the proposed 1991 Renewables Order. I am unable to publish any details of the bids submitted to the NFPA, since to do so might prejudice this procedure.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

£'000

	Television advertising	*Newspaper advertising*	*Radio advertising*	*Other promotional material*
1990-91[1]	0	559	0	1,074
1989-90	0	892	0	1,000
1988-89	0	2,378	4	1,313
1987-88	0	1,513	0	959
1986-87	16,300	11,830	1,219	1,125
1985-86	2,212	1,589	0	[2]—
1984-85	1,302	1,572	27	[2]—
1983-84	682	1,770	50	[2]—
1982-83	292	955	0	[2]—
1981-82	2,550	530	0	[2]—
1980-81	1,500	1,590	0	[2]—
1979-80	20	1,280	0	[2]—

[1] Latest forecast; expenditure on the privatisation of the electricity supply industry will be notified to Parliament in the usual way when the figures have been finalised.
[2] Expenditure on other promotional material prior to 1986-87 is not available on a comparable basis.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media in 1991-92 have not yet been taken.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Wakeham: The Department of Energy has commissioned no new buildings or extensions in the last five years. Expenditure on the Department's new headquarters building over the period 1987-88 to 1989-90 was borne on the Property Services Agency's vote.

Office of Gas Supply

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the annual cost of the Office of Gas Supply and each regional consultative committee since their inception.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for the Director General of Gas Supply and the chairman of the Gas Consumers Council. I also refer the hon. Member to the supply estimates, the Government's expenditure plans within the energy sector and the annual report of the Director General of Gas Supply which were presented to Parliament earlier this year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the people he has appointed to serve at the Office of Gas Supply and each regional consultative committee giving the age, address and profession of each such person.

Mr. Wakeham: The Director General of Gas Supply alone is appointed by me. Mr. McKinnon is an accountant by profession.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the people he has appointed to serve at the Office of Electricity Regulation and to each regional consultation committee, giving the age, address and profession of each such person.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 26 February at columns *448-49*.

Energy Research and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what benefits have accrued to the United Kingdom from participation in the European Communities' energy research and development programme 1990 to 1994, to date.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Within the European Communities' third framework programme for research and development, 1990-94, there are three proposed specific research programmes on energy. These are the non-nuclear energies programme (budget 157 million ecus), the nuclear fission safety programme (budget 37 million ecus) and the controlled nuclear fusion programme (budget 458 million ecus).

No benefits have accrued to the United Kingdom from these proposed programmes as they have not yet been adopted by the Council of Ministers.

Office of Energy Regulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost to date of the Office of Electricity Regulation and each regional consultative committee, broken down annually.

Mr. Wakeham: Although this is a matter for the Office of Electricity Regulation, the hon. Member should first look at the paper entitled "Government's Plans Within the Energy Sector 1991-92 to 1993-94", which was presented to the House in February.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, following the recent support expressed for small nuclear power plants by Crown Prince Tupouto' A of Tonga, he will make it his policy to contact the Government of Tonga to assess what export opportunities exist for the United Kingdom nuclear industry to the South Pacific nation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is Government policy to support British companies in pursuing suitable export opportunities. The staff of the high commission in Tonga keep a close watch on opportunities for United Kingdom businesses. Where appropriate, they will notify exporters of such opportunities. The high commission has noted the Prince's remarks on nuclear power, which were carried in a local magazine, and we await further developments with interest.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* all nuclear incidents in civil nuclear facilities reported to him by *(a)* the nuclear installations inspectorate and *(b)* the nuclear operators over the past five years; and what has been the average time lapse between the occurence of a reportable incident and its reportage to his Department over the same period.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my predecessor, the hon. Memer for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), concerning the revised criteria for the reporting of nuclear incidents at civil nuclear installations, in which he stated:

"All such reports are published quarterly by the Health and Safety Executive",

and that for all occurrences including more minor occurrences which are not formally reportable under the criteria

"nuclear operators will publish details . . . in weekly or fortnightly site newsletters".—[*Official Report*, 30 April 1987; Vol. 115, c. 203-4.]

Copies of these reports and individual site newsletters have since this time been made available to the Library of the House.

Following this statement, operators were instructed that all incidents covered by the formal reporting criteria should be reported as soon as practicable, but anyway within 24 hours to this and other interested Departments and the relevant regulatory bodies. I am not aware of any incident which was defined as reportable where the operator has failed to meet this requirement.

International Energy Agencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out (i) the criteria adopted in the choice of United Kingdom representatives and (ii) the names of all such representatives appointed over the past 10 years to *(a)* the International Energy Agency in Paris and *(b)* the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom is usually represented at the governing board of the International Energy Agency (IEA) by the head of the Department of Energy's international unit and at the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by the head of the Department's atomic energy division.

The UK is represented in the full range of IEA and IAEA committees and working groups by those with expertise in the relevant areas, including those from UK permanent missions to these organisations. To identify all officials involved over the past 10 years would involve disporportionate cost.

The Department's Permanent Under-Secretary is currently chairman of the governing board of the IEA at official level, having been elected to that post by member countries' governing board representatives.

Symposium on Electricity and the Environment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representation the United Kingdom will have at the Helsinki symposium on electricity and the environment to be held in Finland on 13 to 17 May; what criteria were adopted to make the choice of representatives; and with whom his Department plans to liaise in distributing details of its outcome.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The symposium will cover technical, economic, environmental and regulatory aspects of electricity supply. The Department of Energy will be represented by two officials, at grade 5 level, from the energy technology and economics and statistics divisions; a deputy chief inspector from Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate will also attend. The responsibility for distributing details of the outcome of the symposium will lie with the sponsors.

Chernobyl

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps have been taken since the Chernobyl nuclear accident to review and improve the civil emergency plans and regulations, as they concern civil radiation emergencies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Following the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the lessons of the accident for the United Kingdom were carefully considered by a Government working group. As part of this review the Department of Energy carried out extensive consultations with emergency services and authorities which would be involved in dealing with a nuclear accident in the United Kingdom. These consultations showed that in addition to the emergency plans which nuclear operators are required to maintain, other contingency plans were available which, as the then Prime Minister stated;

"would permit an effective response to be made to any nuclear accident, including those with more widespread effects than the specific site and off-site plans are designed to cater for."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 144, c.391.]

In addition, following that review, my Department set up a nuclear emergency planning liaison group which meets twice each year with the aim of agreeing improvements in emergency planning arrangements and procedures among interested organisations at national and

local level. There have also been improvements in the information available about emergency arrangements with the publication in May 1990 of the Health and Safety Executive's booklet "Arrangements for Responding to Nuclear Emergencies" and the preparation by nuclear operators and local authorities of booklets describing emergency plans and telling the public in the area of nuclear sites what action they should take if a nuclear emergency is declared. In addition, arrangements for the regular exercising of emergency plans have been improved.

More recently the report of Michael Barnes QC into the application for planning consent for the construction of a PWR at Hinkley Point contained a number of recommendations designed to strengthen emergency arrangements around the Hinkley Point site and at national level. These recommendations were endorsed by my right hon. Friend in his decision letter and are being taken forward by my Department, the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and other bodies concerned.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment has been made of the effect the increase in the United Kingdom's trade-weighted relative unit values since the second half of 1983 has had on the balance of trade in manufacturing.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish a table showing for each year since 1961 the percentage increase in the volume of output and the volume of imports of consumer goods other than food and fuel together with the International Monetary Fund or other index of competitiveness.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

Information from which percentage changes in import volumes and import price competitiveness may be derived can be found in tables C14 and F3 of the monthly review of external trade statistics and its annual supplement, available from the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office database which may be accessed through the Library. The information is not available for years prior to 1971. Information about percentage changes in the volume of output of consumer goods as defined could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Businesses (London)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many businesses *(a)* opened up and *(b)* went into receivership in each of the last five years in (i) the London borough of Southwark, (ii) south London and (iii) Greater London.

Mr. Redwood: Information is not readily available in the form requested. The following table gives estimates of the number of companies whose registered offices are in the areas shown.

	London borough of Southwark	*South London*	*Greater London*
Companies incorporated in financial year 1990-91	650	5,360	41,000
Active companies on register at 31 March 1991	6,600	53,500	330,000
Of which: in receivership	87	259	2,647

It should be noted that the location of companies in receivership may depend on the location of the offices which carry out receivership duties, and that some companies have been in receivership for a number of years.

South London consists of the London boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark, Sutton and Wandsworth.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Biology

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it a requirement of the biology national curriculum that it includes full and accurate information about the female reproductive organs.

Mr. Eggar: The programmes of study for science in the national curriculum set out what is to be taught to pupils from age five to 16. For children aged seven to 11, the programmes of study state that

"they should be introduced to the functions of the major organ systems and to basic ideas about the processes of breathing, circulation, growth and reproduction."

For pupils aged 11 to 14, the requirement is that

"they should study life processes, food and feeding, respiration, movement, behaviour, growth and reproduction, particularly as they relate to human beings."

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The expenditure figures for advertising and other promotional materials by this Department for the financial years 1979-80 to 1990-91 are provided in the table. The 1991-92 estimated budget is £5·38 million. Final decisions on media have not been taken.

£000

Year	*TV*	*Radio*	*Newspaper*	*Other*
1979-80	—	—	91·6	12·2
1980-81	—	—	8·9	58·3
1981-82	—	—	86·9	49·9
1982-83	—	—	6·0	33·7
1983-84	—	—	9·6	74·9
1984-85	—	—	18·5	150·6
1985-86	—	—	14·8	184·1
1986-87	—	—	532·0	533·0
1987-88	—	—	280·0	1,459·0
1988-89	—	40·0	475·0	1,156·0
1989-90	—	11·8	238·0	1,150·0
1990-91	1,100·0	97·0	1,407·0	1,916·0

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the number of location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Education and Science has not commissioned any buildings in either category. The Department is, however, paying for the fitting out of Sanctuary Buildings which is leased to Property Holdings for use as the Department's headquarters. The cost of the fitting-out works exceeds £5 million. The work is due for completion later this year.

Environmental Education

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* all (i) in-service training and (ii) first offer courses on environmental protection and management currently offered by British universities, polytechnics or colleges of higher and further education, of which his Department is currently aware; and whether he has any plans to extend support for environmental education.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department does not at present maintain a list of the environmental courses currently available in higher and further education. The priority to be given to such courses is for individual institutions to determine, in the light of demand and within the resources available to them. The Government are, however, proposing to establish an expert committee to make recommendations on the future development of environmental provision within further and higher education.

Shakespeare

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what initiatives he intends to take to encourage the teaching of the works of Shakespeare in schools.

Mr. Eggar: The national curriculum for English specifically requires schools to introduce all pupils aged 11 to 16 to some of the works of Shakespeare. This will extend the opportunities for pupils to study and appreciate Shakespeare's plays.

Children in Hospital

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to educate children who are in hospital in London, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: It is for local education authorities to make provision for the education of children in hospital.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by the Overseas Development Administration in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mrs. Chalker: My Department has commissioned buildings as follows:

	£3 million to £5 million Numbers	*Over £5 million Numbers*
1986-87	Nil	Nil
1987-88	Nil	Nil
1988-89	Nil	Nil
1989-90	[1]1	Nil
1990-91	Nil	[2]1

[1]At Chatham.
[2]At London.

Kurds

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by date, aircraft type and tonnage each planeload of supplies from Government and non-government sources which are known to his Department to have been sent from the United Kingdom as aid to the Kurds.

Mrs. Chalker: As of 24 April, an estimated total of 684 metric tonnes of relief supplies have been sent from the United Kingdom by the Overseas Development Administration, and an estimated total of 540 metric tonnes have been sent by non-government sources. The details of which the Department is aware are as follows:

Agency	*Date*	*Aircraft*	*Tonnage*	*Destination*
ODA	5 April	2 × Boeing 707	[1]80	Ankara, Turkey
ODA	7 April	2 × C.130	21	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	8 April	2 × C.130	24	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	8 April	1 × Boeing 707	[1]35	Orumiyeh, Iran
ODA	9 April	1 × Tristar	18	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	9 April	1 × Boeing 707	[1]35	Orumiyeh, Iran
ODA	11 April	1 × Tristar	20	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	12 April	1 × Boeing 707	27	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	13 April	1 × Boeing 707	25	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	14 April	1 × Boeing 707	26	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	15 April	1 × Boeing 707	27	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	16 April	1 × Boeing 707	22	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	17 April	1 × Boeing 707	39	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	18 April	1 × Boeing 707	[1]35	Orumiyeh, Iran
ODA	19 April	1 × Boeing 707	38	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	19 April	1 × Boeing 707	[1]35	Orumiyeh, Iran
ODA	20 April	1 × Boeing 707	36	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	21 April	1 × Boeing 707	34	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	22 April	1 × Boeing 707	37	Incerlik, Turkey
ODA	23 April	1 × Boeing 707	[1]35	Orumiyeh, Iran
ODA	24 April	1 × Boeing 707	[1]35	Orumiyeh, Iran
Various NGOs	12 April	1 × Boeing 757	23	Incerlik, Turkey
OXFAM	10 April	1 × Boeing 707	40	Dyarbakir, Turkey
OXFAM	15 April	1 × Boeing 707	5	Dyarbakir, Turkey
OXFAM	22 April	1 × Belfast	16	Dyarbakir, Turkey
BRCS	5 April	1 × Boeing 707	36	Ankara, Turkey
BRCS	5 April	1 × Boeing 707	37	Ankara, Turkey
BRCS	10 April	1 × Boeing 707	39	Orumiyeh, Iran
BRCS	12 April	1 × Boeing 707	36	Orumiyeh, Iran
BRCS	17 April	1 × Boeing 707	35	Tehran, Iran
BRCS	18 April	1 × Boeing 707	34	Orumiyeh, Iran
BRCS	19 April	1 × Boeing 707	33	Orumiyeh, Iran
BRCS	20 April	1 × Boeing 707	40	Tabriz, Iran
SCF	5 April	Not known	1	Turkey
SCF	6 April	Not known	28	Turkey
SCF	9 April	Not known	30	Turkey
SCF	15 April	1 × Boeing 707	37	Turkey
SCF	16 April	1 × Boeing 707	37	Iran
SCF	20 April	1 × DC8-55FQ	31	Iran

[1] Denotes estimate.

Development Organisations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any decisions were taken at the 17th Annual General Assembly of European non-governmental development organisations in Brussels, 9-11 April, that affect the present funding of United Kingdom non-governmental development organisations by his Department.

Mrs. Chalker: No decisions were taken at the 17th annual general assembly of European non-governmental development organisations in Brussels, 9-11 April, which affect the present funding of United Kingdom non-governmental development organisations by my Department. The level of funding, which has increased substantially over the last few years, is constantly under review.

Global Environment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters in regard to financial support for protecting the global environment will be discussed at the meeting of G7 Finance Ministers in Washington on 28 April.

Mrs. Chalker: A number of important issues will be discussed at the G7 Finance Ministers meeting in Washington, but it is not possible to forecast how discussions will develop. Environment will be discussed at the development committee meeting on 29-30 April and there will be a meeting of the global environment facility on 1 and 2 May. The United Kingdom has pledged approximately £40 milion to the core facility plus £8 million for the programme to phase out CFCs.

EMPLOYMENT

Bradford TEC

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria were set for Bradford TEC for training needs in 1991-92; what targets have been set; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The training needs identified by Bradford and District TEC are based on a thorough assessment of the local labour market. Their plans include challenging targets which have been agreed with my Department covering a range of training and enterprise activifles. Bradford and District TEC has developed a number of interesting initiatives, including Jobsmatch 1000. The aim of the initiative is to help 1,000 unemployed people in inner city areas to obtain a job within two years.

Employment, South Derbyshire

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in South Derbyshire were employed in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985 and (iii) latest figures; and what is the rate of change of employment in South Derbyshire and the national average over the same period.

Mr. Jackson: The available information for South Derbyshire is from censuses of employment held in 1981, 1984, 1987 and 1989. Data for the constituency and comparable figures for Great Britain are given in the table. The figures relate only to employees in employment; they exclude the self-employed and members of HM Forces.

Employees in employment (thousands)

	South Derbyshire	*Great Britain*
September of each year		
1981	19.1	21,314·1
1984	18·8	20,845·9
1987	19·6	21,271.0
1989	20·5	22,234·5
Change 1981 to 1989		
Number	+1·5	+920·3
Per cent	+7·7	+4·3

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: Expenditure on advertising and promotional material by the Department of Employment from 1979-80 to 1985-86 was as follows:

	£
1979-80	70,000
1980-81	320,000
1981-82	400,000
1982-83	360,000
1983-84	500,000
1984-85	320,000
1985-86	1,220,000

Figures for television, radio and newspaper advertising and other promotional material are not available separately.

The figures for 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 are as follows:

	Television	*Press/Radio*	*Other promotional*
1986-87	9·3	3·0	4·1
1987-88	3·3	0·8	2·8
1988-89	2·1	2·3	1·3
1989-90	0·9	0·9	1·2
1990-91	n/a	0·5	2·1

The Department's overall advertising budget for 1991-92 is £17·4 million. Detailed discussions on expenditure by media category have not yet been taken.

All the above figures refer only to Department of Employment expenditure. They do not cover expenditure by the former Training Agency, Training Commission and Manpower Services Commission. Figures for these are being provided to the hon. Member in reply to a separate question.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has commissioned the following new buildings and extensions:

in 1986, a new building in Broad lane, Sheffield for the Health and Safety Executive at a cost of £8 million;

in 1991, a new building at East lane, Runcorn at a cost of £12 million to accommodate headquarters posts relocating from London;

in 1989, an extension to Brixton unemployment benefit office, Halmaker Lodge, south-west London, costing £3·7 million.

Southport (Tourist Industry)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new help he will give to the tourist industry in Southport.

Mr. Forth: The English tourist board, which is grant-aided by my Department, will allocate a subvention of £403,300 to the North West tourist board, which covers Southport, during the 1991-92 financial year. This subvention may be supplemented during the year by additional sums from central funds held by the ETB.

Southport will benefit from the various marketing and development initiatives undertaken by the North West tourist board, including the board's new coastal corridor initiative.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will visit Southport to look at the local tourist industry.

Mr. Forth: My noble Friend Viscount Ullswater, who has ministerial responsibility for tourism matters, recently met a delegation of representatives of resorts in the North West, including Southport. He also hopes to include Southport in his forthcoming extensive programme of regional visits.

Injuries at Work

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total numbers of injuries as a result of work activities reported to enforcement authorities falling within the east midlands region in the latest year for which Health and Safety Comission statistics are available in the categories *(a)* total fatal injuries to all persons, *(b)* total non-major injuries to all persons, *(c)* total over three-day injuries to all persons and *(d)* total all reported injuries to all persons.

Mr. Forth: The latest available information, provisional figures for the financial year beginning 1 April 1989, is provided in the table.

Numbers of reported occupational injuries[1] in the East Midlands region, 1989-90 (provisional)

	Numbers
Fatal	45
Non-fatal major[2]	3,106
Over three day[3]	13,762
Total reported	16,913

[1]Injuries to employees, self-employed persons and non-employed persons injured in a working environment, reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985 (RIDDOR), to all enforcement authorities excluding the HSE's railway inspectorate.
[2]As defined under RIDDOR.
[3]Injuries causing incapacity for work for more than three days.

Employment Service (Annual Performance Agreement)

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Employment Service annual performance agreement for 1991-92 will be published.

Mr. Jackson: I have today placed copies of the Employment Service 1991-92 annual performance agreement in the Libraries of the House.

New Businesses, Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses have started in Yorkshire in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* The available information for the counties of North, South and West Yorkshire, based on VAT data, is given in the table:

VAT registrations and deregistrations in North, South and West Yorkshire

000s

	Registrations	*Deregistrations*	*Net change*
1980	9·1	9·0	0·1
1981	9·5	7·6	1·9
1982	10·5	9·1	1·4
1983	11·5	9·1	2·4
1984	11·0	9·5	1·5
1985	11·0	10·8	0·2
1986	11·4	10·9	0·4
1987	12·2	10·6	1·6
1988	14·1	10·8	3·3
1989	15·9	11·3	4·7

Training Agency (Privatisation)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Training Agency/Manpower Services Commission in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his estimate for 1990-91 and budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 24 April 1991]:* There were no fees paid to organisations in furtherance of privatisation by the Training Agency or Manpower Services Commission in the financial period from 1979-80 to 1987-88 inclusive.

Fees to the value of £525,000 were incurred in 1988-89, to the value of £613,000 in 1989-90, and £622,000 in 1990-91. These figures are inclusive of expenses plus VAT.

There is no current privatisation being undertaken, although an outstanding invoice for £30,000 will be paid in the current financial year.

NATIONAL FINANCE

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make facilities available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no such plans to make special arrangements for this appeal. The Treasury has in the past publicised to staff the arrangements for payroll giving for charity, and I shall be drawing staff's attention to these general arrangements again in due course.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the fall in the profitability of exports of manufactures since 1 January 1990 as a return on sales; and whether he will publish a table comparing the reduction in profitability with the increase in export unit values, the increase in producer input and output prices and the increase in consumer prices.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the profit margins of manufactured exports is not available. Information on the relative profitability of manufactured exports and domestic sales, and on producers' input and output prices, is available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the value of March output of the manufacturing sector, less food, drink and tobacco, calculated on the basis of note 1 of the notes to editors in CSO press notice CSO (91)51, dated 16 April, on producer prices, *(b)* the ratio of the input to the output, *(c)* the proportion of the input assumed to be imported and *(d)* the price index for the imported and the home-produced import components; and if he will provide corresponding figures for 1970, 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is either not available or not readily so for the periods given. Some information relating to parts *(a)* and *(b)* is available for 1984, the year on which the weights for the producer price indices are currently based. The value of sales of the manufacturing sector, less food, drink and tobacco, on a

net sector basis was about £60 billion. The value of inputs on a net sector basis to the manufacturing sector less food, drink and tobacco (excluding some imported semi-manufactured goods not covered by the incides) was around two fifths of the net output value.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the actual figures, at the respective dates, which underlie the chart in CSO press notice CSO (91) 51 dated 16 April 1991, on producer prices together with the corresponding figures from January 1970 together with the IMF index of relative export unit values and the relative DTI export unit value for the United Kingdom relative to that of West Germany; and whether he will publish a corresponding table for manufacturing, less food, drink and tobacco.

Mr. Mellor: The figures underlying the chart in CSO press notice CSO (91) 51 are shown in annex B to that press notice for 1988 onwards. Comparable data are only available back to January 1974 and are published in the CSO database accessible through the House of Commons Library.

The DTI index of relative export values of manufactures is published in "Economic Trends", available in the House of Commons Library. The IMF indices of relative export values for the United Kingdom and Germany are given in the following table. (The definition of manufacturing used by the IMF excludes food, drink and tobacco).

Relative[1] export unit value index

(1985 = 100)

	United Kingdom	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*United Kingdom relative to FRG*
1970	90·8	113·1	80·3
1971	91·8	115·7	79·3
1972	93·3	116·0	80·4
1973	86·0	125·6	68·5
1974	85·5	121·8	70·2
1975	86·9	119·7	72·6
1976	83·8	120·0	69·8
1977	88·8	121·9	72·8
1978	95·0	125·2	75·9
1979	100·2	122·3	81·9
1980	112·1	116·3	96·4
1981	110·0	104·6	105·2
1982	103·4	106·9	96·7
1983	100·6	107·0	94·0
1984	98·3	99·5	98·8
1985	100·0	100·0	100·0
1986	97·7	110·9	88·1
1987	101·5	116·0	87·5
1988	110·0	112·4	97·9
1989	104·0	111·6	93·2
1990	107·6	115·8	92·9

[1]The UVI of each country divided by a weighted average of the 1980 UVI's of 16 major competitors.

Inland Revenue Offices, Nottingham

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates have been received for the heating of the proposed new Inland Revenue offices in Nottingham by electricity; and what estimate has been made for heating them from the combined heat and power system operated by British Coal, Nottinghamshire county council and Nottinghamshire city council.

Mr. Maude: The estimates obtained for the heating of the proposed new Inland Revenue offices in Nottingham by electricity showed installation costs of £1·056 million and annual fuel and maintenance costs of about £97,000. The estimates for heating the offices by the combined heat and power system were £2·16 million for the installation and about £41,000 for annual fuel and maintenance costs.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by the Treasury, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Maude: My Departments have commissioned buildings:

£million

Year	*Department*	*No.*	*£3-£5 location*	*No.*	*Over £5 location*
1986-87	C&E	1	Belfast	1	Newry
1987-88	C&E			2	London
1988-89	IR	1	Kew		
1989-90	IR			1	Nottingham
1990-91	C&E	1	Manchester	1	Liverpool
	IR	1	Glenrothes		
	IR	1	Plymouth		
	IR	1	Nottingham		
	IR			1	Bolton
	IR			1	Belfast
	IR			1	Birkenhead
	IR			1	Falkirk
				1	St Austell
				1	Barnsley
				1	Wrexham

The Treasury has not let any major contracts for building or extension work in the last five years.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the total annual income of local government in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany is raised through local taxation.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Comparative figures for the income received by local government are published in "OECD National Accounts 1976-88" (volume II). The balance of taxation will be affected by, among other things, the different constitutional position of local authorities, and different allocation of functions to local government, in the different countries.

HEALTH

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to recommend to health authorities a system of booked admissions to hospitals to replace waiting lists for operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has long recommended that health authorities use booked

admissions wherever possible. Currently, 17 per cent. of patients waiting for admission have a firm date booked for their treatment. The South Western regional health authority is developing a region-wide admissions booking system. The Department and health regions are following progress with great interest with a view to wider application in the NHS.

Project 2000

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any additional schools of nursing have been approved to implement Project 2000 nurse training.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I announced on 9 January that £71 million was to be made available for Project 2000 in 1991-92. I am now pleased to be able to announce that agreement has been given today to the implementation of Project 2000 in 14 colleges of nursing during 1991-92, subject to the necessary educational approval being obtained from the English national board and the resolution of any outstanding financial and manpower issues.

This will mean that, by the end of the current financial year, over half the colleges of nursing in England will have been approved for Project 2000.

The Project 2000 implementation group has approved the following schemes for a 1991-92 start:

1. Northern RHA—Darlington, Durham, West Durham
2. Yorkshire RHA—York and Scarborough
3. Trent RHA—Leicestershire
4. East Anglia RHA—Cambridge
5. NW Thames RHA—Barnet
6. SE Thames RHA—Dartford, Gravesend, Bexley and Greenwich
7. SW Thames RHA—Kingston and Epsom
8. Wessex RHA—East and West Dorset, Salisbury
9. Oxford RHA—Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe
10. South Western RHA—Gloucestershire
11. Mersey RHA—St Helens and Knowsley, Warrington, Halton

In addition, the following three schemes have already received advance approval for a 1991-92 start:

12. NE Thames RHA—City and Hackney
13. West Midlands RHA—Shropshire, Mid Staffordshire
14. North Western RHA—Stockport, Glossop and Tameside

Financial allocations for the new schemes will be notified as soon as possible, following discussions with the authorities concerned. I shall then consider, in the light of further advice from the implementation group, how any balance of the money provided for Project 2000 should be allocated. I shall make a further announcement as soon as possible.

Project 2000 represents an important development in nurse education in this country. It gives more weight to the process of learning and less to the sharing of the work load in hospital wards, although the training remains practical and patient-orientated.

Electoral Statistics (1991)

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when local government and parliamentary electoral statistics for 1991 will be available.

Mr. Dorrell: Local government electorate statistics are being published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in Monitor EL 91/1 today, a week before the local elections. These data are now being reassembled by parliamentary constituency. Statistics in the latter form will be placed in the Library by 10 May, prior to publication in "Electoral Statistics, 1991" (Series EL no. 18) during the summer.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the last five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department does not directly commission new buildings or extensions. It occupies buildings on the common user estate provided and administered by the Department of Environment.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 is not available in the form requested.

The Department's budget for communications and publicity includes provision for nurse recruitment, blood donor recruitment and drug misuse compaigns.

	£ million
Expediture for 1988-89 is as follows:	
Television	1·662
Radio	0·205
Newspaper	1·196
Other Material	7·736
Expenditure for 1989-90 is as follows:	
Television	3·549
Radio	0·127
Newspaper	2·739
Other Material	10·828
Estimated Expenditure for 1990-91 is as follows:	
Television	1·900
Radio	0·005
Newspaper	2·258
Other Material	13·148

The budget for communications and publicity for 1991-92 is £24·5 million.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representation his hon. Friend the Minister of Health has received from the Act Now Group concerning Government policy of non-implementation of sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a letter from this group expressing concern at our decision not to implement sections 1, 2, and 3 of the Act at the present time. Act Now also wrote to officials in the the Department following the announcement that we did not at present intend to proceed with the implementation of section 7.

Opticians

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many opticians are currently registered in England; and what was the figure in March 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Figures on the numbers of opticians in contract with family health services authorities in England are collected by calendar year. The number of opticians in contract with English FHSAs at 31 December 1989 was 6,299 of which 5,515 were ophthalmic opticians and 784 were ophthalmic medical practitioners. The figures for 31 December 1990 should be available in the summer.

Optical Appliances

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people qualified for financial assistance towards the cost of optical appliances in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Figures are not available prior to 1986-87, when the NHS spectacle voucher scheme was introduced. The table gives details of the numbers of spectacle vouchers redeemed in England and Wales from 1986-87.

Financial Years	*Vouchers redeemed (millions)*
1986-87	2·471
1987-88	2·704
1988-89	2·417
1989-90	2·422

Vasectomy and Sterilisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of provision of vasectomy and sterilisation operations he requires of individual health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities were advised in guidance contained in the 1974 memorandum of guidance on family planning (HSC(IS)32), which is still current, that male and female sterilisation operations should be available under the national health service both for family planning and medical reasons, a copy of which is available in the Library. The priority given to these operations generally is a matter for health authorities to determine in the light of clinical judgment and local needs and circumstances.

Spectacle Frames

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance is available to individuals suffering from metal allergies who need to purchase specially produced non-metallic spectacle frames.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: People who are eligible for help with the cost of spectacles receive a spectacle voucher which they can use to purchase spectacles which have either metallic or non-metallic frames. Non-metallic frames tend to be cheaper than the metallic variety.

PRIME MINISTER

President de Klerk

Q6. Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with President de Klerk of South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I was glad to have had the opportunity to meet President de Klerk during his visit to the United Kingdom this week. We had a useful talk on a wide range of issues.

I should add that I also had useful talks with Mr. Nelson Mandela at our meeting yesterday.

Economic and Social Committee (United Kingdom Membership)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will list the 24 United Kingdom members of the European Community Economic and Social Committee, indicating their dates of appointment, their occupations and their party political affiliations if known.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom members of the Economic and Social Committee who were appointed in September 1990 for a term of four years are as follows. Members are recommended to Council for appointment on the basis of their individual qualifications not political affiliations.

Neville Beale Esq—Independent Consultant. Former senior executive of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies.
Michael Bell Esq—Chairman, International Business Communications PLC.
John Little Esq—Former Chairman and Chief Executive, Anderson Strathclyde. Former Chairman, Scottish Confederation of British Industries.
Kenneth Gardner Esq MA FRSC—Consultant in food law technology and food technology.
Dr Felix Kafka—Production and Technical Managements (Health and Safety and Environment), ICI Europa Ltd.
Michael Mobbs Esq—Chairman and Managing Director, M L Aviation.
Dr Ann Robinson—Head of Policy Unit Institute of Directors.
John Whitworth Esq—Chairman, Merchant Navy Officers' Pension Fund. Former Director of the International Shipping Federation.
Campbell Christie Esq—General Secretary, Scottish Trades Union Congress.
Peter Dawson Esq OBE—General Secretary Professional Association of Teachers.
Tom Jenkins Esq—Assistant Secretary, Trades Union Congress, International Department.
John Lyons Esq CBE—General Secretary, Engineers' and Managers' Association.
Miss Ada Maddocks OBE—National Organising Officer (Health Staffs), National Association of Local Government Officers.
William Morris Esq—Deputy General Secretary, Transport and General Workers' Union.
Roy Sanderson Esq OBE—National Secretary, Electrical and Engineering Staff Association (Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union).
Alexander Smith Esq—General Secretary, National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.
Wilfred Aspinall Esq—Executive Director, Managerial, Professional and Staff Liaison Group.
Mrs Jocelyn Barrow OBE—Deputy Chairman, Broadcasting Standards Council.
Professor William Black—Economic Adviser, Department of Economic Development, Northern Ireland. Former Professor of Economics, Queen's University, Belfast.
Mrs Angela Guillaume—(British) Chairman, European Union of Women.

Robert Moreland Esq—Former MEP. Member of the Council for Business Graduates Association. Management Consultant. Chairman of Regional Development Section.
Ms Sue Slipman—Director, National Council for One Parent Families.
Michael Strauss Esq—Former Co-ordinating Director for Policy, National Farmers' Union.
Andrew Tyrie Esq—Fellow, Nuffield College, Oxford.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to reply to the letter dated 27 March from the hon. Member for Monklands West, concerning the Government's policy of non-implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

The Prime Minister: I replied to the hon. Member on 22 April 1991.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Prime Minister what representation he has received from the Act Now Group concerning the Government policy of non-implementation of sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and how he has responded.

The Prime Minister: The Act Now Group and I have corresponded.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are taken to ensure parity of treatment for haemophiliacs in Scotland and Wales so far as factor 8 is concerned.

The Prime Minister: The prescribing of factor 8 in the treatment of haemophiliacs is a matter for the individual clinicians concerned. Both Scottish and Welsh patients have equal access to the treatment deemed appropriate.

Building Works

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by the Cabinet Office in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office has not commissioned any new buildings or extensions in the last five years which had contracts worth more than £3 million.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister whether the issue of South Africa signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was discussed in his meeting with President De Klerk of South Africa in London on 27 April.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Chernobyl

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the compensation received by the United Kingdom from *(a)* the Soviet Union and *(b)* any other relevant international authority to cover the financial losses incurred by United Kingdom farmers and tourist trade businesses in Scotland, Cumbria, Northern Ireland and North Wales as a result of the Chernobyl nuclear accident in the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: No compensation has been paid to the United Kingdom for damage suffered following the Chernobyl accident. The Soviet Union is not a party to the international conventions on third party liability for nuclear damage.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will propose the creation of safe havens for Shias in southern Iraq.

The Prime Minister: We are concerned for the welfare of all Iraqis. We understand that the International Red Cross and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees are ready to take over responsibility for refugees in those parts of southern Iraq presently occupied by coalition forces. The United Nations Iraq/Kuwait observer mission is being deployed to the border. Our contribution of some £20 million to the UN Secretary-General's and other international appeals is for the humanitarian need of all Iraqis. We are in touch with both the Kuwaiti and Saudi Governments about access for Iraqi refugees to their countries.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 25 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with Ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Prime Minister's Office in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his estimate for 1990-91 and budget for 1991-92.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 April 1991]:* No expenditure has been incurred by the Prime Minister's office on fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation since 1979-80, and none is planned for 1991-92.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Total expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on advertising and other promotional material for the years 1979-80 to 1989-90, latest estimates for 1990-91 and budget provisions for 1991-92 are:

	FCO (Diplomatic wing)	FCO (ODA wing)
1979-80	100,266	214,739
1980-81	116,532	145,697
1981-82	162,998	207,964
1982-83	229,711	135,506
1983-84	205,247	252,691
1984-85	149,932	234,050
1985-86	160,535	271,084
1986-87	335,754	228,347
1987-88	195,000	351,000
1988-89	289,184	689,631
1989-90	395,842	1,066,447
1990-91	926,610	902,000
1991-92	540,204	1,031,000

A disaggregation of these figures to identify the medium used cannot be produced without incurring disproportionate costs.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the last five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department has commissioned buildings:

Year of Commencement	Location
	£3-5 million
1985-86	Amman
1985-86	Warsaw
1986-87	Vienna
1989-90	Wellington
1989-90	Seoul
1989-90	Prague
	Over £5 million
1986-87	Kuala Lumpur
1987-88	Helsinki
1989-90	Dhaka
1990-91	Hanslope Park, Bucks

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he intends to take to protect Shias in southern Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned for the welfare of all Iraqis. We understand that the ICRC and the UNHCR are ready to take over responsibility for refugees in those parts of southern Iraq presently occupied by coalition forces. The UN Iraq/Kuwait observer mission is being deployed to the border. Our contribution of some £20 million to the UN Secretary-General's and other international appeals is for the humanitarian needs of all Iraqis. We are in touch with both the Kuwaiti and Saudi Governments about access for Iraqi refugees to their countries.

South Africa

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the objectives of British foreign policy in South Africa; and what progress Her Majesty's Government are making towards those objectives.

Mrs. Chalker: The objectives of British foreign policy in South Africa are to encourage the creation of a democratic, non-racial, society through negotiations leading to peaceful change. Significant progress towards fulfilling this objective is being achieved.

TRANSPORT

M6

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the extent to which the recent roadworks at the M6 Farleton interchange and on the connecting Kendal link road were carried out without avoidable disruption to traffic flows.

Mr. Chope: A number of different maintenance activities were identified as essential at the interchange. An assessment showed that adopting a road closure option which lasted three weeks and enabled all the works to be completed, was preferable to a series of road closures, lane closures and contraflows over nine months. The traffic management arrangements adopted were considered the most appropriate for the safe and efficient progress of the works with the least disruption to road users. The proposals were extensively publicised.

M62

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to evaluate the safety and cost-effectiveness of the wire rope safety fence technology in use on the central reservation of the M62 in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Chope: A two-rope design of wire rope safety fence has been safely and successfully deployed on 10 km of the M62 since 1971. During the last 18 months, some of this fence has been replaced with an enhanced four-rope design of wire rope safety fence which has been developed by industry.

Prior to the Department adopting this new enhanced design of fence in December 1988, a full assessment was undertaken. This indicated a satisfactory vehicle impact performance together with likely competitive costings for initial installation and future repair and maintenance.

I will write to the hon. Member giving fuller details of the development and use of wire rope safety fencing in the United Kingdom.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received representations concerning the number of cars likely to fail the revised MOT due to unacceptable exhaust emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The majority of representations offered strong support for the check. At present, some 40 per cent. of cars fail annual MOT tests, and this percentage will

probably increase following the introduction of the emissions check. But the number of cars which actually fail will depend upon how many motorists have their engine tuning checked before the MOT test.

North Devon Link Road

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will approve the siting of a sign reading Exmoor market town at the South Molton exit to the North Devon link road (A361).

Mr. Chope: No, although signs indicating the availability of local services in South Molton are shortly to be erected on the link road. Signs need to be restricted to giving essential information quickly and succinctly and descriptive terms or area wide designations are not therefore appropriate.

Road Accidents

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide information about blood alcohol content distributions for fatally injured drivers by sex for the last five years.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Blood alcohol level in mg per 100ml of blood for fatally injured drivers and riders by sex: GB: 1985-89

	Percentage in each band				
Blood Alcohol	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Males					
0-10	63	65	64	67	70
11-50	7	7	10	7	8
51-80	3	3	3	3	2
Total below limit	73	75	76	78	80
81-100	2	2	2	2	2
101-200	14	14	12	12	11
201+	11	9	9	9	7
Total above limit	27	25	24	22	20
Females					
0-10	80	82	86	85	87
11-50	7	5	6	9	6
51-80	2	2	0	1	1
Total below limit	89	89	92	95	94
81-100	2	0	1	1	1
101-200	6	5	6	3	3
201+	3	6	2	2	3
Total above limit	11	11	8	5	6

Notes:
1. These figures are based on police and coroners' returns to the Department and are incomplete covering only about two out of every three driver or rider casualties.
2. Only drivers and riders aged 16 or over who die within 12 hours of their accident are included.
3. Results for 1989 are provisional.

Drunken Drivers (Retraining)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that only Department of Transport approved driving instructors will be allowed to undertake the retraining of convicted drunken drivers.

Mr. Chope: There are no proposals to change the existing requirement that driving instruction, for which payment is made, can only be given by a person who is registered or licensed to do so. Our proposals for an experiment in the use of rehabilitation courses for drink-drivers are set out in the Road Traffic Bill. Courses will have to be approved by the Secretary of State. Their main aim is to educate offenders about the effects of drinking and driving. Provision will not be restricted to driving instructors as courses will not normally involve driving lessons.

Organ Donor Cards

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether an organ donor card could be included with current driving licences; and whether there is any EC directive on the subject.

Mr. Chope: Organ donor cards are issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Swansea, with full and provisional driving licences. There is no EC directive on organ donor cards.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State of Transport what plans he has to introduce legislation to control the actions of private wheel clamping companies.

Mr. Chope: None at present, but I am keeping the situation under review.

M65

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when contracts for the construction of the Blackburn to M6/M61 section of the M65 will be let; when work will start; and when it is due to be completed; (2) if he will make a statement as to any outstanding legal or public expenditure processes which will have to be completed before contracts for the Blackburn to M6/M61 section of the M65 are let.

Mr. Chope: The route of the new motorway is fixed. Proposals for the consequential alterations to other highways and means of access were published last month. We expect to publish the Order for compulsory purchase of land this summer. A period will be allowed for objections and comment. A public inquiry will be necessary if there are objections.

Subject to the successful outcome of any inquiry and the availability of funds work could start in Spring 1993. The new road will take three years to build.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: The spending by my Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year and the estimated spending in 1990-91 are as follows:

	Television £'000s	*Radio £'000s*	*Newspaper £'000s*	*Other £'000s*
1979-80	4,141	62	105	1,532
1980-81	3,502	336	129	1,737
1981-82	3,615	6	410	1,457
1982-83	2,319	98	816	1,415
1983-84	4,655	22	334	1,488
1984-85	1,723	207	476	2,873
1985-86	70	858	834	4,026
1986-87	72	520	738	4,489
1987-88	2,310	50	140	3,010
1988-89	1,867	110	365	3,367
1989-90	1,930	233	982	3,289
1990-91	3,122	145	833	3,962

Detailed decisions have not yet been taken on expenditure by media for 1991-92, but the overall figure is expected to be approximately £10 million.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. McLoughlin: None since 1989-90. Before that, the Property Services Agency was responsible for expenditure on major new buildings.

Glasgow-Paris (Channel Tunnel Link)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to when direct passenger trains will start to run, through the channel tunnel, between Glasgow and Paris.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 24 April to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) at column *450*.

Clifton Bypass

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce his decision on the A453 Clifton bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: As soon as possible.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he received the detailed study on the A453 Clifton bypass, Nottingham.

Mr. Chope: I received a supplementary report from the landscape advisory committee on 22 April. The committee has reinspected all the route options for the A453 Clifton improvement, and I am urgently considering its report in the light of other views expressed during public consultation.

A13 (Water Main)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the incidents which took place on the A13 involving the fracturing of a water main on Thursday, 18 April and of a gas mains pipe on Friday, 19 April by the contractor employed by his Department; what investigations were made regarding the competence of this company before they were given the contract; and what compensation will be made to the London borough of Tower Hamlets for the emergency work carried out to rectify the problem.

Mr. Chope: The Department is undertaking a review of the incidents that took place. The contractor is a public company which has been used by the Department on numerous trunk road and motorway schemes over many years. The normal practice on schemes of this nature is for information to be obtained from statutory undertakers on the location of their services, which is passed on to the contractors who have a responsibility for checking locations once on site.

Apportionment of financial responsibility must await the outcome of the review.

Accidents (Motorways)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of accidents at motorway repair and maintenance sites since 1986 have been attributed to *(a)* drivers' vision being impaired by badly sited or excessively bright temporary lighting, *(b)* excessive speed or *(c)* inadequate driving warning.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is not available. The Department has awarded a research contract into safety of major motorway roadworks sites, which will include an examination of ways of reducing accidents.

Vehicle Testing Stations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken by his Department to monitor the performance of individual vehicle testing stations.

Mr. Chope: MOT testing stations are authorised only if the examiner is of good repute and provides the required level of premises and equipment. All testers must attend a course run by the vehicle inspectorate and pass a test of competence. Performance of testing stations is monitored by regular inspections by the vehicle inspectorate, at least once a year and more frequently if sub-standard performance is suspected. Motorists have a right of appeal against the refusal of a testing station to issue a test certificate. The vehicle inspectorate also makes incognito visits to testing stations; follows up complaints about stations; and checks vehicles at the roadside. Sub-standard performance can and does result in withdrawal of authorisation to test.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if individual vehicle testing stations are permitted to sell vehicles that they themselves have tested.

Mr. Chope: Yes.

Docklands Light Railway (Collision)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the collision of two trains on the docklands light railway on 22 April and its implications for the safety of the public.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate has reported that there was a sideways collision between two trains which converged at a junction on the northern approach to West India Quay station at approximately 7.20 am. A train arriving from Stratford struck the leading coach of a train from Tower Gateway. The latter train was under manual control due to a trackside equipment failure at Westferry station.

This was a low-speed collision, and I was glad to learn that no serious injuries were sustained.

Docklands light railway is urgently investigating the accident. Until the cause is established, and any necessary remedial action taken, additional controls have been implemented to strengthen the existing procedure for emergency manual operation.

I have asked the railway inspectorate to keep me informed of developments.

Signalling Failure (Aberdeen)

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the report by British Rail dated 25 March into a signalling failure at Aberdeen railway station.

Mr. McLoughlin: The report is part of BR's internal inquiry into the derailment of a train at Aberdeen station on 5 February. HM railway inspectorate was notified of the accident and will consider the results of BR's inquiry. Meanwhile, BR has taken action to avoid a recurrence.

Exter-Plymouth Roads

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his current intention on the appointment of consultants to undertake an assessment of the future road needs between Exeter and Plymouth, including the possibility of a new route; when an announcement can be expected; and what have been the reasons for changes in his policy on this matter.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 24 April 1991]:* We will be inviting bids from consultants later this year for the study of the needs of the A38 from Exeter to Plymouth. This will be linked with studies into the planning and environmental issues pertaining to the proposal for a privately financed second Tamar crossing, which will also commence shortly.

Motorway Tolls

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has commissioned or organised into the comparison of traffic flows between a freely available motorway and a toll road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 24 April 1991]:* To assist in modelling the traffic that would use a tolled Birmingham northern relief road, last year the Department undertook a study jointly with the bidders to assess the value which road users in the area placed on saving time.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services Councils

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names and addresses of the members of the four new health and social services councils excepting those nominated by district councils.

Mr. Hanley: The names of the chairmen of the health and social services councils are as follows:

Mrs. Patricia Stout, Eastern
Mr. Robert Pinkerton, Northern
Mrs. Fionnuala Cook, Southern
Mr Francis Hughes, Western

Nominations for membership of the councils have been invited from district councils, voluntary and community groups and other interested groups and individuals. It is hoped to announce the names of the members shortly.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the area in acres and hectares, the number of sheep, and the number of farms currently under restriction, including the county or counties involved, as a result of the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

Area under restriction	*Glenshane, Co Londonderry*	*Belraugh, Co Londonderry*	*Glenwherry, Co Antrim*	*Total*
Acres	10,497	1,305	8,620	20,422
Hectares	4,251	528	3,491	8,270
Estimated number of breeding sheep	13,400	1,250	7,000	21,650
Number of farms	79	11	31	121

Clenbuterol

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been found guilty of possession of clenbuterol; how many prosecutions are pending; how much clenbuterol has been seized this year; and if he will make a statement about measures to prohibit the movement of clenbuterol across the border from the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Two persons have been successfully prosecuted for the illegal administration of clenbuterol to cattle and three further prosecutions are pending. Thirteen kilos of the substance in powder form have been seized this year. The importation of unlicensed products such as clenbuterol into the United Kingdom is illegal. Inspectors of the Department of Health and Social Services work closely with HM Customs and Excise and the RUC in

seizing illicit supplies and arranging for the subsequent prosecution of offenders. It should be noted that any animal presented for slaughter with traceable and unjustified levels of clenbuterol will be condemned and destroyed.

DEFENCE

Royal Naval Supplies Depot

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he proposes to expand the royal naval supplies depot at Eaglescliffe, Stockton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no plans at present to expand the royal naval stores depot at Eaglescliffe.

Tornados (Loss)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tornados were lost during the Gulf war due to *(a)* enemy ground fire and *(b)* crashing into the ground from flying so low.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Seven Tornado GR1s were lost during the Gulf conflict. One of these crashed shortly after take-off due to a mechanical problem. The circumstances in which the other six were lost are still under investigation.

Arms Sales

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what ways armed forces personnel are used to help arms manufacturers sell their goods abroad or at arms fairs; what is the cost to the Exchequer; whether manufacturers or sellers make any contribution towards these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Armed forces personnel provide assistance to the United Kingdom defence industry in a wide variety of ways, the costs of which, in general, fall either to the relevant companies or to the purchasing nations.

Kurdish Refugees

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of Kurdish refugees killed by falling relief supplies; and what steps have been taken to improve the accuracy of supply drops.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any deaths caused by Royal Air Force relief operations. RAF aircrew take the greatest care to avoid accidents, and operating procedures are kept under constant review.

Iraq (Use of Weapons)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ground-based anti-aircraft weapons systems were used by the Iraqis against RAF Tornados during the Gulf war; and if he will list them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Before the conflict, Iraq was believed to have possessed the following air-defence systems:

surface to air missiles: SA-2, SA-3, SA-6, SA-7, SA-8, SA-9, SA-13, SA-14, ROLAND;

air defence guns: 22mm ZSU-23-4, 37mm M-1939, 57mm (including ZSU-57-2), 85mm, 100mm, 130mm.

All aspects of the Gulf conflict are currently under investigation; it is not possible to say which systems were used against RAF Tornados.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to *(a)* the capability of the JP233 bomb to immobilise Iraqi airfields permanently during the Gulf War and *(b)* how effectively the Iraqis were able to repair airfields attacked by JP233 bombs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Tornado GR1s equipped with the JP233 low-level attack weapon system were used to disrupt and harass Iraqi air operations rather than to close Iraqi airfields. Detailed analysis of equipment and munition effectiveness during the Gulf conflict is still being undertaken.

Gulf War

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what time of the day was the friendly fire incident in late February in the Gulf in which five British service men lost their lives.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The incident in which US A-10 aircraft inadvertently attacked two Warrior armoured infantry vehicles, killing nine British servicemen occurred shortly after 1500 local time (1200 GMT) on 26 February 1991.

Chemical Agents (Defence Manual)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been *(a)* the production cost and *(b)* the distribution, of his Department's publication "Medical Manual of Defence Against Chemical Agents".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The initial order in 1987 for 3,432 copies of the "Medical Manual of Defence Against Chemical Agents", which was printed by HMSO, incurred a production cost in the order of £8,400 at 1991 prices. The initial distribution was 2,256 Army, 180 RAF and 220 Royal Navy, with 776 kept in the maintenance stock. About 1,000 further copies were ordered from HMSO at the beginning of Operation Granby, and these were issued as required to the services.

Missing Documents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on missing documents connected with the barracks at Aldershot, which were stolen from inside a vehicle stolen from a street in Chatham, Kent on 3 December 1990; what were the documents' security classification; and whether either *(a)* the documents or *(b)* the vehicle have yet been recovered.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A car belonging to a drainage contractor was stolen from outside his home in Chatham, Kent in early December 1990. It contained some unclassified maps and plans which the contractor needed to carry out his contract. As at 19 April neither the documents nor the car had been recovered.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

	Television advertising	*Radio advertising*	*Newspaper advertising*	*Other promotional material*	*Total*
1979-80	2·280	0·040	5·750	0·137	8·207
1980-81	0·540	0·168	6·100	0·851	7·659
1981-82	0·010	0·042	4·200	1·037	5·289
1982-83	0·010	0·071	3·900	1·032	5·013
1983-84	Nil	0·072	5·300	1·904	7·276
1984-85	0·488	0·023	6·863	1·501	8·875
1985-86	1·820	0·019	6·822	1·032	9·693
1986-87	0·727	0·224	8·071	1·167	10·189
1987-88	0·553	0·026	7·682	2·523	10·784
1988-89	2·859	0·182	9·559	4·444	17·044
1989-90	[1]4·432	[1]—	13·359	6·214	24·005
1990-91	2·883	0·219	9·212	8·623	20·937
1991-92[2]	—	—	—	—	—

[1]Figures for both television and radio advertising.
[2]Budgets not yet finalised.
Notes:
1. All figures are expressed in £(pounds) million.
2. In the time available it has not been possible to provide a breakdown of the 1989-90 television and radio advertising figure.
3. Figures for 1990-91 are estimates.

I will write to the hon. Member once the 1991-92 figures are available.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the information cannot be provided in the form requested without disproportionate effort. I refer the hon. Member to the details given in the long-term projects tables, published as part of the supply estimates, class I, for the Ministry of Defence for the years in question.

Tanks

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the suitability of American manufactured tanks as a replacement for Chieftain tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department is making a full assessment of the suitability of the US M1A2 Abrams tank as equipment for our future main battle tank fleet.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to deploy British armed forces to protect the population of southern Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom has contributed a 20-strong contingent to the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait observation mission, which will operate in the demilitarised zone along the Iraq-Kuwait border. There are no other plans to deploy British forces into southern Iraq.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Uncorroborated Confessions

16. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to prevent convictions based on uncorroborated confessions in police custody; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The use of uncorroborated confession evidence is within the remit of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, as I announced to the House on 14 March. We shall consider what changes may be needed in the light of the commission's findings.

Right of Silence

17. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to amend the rules relating to the right of silence of suspects interviewed in police stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The right of silence will be among the matters to be considered by the Royal Commission and we should await its findings.

Community Service Orders

18. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress with community service orders.

Mrs. Rumbold: National standards on the supervision of community service orders were introduced two years ago, on 1 April 1989, and were designed to achieve tighter and more consistent management of this work by probation services. My Department will very shortly publish an analysis of the first year's operation of the standards.

Crime Prevention

19. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new measures he will propose to enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are constantly seeking to enhance the effectiveness of crime prevention in the interests of community safety. The report of an independent working group appointed by the Home Secretary to study the partnership approach to crime prevention is due in early summer. In the light of the group's findings the Government will consider whether further measures are necessary to ensure the effective organisation of crime prevention and to assess the impact of particular initiatives. In addition the Government will be evaluating the success of the national Crime Prevention Week which ended on 20 April.

Sunday Trading

20. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the Sunday trading legislation; and if he will make a statement.

22. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has recently received about Sunday trading.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay).

Domestic Violence Units

21. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report on progress in establishing domestic violence units.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At least five forces have established dedicated units. A number of others are currently considering them as part of their response to the Home Office circular on domestic violence issued to the police last summer.

Detective Superintendent Alan Watson

23. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to whether Detective Superintendent Alan Watson is still on duty.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No, it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to do so.

Crime

24. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new proposals he has to reduce the levels of crime.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We shall continue to develop and pursue vigorously our policies to combat crime and protect the public. These include additional people and money for the police and a growing programme of crime prevention measures. The provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill will enhance the courts' powers to deal effectively with offenders. Effective crime prevention is not just a responsibility of the Government, the police and the courts; it needs the support of the entire community.

Lollipop People

25. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what vacancies exist for lollipop people *(a)* in Ealing and *(b)* in the remaining London boroughs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that in Ealing, taken as the Metropolitan police divisions of Ealing and Southall, there are 20 vacancies for school crossing patrols. In the Metropolitan police district as a whole, vacancies exist for 245 school crossing patrols.

Prisons (Arts Courses)

26. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any courses in the arts are offered to prisoners.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. Visual arts and crafts, literature, music, film and video and drama and dance activities are all carried out in prisons. The Home Office has also funded with the Arts Council of Great Britain a recent research project into arts activities in prison. I shall be placing in the Library copies of this report and an accompanying directory of arts activities in prisons.

Miscarriages of Justice

27. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will update his response to the sixth report of the Home Affairs Committee of Session 1981-82, on miscarriages of justice.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier to the hon. Members for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott).

Drug Misuse

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce regular screening of prisoners for drug misuse.

Mrs. Rumbold: As my hon. Friend knows, all new receptions are seen and interviewed by health care staff and asked whether they have ever taken drugs. Indications of the use of drugs by injection are looked for at that time. Steps have been taken to try to reduce the supply of illicit drugs into establishments and the need for further measures is kept under review.

Deportation

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of middle east countries issued with notices of intention to deport on national security grounds *(a)* in November or December 1990 and *(b)* in January 1991 (i) were removed following the signing of a deportation order (ii) had deportation orders made against them and (iii) left the United Kingdom voluntarily.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The answer is as follows:

	Number
(a) (i)	None
(ii)	2
(iii)	[1]3
(b) (i)	None
(ii)	5
(iii)	56

[1] Including the two who left under their own arrangements after service of the deportation order.

Police Costs

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the annual cost of *(a)* police operations and *(b)* court time in England and Wales incurred while policing, investigating and prosecuting alleged offences by gay men under the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the number and annual costs of such police operations and related court time is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information about the number and location of new buildings or extensions commissioned by my Department in each of the last five years is not held centrally in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, details of capital projects of the values specified are included in the summaries of capital project expenditure in the supply estimates: Class IX, vote 2—table 1 (Prisons) and vote 3—table 1 (Administration, Immigration and Police Support Services).

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Figures for expenditure on newspaper and television advertising from 1979-80 to 1983-84 were given in an answer to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 May 1984 at column *587* and those for 1984-85 were given in answer to another question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on 19 December 1985 at column *275*.

Figures for radio advertising and other promotional literature for the years from 1979-80 to 1984-85 were given in answer to questions from the hon. Member on 19 November 1986 at columns *202-04*. The hon. Member was also given in those replies figures for expenditure on newspaper, television and radio advertising and other promotional literature for 1985-86.

Figures for the years 1986-87 to 1990-91 (provisional) for total advertising expenditure—all media—and production and distribution of other promotional material were given in answer to a question from the hon. Member on 12 March 1990 at columns *23-24*.

Apart from the final year, 1990-91, it would not be possible to provide more detailed information for those years except at disproportionate cost.

Expenditure figures for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 are as follows:

	1990-91[1] *£000's*	*1991-92*[2] *£000's*
Television advertising	2,024	3,500
Radio advertising	[illegible]	300
Newspaper advertising	3,595	1,800
Production and distribution of other promotional material (including poster advertising)	6,750	8,085

[1] Provisional.
[2] Estimate.

Household Insurance

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many local authorities have taken advantage of the block insurance scheme to enable residents in high crime areas to obtain insurance; what steps his Department is taking to encourage more local authorities to establish block insurance schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand that more than 100 local authorities take advantage of block insurance schemes to offer their tenants insurance cover, although the schemes are not necessarily related to the prevalance of crime in the area.

The standing conference on crime prevention working group on the costs of crime, which reported in December 1988, touched on the value of block insurance and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State subsequently brought the report to the attention of the Association of British Insurers. My officials have also been in touch with the Housing Corporation and the Insurance Service for Housing Associations. It is for local authorities to decide whether to establish schemes for their tenants.

Working Visas

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens of *(a)* New Zealand, *(b)* Australia and *(c)* Canada were admitted to the United Kingdom on two-year working visas in each year from 1979 to 1990; and how many in each year were extended to three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 8 April 1991]:* Reliable figures of working holidaymaker admissions are available only from 1 May 1990. The numbers admitted between 1 May and 31 December 1990 are given in the following table. Under the immigration rules, the maximum stay permitted for working holidaymakers is two years.

Admissions as working holidaymakers for selected nationalities 1 May—31 December 1990

No. of persons

Nationality	*Total admitted*	*of which: granted leave to enter for two years*
New Zealand	6,440	4,930
Australia	11,600	8,690
Canada	1,800	1,130

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Accommodation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Lord President of the Council why and when *The Times* received exceptional space in the Press Gallery of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: The authorities of the House have not been able to find out precisely when a room was allocated to *The Times*, but records going back as far as 1894 refer to this.

The hon. Member will be aware that *The Times* newspaper has a very long traditional connection with the reporting of the House and this may well have led to the allocation by our predecessors of a special room for use by its reporters.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make facilities available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Chris Patten: If the hon. Member sends me details of the appeal, I shall ensure that they are circulated within my office.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make facilities available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. MacGregor: If details of the appeal are sent to my office, I will ensure that they are properly circulated.

WALES

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what facilities he has made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. David Hunt: Staff in my Department can contribute to appeals through the normal range of facilities, including the payroll giving scheme.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many haemophiliacs there are in each of the area health authorities in Wales;

(2) how many haemophiliacs in each of the area health authorities in Wales will receive the most pure form of factor 8; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the number of haemophiliacs in each of the district health authorities in Wales is not held centrally. Central funds have been provided for the purchase of high purity factor VIII to treat patients under the care of the haemophilia reference centre at the university hospital of Wales. Its prescribing is a matter for the clinicians concerned and I am unable to provide information on the number of patients treated.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. David Hunt: A breakdown of annual expenditure by the Welsh Office on advertising and other publicity from 1979-80 to 1990-91 is set out in the following table.

Welsh Office publicity spend

£'000

Year	*Radio advertising*	*Television advertising*	*Press advertising*	*Other publicity*	*Total*	
1979-80	Nil	—	61	—	24	85
1980-81	Nil	—	62	—	22	84
1981-82	Nil	—	100	—	44	144
1982-83	Nil	—	99	—	28	127
1983-84	Nil	—	108	—	34	142
1984-85	Nil	—	66	—	100	166
1985-86	Nil	Nil	—	31	92	123
1986-87	Nil	27	—	49	331	407
1987-88	Nil	39	—	191	615	845
1988-89	Nil	64	—	112	1,105	1,281

Year	Radio advertising	Television advertising	Press advertising	Other publicity	Total	
1989-90	Nil	57	—	354	1,758	2,169
1990-91[1]	Nil	17	—	251	1,161	1,429

[1] Estimated.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on new buildings/extensions commissioned in respect of the national health service in Wales is as follows:

All over £5 million

Locations	Numbers
1986-87	
Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli	3
Llandough Hospital, Obstetric Unit, South Glamorgan	
Royal Gwent Hospital, Scheme 6, Gwent	
1987-88	
Morriston Hospital, Scheme 3, Swansea	1
1988-89	
Prince Charles Hospital, Phase 2, Merthyr Tydfil	2
Singleton Hospital, West Ward Block, Swansea	

Hospital buildings are vested in the Secretary of State, but operational responsibility for them lies with the district health authority.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent initiatives have been taken by his Department to raise the level of public, industry and commercial awareness of energy efficiency and conservation in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Energy Efficiency Office (Wales) has a continuing programme of visits and events for the promotion of the efficient use of energy for the benefit of industry, commerce, the public sector and domestic consumers.

This is in line with the strategic framework published by my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), in May 1989, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Speed Signs (M4)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales at what time the 30 mph and 60 mph speed limits were switched on on the illuminated maximum speed indicators on the westbound carriageway of the M4 motorway between junction 48 and the Pont Abraham services on the evening of Friday 19 April; at what time they were switched off; and what was the nature of the problem which necessitated the activation of the speed limits.

Sir Wyn Roberts: South Wales police are responsible for the operation of the matrix signalling system in the area involved.

Their records show that the system was activated once on Friday 19 April at 21.02 hours due to a vehicle (car) fire on the hard shoulder of the westbound carriageway. The fire service extinguished the fire, and the police switched off the matrix system at 21.33 hours.

It is police policy in such situations to activate 60 mph signs in advance of the incident and 30 mph signs closer to the scene.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the area in acres and hectares, the number of sheep, and the number of farms currently under restriction, including the county or counties involved, as a result of the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. David Hunt: In Wales restrictions affect approximately 207,500 acres (approximately 84,000 hectares); 292,000 sheep (maximum post-lambing figure); and 410 holdings. The restrictions involve parts of the counties of Clwyd, Powys and Gwynedd.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total amount of grants from the Exchequer that have been paid to farmers in Wales to deal with the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. David Hunt: As at 29 March 1991, compensation payments totalling £5,130,404 had been authorised for sheep producers in Wales affected by the Chernobyl incident.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* Television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Miss Widdecombe: For information from 1979-80 to 1989-90, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 12 March 1990 at cols *71-72*.

The total estimated outturn for publicity in 1990-91 is £12·843 million. Of this, £5·025 million has been committed for the purpose of advertising.

	£ million
Television	3·38
Press	1·517
Other material (This includes information and promotion)	7·946

The estimate for the 1991-92 national social security advertising and publicity budget is £12·992 million. Detailed decisions on media have not yet been made.

The estimate for the 1991-92 publicity budgets for the Benefits Agency is £8·724 million and £1·254 million for the Contributions Agency. Detailed decisions on media have not yet been made.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extensions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* has contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Jack: The Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment has managed and executed new buildings and extensions on behalf of this Department in the period in question.

This Department commissioned buildings at the following locations within the following project values.

Year	*£3-£5 million*	*Over £5 million*
1986-87[1]	Nil	Nil
1987-88[1]	Nil	Nil
1988-89	Washington	Livingston, North Fylde (2 buildings), Ashton in Makerfield
1989-90	Nil	Belfast, London North Fylde, Leeds, Preston, Newton Abbott
1990-91	North Fylde	

[1]Before 1 April 1988 this Department had no responsibility for funding major new buildings on the Government's civil estate. This was the responsibility of the Property Services Agency.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what rules govern eligibility for unemployment benefit for those with part-time employment; and what form of recourse is available to claimants who have been refused unemployment benefit due to part-time employment.

Mr. Jack: A person working part-time must satisfy the contribution conditions for receipt of unemployment benefit and be available for work on the days for which he claims. He must also actively seek work and show that any restrictions he places on his availability do not prevent him from having reasonable prospects of employment. Benefit is not payable for any day on which he earns over £2, or for any week in which he has done his full normal week's work or earned at least £52.

A person refused unemployment benefit may appeal to the local social security appeal tribunal. He may also be entitled to family credit or income support.

Social Fund

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 11 March, *Official Report*, column 415 on the percentage of income support claimants repaying social fund loans, if he will give the figures for the East Midlands region, by local authority.

Mr. Scott: The administration of income support and the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the public information office.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many family credit awards were current; and what was the caseload including backdated awards at the end of each month since April 1989, for employees and self-employed people, respectively.

Mr. Jack: *[pursuant to his reply, 11 March 1991, cols. 417-18]:* I regret that the figures given for the caseload for the months of August to December 1989 were incorrect. The correct information is as follows:

	Number of family credit awards current at end of month[1]	*Caseload (including backdated awards) as at end of month* *Employees*	*Self-employed*	*Total*
April 1989	251,897	235,820	43,160	278,980
May 1989	235,751	255,420	44,620	300,040
June 1989	263,480	263,200	45,520	308,720
July 1989	275,414	268,140	45,080	313,220
August 1989	281,734	269,340	44,680	314,020
September 1989	288,631	273,880	44,960	318,840
October 1989	278,122	269,840	44,120	313,960
November 1989	274,194	260,020	43,940	303,960
December 1989	263,135	255,440	43,140	298,580
January 1990	265,548	255,300	44,100	299,400
February 1990	278,392	261,960	44,860	306,820
March 1990	281,559	263,360	45,920	309,280
April 1990	280,898	267,240	46,760	314,000
May 1990	268,933	267,940	47,260	315,200
June 1990	275,250	272,360	47,480	319,840
July 1990	279,856	277,620	48,200	325,820
August 1990	281,414	—	—	[2]324,000
September 1990	282,019	—	—	[2]326,000
October 1990	280,744	—	—	[2]326,000
November 1990	293,343	—	—	[2]324,000
December 1990	284,429	—	—	[3]—

	Number of family credit awards current at end of month[1]	Caseload (including backdated awards) as at end of month		
		Employees	Self-employed	Total
January 1991	281,250	—	—	[3]—
February 1991	288,924	—	—	[3]—

[1] A breakdown between employees and self-employed is not available.
[2] Provisional totals: no breakdowns between employers and employed at this stage.
[3] Meaningful figures not yet available because of claims not yet decided.

Local Government Finance

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many poll tax payers will lose their rebate entitlement as a result of the proposed reduction in the poll tax *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Gateshead.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 28 March 1991]:* It is estimated that, as a result of the general reduction of community charges by £140, the number of people qualifying for community charge benefit will be about 1·4 million less than if the previous higher charges had remained in place. This estimate takes account of the abolition, from 1 April 1991, of the minimum benefit rule for community charge benefit.

Information about Gateshead is not available

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1986-87-88 Family Expenditure Surveys at 1991-92 prices and benefit levels.

SCOTLAND

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of launching Highlands and Islands Enterprise and its associated local enterprise companies.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This is an operational matter for Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairman to write direct to the hon. Member.

Legal System

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when Glasgow sheriff court opens and closes each day.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Glasgow sheriff court opens to the public at 9.15 am on weekdays and closes when all courtroom business has been completed or when the offices close at 3.45 pm, whichever is the later. Court business can also be conducted outwith these times where necessary.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average hours use per day on judicial business of Glasgow sheriff court.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the quarter ending 31 December 1990, the average court sitting day, excluding lunch breaks, was 3·8 hours. In addition, sheriffs undertook judicial business in chambers.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheriffs, including sheriff principals there are in each sheriffdom; and how many there were five years ago.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The complement for each sheriffdom is set out in the table:

	1991	1986
Glasgow and Strathkelvin	24	24
Grampian, Highland and Islands	13	13
Lothian and Borders	16	15
North Strathclyde	15	13
South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway	16	13
Tayside, Central and Fife	15	14
Floating Sheriffs	6	5
Total	105	97

Health Service Contracts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for the Argyll and Clyde health board (a) the services which are subject to compulsory competitive tendering, *(b)* the contracts which have been awarded to the private sector and *(c)* the contracts which have been awarded in-house; and what plans he has to extend compulsory competitive tendering in the health service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

a) The services of domestic catering, portering, transport and painting have been subjected to competitive tendering.

b) Two contracts for portering and one for painter work have been awarded to outside contractors.

c) 19 contracts have been awarded in-house.

This has released an extra £2·2 million for the board to spend on patient care.

Health boards have been encouraged to keep under review the range of services which may be susceptible to competitive tendering.

Homes for the Elderly

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further resources he has allocated to local authorities in Scotland to help them meet targets for the provision of homes for the elderly in terms of both quantity and quality.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no such targets set centrally. The allocation of grant-aided expenditure for social work for 1991-92 provides for an increase of 14 per cent. on that for 1990-91. It is for individual authorities to decide on the allocation of expenditure to particular services in accordance with their own perception of needs and priorities.

Schools

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since 1980 the number of special classes or units in primary schools in each local

authority region, expressing this as a proportion of all *(a)* primary schools in the region and *(b)* secondary schools in each region; and if he will express this as a proportion of all secondary schools in the region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is readily available only from 1987.

The numbers and proportions of education authority primary and secondary schools with an attached special department, including classes or units, at September in each year are shown in the table:

Number and percentage of education authority primary schools with special departments by local authority region

Education authority	1987		1988		1989		1990	
	Number of departments	Percentage	Number of departments	Percentage	Number of departments	Percentage	Number of departments	Percentage
Borders	7	9·1	7	9·1	6	7·8	6	7·8
Central	0	—	2	1·7	2	1·7	4	3·4
Dumfries and Galloway	9	7·8	12	10·5	11	9·6	14	12·3
Fife	9	6·1	10	6·8	10	6·8	10	6·9
Grampian	2	0·7	2	0·7	2	0·7	2	0·7
Highland	11	5·4	10	5·0	11	5·5	14	7·0
Lothian	11	4·5	12	4·9	12	4·9	13	5·3
Strathclyde	8	0·9	8	0·9	10	1·1	10	1·1
Tayside	13	7·0	15	8·1	13	7·0	13	7·0
Orkney	0	—	0	—	1	5·0	1	5·0
Shetland	1	3·7	1	3·7	1	3·7	1	3·7
Western Isles	2	4·9	2	5·9	2	5·9	1	3·0
Scotland	73	3·1	81	3·5	81	3·5	89	3·8

Number and percentage of education authority secondary schools with special departments by local authority region

Education authority	1987		1988		1989		1990	
	Number of departments	Percentage	Number of departments	Percentage	Number of departments	Percentage	Number of departments	Percentage
Borders	5	55·6	5	55·6	5	55·6	5	55·6
Central	7	33·3	7	36·8	8	42·1	9	47·4
Dumfries and Galloway	6	37·5	7	43·8	9	56·3	7	43·8
Fife	9	47·4	9	47·4	9	47·4	9	47·4
Grampian	5	12·5	4	10·3	4	10·3	5	12·8
Highland	10	37·0	10	37·0	10	37·0	11	40·7
Lothian	10	19·6	10	19·6	10	19·6	8	15·7
Strathclyde	6	3·1	6	3·1	8	4·3	8	4·4
Tayside	6	18·8	6	18·8	7	21·9	6	18·8
Orkney	0	—	0	—	0	—	0	—
Shetland	0	—	0	—	0	—	0	—
Western Isles	1	6·3	1	6·3	1	6·3	1	6·3
Scotland	65	14·8	65	15·0	71	16·6	69	16·3

Courts (Closed Circuit Television)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the provision of closed circuit television links in court proceedings involving child witnesses in cases dealing with physical and or sexual abuse subsequent to the introduction of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I indicated last year in our debates on what are now sections 56 to 59 of the 1990 Act that we would be consulting the judiciary about the arrangements for implementation of these provisions. Equipment demonstrations have been mounted and consultations have taken place. An announcement will be made when we have completed our examination of the results.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he will use to judge whether to approve or otherwise any application for setting up an NHS trust.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The criteria for NHS trust applications are published in "NHS Trusts: A Working Guide".

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what authority the chief executive of the national health service in Scotland has appointed Douglas Brown and Donald MacNeill as chairman designate and chief executive designate, respectively, of the Ayrshire national health service trust; on whose authority Donald MacNeill is organising the national health service trust application from property belonging to the Ayrshire and Arran health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No appointments have been made by the chief executive of the national health service in Scotland: that of chairman-designate was announced by the Secretary of State. Procedures for applications are laid down in chapter 5 of "NHS Trusts: A Working Guide", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he has made to ensure that members or

officers of health boards charged with the responsibility of carrying out the consultation on NHS trusts are not themselves involved in any way in the trust application.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In all cases where trust proposals are being pursued, a team drawn from the unit concerned has been established under the control of a project manager.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is included in the application for national health service trust status for the new Ayr hospital about the prospective directors of the trust.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The application describes the proposed management framework. This will be examined as part of the assessment of the trust proposal.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guarantees he has given to those appointed as officers designate of NHS trusts that they will be appointed to the equivalent substantive positions on the trusts, if eventually approved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. The appointment of executive members of a trust is a matter for the chairman and non-executive members.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the details of the standard contract between health boards in Scotland and proposed national health service trusts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* There is no standard contract. NHS contracts between health boards and NHS trusts will be a matter for the parties concerned having regard to any general guidance which may be issued from time to time by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the area in acres and hectares, the number of sheep, and the number of farms currently under restriction, including the county or counties involved, as a result of the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following the removal from 14 January 1991 of restrictions on a number of farms in Scotland, 148,647 acres (60,181 hectares), 116,000 sheep, post-lambing figure, and 63 farms in parts of Central region, Stirling district; Dumfries and Galloway region, Stewartry, Wigtown and Nithsdale districts; Strathclyde region, Cumnock and Doon Valley, Kyle and Carrick, Cunninghame, Kilmarnock and Loudoun, East Kilbride and Eastwood districts are currently subject to restriction under the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Radioactivity in Sheep) Order 1991.

Inverclyde Initiative

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the central Government financial assistance to the Inverclyde initiative, since its creation detailing precise allocations to specific activities.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 26 March 1991]:* Central Government financial assistance to the Inverclyde Initiative for the years in question was as follows:

Scottish Development Agency
Project and programme expenditure
(the precise breakdown requested is not available)

	£
1985-86	3,387,000
1986-87	2,676,000
1987-88	2,792,000
1988-89	4,762,000
1989-90	7,784,000

Urban programme—Inverclyde community initiatives fund

	£
1987-88	7,687
1988-89	8,404
1989-90	17,328

Cancer

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list for each year from 1986 onwards the number of reported cases of cancer-related diseases in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Forth Valley district health board area, *(c)* Falkirk district, *(d)* the postal district FK4, *(e)* the postal district FK5 and *(f)* the postal district FK6.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 April 1991]:* The number of cancer-related[1] diseases from 1986 onwards for *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Forth Valley health board area, *(c)* Falkirk local government district, *(d)* the postal district FK4, *(e)* the postal district FK5 and *(f)* the postal district FK6 are shown in the table:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Scotland	24,995	25,439	25,901	25,860
Forth Valley health board	1,268	1,283	1,303	1,233
Falkirk local government district	655	631	668	689
Postal district FK4	40	64	32	60
Postal district FK5	70	56	82	79
Postal district FK6	43	43	55	45

Final figures for 1990 are not yet available.
[1] All Malignant Neoplasms; International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish or place in the Library the minutes of discussion and decision of Grampian health board of 7 March with regard to the item dealing with NHS trust status of Aberdeen royal infirmary, Foresterhill site.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* Board minutes are a matter for the board concerned, in this particular case the discussion referred to took place in closed session, but I understand that Grampian health board has made clear to the hon. Member its willingness to make the minutes available.

Forestry Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the names of each individual on each regional advisory committee of the Forestry Commission and indicate whether they represent forestry, trade union or environmental interests.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* The Forestry Act 1967 stipulates that not fewer than four members of each regional advisory committee will be appointed by the Forestry Commissioners after consultation with organisations appearing to them to represent the interests of owners of woodlands and timber merchants respectively and organisations concerned with the study and promotion of forestry. In 1974, Forestry Ministers instructed the commissioners to appoint to each RAC representatives of agricultural, planning and environmental interests; it was also decided that the remaining place should continue to be allocated to a trade union representative.

The names of the members of each RAC, and the backgrounds from which they have been drawn, are given in the table. RAC chairmen are, as far as possible, appointed from independent backgrounds.

North of England RAC
Professor G. R. Dickson—Chairman
R. N. Cartwright—Forestry (Forestry Profession)
J. Derham—Trade Union
T. R. Fetherstonhaugh—Forestry (Timber Growers)
N. C. Forbes Adam—Forestry (Timber Growers)
Lady E. Kirk—Environment
A. A. Macdonald—Planning
R. J. Steel Addison—Agriculture
J. T. Todd—Forestry (Timber Merchants)

East England RAC
W. E. Lane—Chairman
N. A. Braden—Forestry (Timber Merchants)
D. M. Clark—Planning
M. Craske—Trade Union
T. Cook—Forestry (Timber Growers)
N. G. Halsey—Forestry (Timber Growers)
A. R. Pelly—Forestry (Timber Growers)
C. Stratton—Environment
L. Woodham—Agriculture

West England RAC
Mrs. R. Thomas—Chairman
N. D. Anderson—Forestry (Timber Growers)
Lord Courteney—Agriculture
C. A. Eade—Forestry (Timber Growers)
A. Fooks—Trade Union
R. Jarman—Environment
J. T. Perry—Planning
G. E. Smith—Forestry (Timber Merchants)
J. H. B. Workman—Forestry (Forestry Profession)

North Scotland RAC
F. Critchley—Chairman
B. E. Crabtree—Trade Union
A. D. M. Farquharson—Forestry (Timber Growers)
Professor C. Gimingham—Environment
Councillor F. R. M. Keith—Planning
A. N. G. Laing—Forestry (Timber Growers)
M. J. Leslie—Forestry (Timber Merchants)
Professor H. G. Miller—Forestry (Forestry Profession)
M. Pottinger—Agriculture

Mid Scotland RAC
Dr. Jean Balfour—Chairman
A. W. Barbour—Forestry (Timber Growers)
P. Fairweather—Forestry (Forestry Profession)
J. A. Fell—Forestry (Timber Growers)
Councillor G. McGrath—Planning
J. McNaughton—Agriculture
G. Morton—Trade Union
P. S. Murray—Forestry (Timber Merchants)
P. Wormell—Environment

South Scotland RAC
H. A. Waterson—Chairman
D. B. Crawford—Forestry (Forestry Profession)
J. F. S. Gourlay—Agriculture
D. J. Liddell-Grainger—Forestry (Timber Growers)
D. Minns—Environment
Captain J. W. N. Mitchell—Forestry (Timber Growers)
T. Smith—Forestry (Timber Merchants)
Councillor A. L. Tulley—Planning
H. Wilson—Trade Union

Wales RAC
M. A. McLaggan—Chairman
Mrs. S. A. G. Ballance—Forestry (Timber Growers)
J. Donovan—Environment
Dr. G. K. Elliot—Forestry (Forestry Profession)
J. R. Lloyd Jones—Agriculture
M. J. Morgan—Planning
S. K. Neale—Trade Union
Colonel P. C. Ormrod—Forestry (Timber Growers)
M. Oxnard—Forestry (Timber Merchants)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the biographical details of the Forestry Commissioners indicating whether they have experience in *(a)* forestry, *(b)* environment and conservation, *(c)* employment and *(d)* other.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]:* The information is as follows:

CHAIRMAN

J. Raymond Johnstone—Chairman of the Forestry Commission since 1989. Chairman of Murray Johnstone Ltd. Chairman Scottish Financial Enterprise. Honorary president Scottish Opera. Past member Scottish Advisory Committee of the Nature Conservancy Council.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN AND DIRECTOR GENERAL

T. R. Cutler—Full-time appointment since 1990 at grade 2 level. Professional forestry qualifications and considerable experience in multi-purpose forest management. Formerly member of the Colonial Forest Service in Kenya, latterly chief executive, New Zealand Ministry of Forestry.

OTHER COMMISSIONERS: FULL-TIME

R. T. Bradley—Commissioner Private Forestry and Development at grade 3 level. Professional forestry qualifications and wide experience in multi-purpose forest management. Held various posts in the Forestry Commission since 1960, becoming a Commissioner in 1985.

D. L. Foot—Commissioner Operations at grade 3 level. Professional forestry qualifications and wide experience in multi-purpose forest management. Held various posts in the Forestry Commission since 1961, becoming a commissioner in 1986.

D. S. Grundy—Commissioner Administration and Finance at grade 3 level. Economist. Joined the Forestry Commission in 1982, after periods with the Ministry of Fuel and Power, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of the Environment and the Civil Service College. Appointed commissioner in 1990.

OTHER COMMISSIONERS: PART-TIME

J. D. Pollock—Appointed 1978. Former General Secretary of the Educational Institute for Scotland. Past member of the Manpower Services Committee Scotland and the Broadcasting Council for Scotland. Former chairman of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Member of the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

I. D. Coutts—Appointed 1984. Chartered accountant with local government experience. Norfolk county councillor since 1970 (leader 1973-79). Member of Local Government

Audit Commission 1983-90.

C. R. Woosnam—Appointed 1986. Woodland owner and farmer. Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors with wide experience of management of agricultural and forestry properties in Wales and the Border counties. Member Timber Growers UK (deputy chairman (1983-86).

F. M. Strang Steel—Appointed 1988. Woodland owner and farmer. Has managed a mixed forestry/farming estate near Selkirk for 10 years. Chairman of south-east region of Scottish Landowners Federation. Member Timber Growers UK. A keen conservationist and member of Borders Farming and Forestry Wildlife Advisory Group.

R. P. Hancock—Appointed 1988. International insurance consultant. Member of Lloyd's, freeman of the City of London. Presently has farming and forestry interests in Surrey and the Scottish Borders. Particular interest in wildlife conservation and deer husbandry. Council member of the Surrey County Agricultural Society.

T. S. Mallinson—Appointed 1989. President Timber Trade Federation. President UK Institute of Carpenters. Former Chairman Timber Research and Development Association and former president Institute of Wood Science. Chairman Epping Forest Centenary Trust.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the biographical details of the conservators of the Foresty Commission, indicating whether they have experience in *(a)* forestry, *(b)* environment and conservation, *(c)* employment or *(d)* other.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 April 1991]*: The Forestry Commission's conservators are:

North England—S. A. Neustein
East England—N. Dannatt
West England—R. J. N. Busby
Wales—J. F. Morgan
North Scotland—J. Atterson
Mid Scotland—G. J. Hamilton
South Scotland—G. M. Cowie

They are Forestry Commission officials who have been appointed to their posts through the normal departmental procedures. It would not be appropriate to give biographical details.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Whales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to press for a permanent ban on any killing of whales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have taken a strong stand, both as Minister of State and as Minister, on the importance of conserving whale stocks and I have repeatedly stated my determination that no whale stock should again be over-exploited by man. Unless and until certain conditions are met I would not even contemplate agreeing to the lifting of the moratorium imposed by the International Whaling Commission on commercial whaling.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to make any representations to the Japanese authorities about their continued slaughter of whales.

Mr. Curry: The Japanese Government are well aware of our views on scientific whaling. Last year the United Kingdom co-sponsored a resolution agreed by the International Whaling Commission calling on Japan to reconsider her intention of conducting scientific research whaling in the Antarctic ocean. Japan agreed to modify her programme in the light of comments by the IWC's scientific committee. We shall raise the issue again at the forthcoming meeting of the IWC.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what circumstances he would support a limited resumption of commercial whaling.

Mr. Curry: We are not prepared even to contemplate agreeing to the lifting of the moratorium placed by the International Whaling Commission on commercial whaling unless and until it is clear that whale stocks are at healthy levels, a satisfactory management procedure is in place and the methods of killing whales are as humane as possible. These conditions have not yet been met.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will pursue a common and permanent ban on the killing of whales for commercial, research or other purposes within the EC's common fisheries policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The European Community does not have competence for whaling matters and could not therefore take action within the common fisheries policy. There are no moves, however, by any member state to begin whaling in Community waters and trade in cetacean products is prohibited.

The United Kingdom has been and will remain in the forefront in the International Whaling Commission in working to ensure that the objective of conserving whales is fully observed.

Scottish Seed Potatoes

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to whom his Department communicates the relevant information where his plant health department confirms that a batch of Scottish seed potatoes has high levels of virus infection.

Mr. Curry: If virus levels in excess of those prescribed in the Seed Potatoes Regulations 1984 are found in Scottish seed potatoes dispatched to England and Wales, this is reported immediately to the Scottish Office.

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations govern the disposal or destruction of a consignment of Scottish seed potatoes which are confirmed to have high levels of infection or virus.

Mr. Curry: Regulation 18 of the Seed Potatoes Regulations 1984 provides authorised officers with powers to serve notices requiring action to be taken in respect of seed potatoes which, on an official examination, do not meet various requirements in the regulations. The course to be taken will depend on the circumstances of the case. Notices are unlikely to be served if all the tubers have been removed from their sealed containers, thereby preventing their resale as seed, and if the virus concerned is not one which is subject to statutory action under the Plant Health (Great Britain) Order 1987.

Agricultural Spending

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many letters he has received on the subject of the decision by the United Kingdom on 8 April to oppose the measures presented by the Commission to increase the legal limits of agricultural spending; and what is the nature of these representations;

(2) if he will make a statement on the measures proposed on 8 April by the European Commission on the limits of agricultural spending; and what steps the Council now proposes to take on these proposals.

Mr. Curry: The Commission's 1991-92 price proposals, published on 13 March, are designed to contain agricultural expenditure within the legally binding limit —the guideline. At the ECOFIN Council on 8 April the United Kingdom confirmed its support for a settlement compatible with the guideline.

Farm Subsidies

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the average subsidy paid in the last financial year, on a per acre basis to farms smaller than 163 acres;

(2) what was the average subsidy paid in the last financial year, on a per acre basis, to farms larger than 163 acres;

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the extent to which farm size is an accurate basis for the allocation of financial subsidies;

(4) what was the average subsidy paid on a per acre basis to farms of 33 acres or less in the last financial year.

Mr. Curry: Support for farmers under the CAP is provided primarily through market prices; in some sectors direct subsidies to farmers also play a role. The level of support received by individual farmers will depend on factors such as the combination of enterprises on a particular holding and the level of output, and any estimate of average levels of support per acre would be of little relevance. For these reasons farm size on its own would not provide a satisfactory basis for determining levels of support.

Common Agricultural Policy

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what assessment his Department has made of the effects that the proposed alterations to the CAP would have on the British farming industry;

(2) what is his estimate of the average subsidy which will be paid on a per acre basis to farms of *(a)* 33 acres or less, *(b)* less than 163 acres and *(c)* more than 163 acres over the current financial year and in that beginning in April 1992 if the current proposals for the reform of the CAP go ahead unchanged.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission has yet to produce detailed proposals for the reform of the CAP. If the Commission was to pursue the principles for reform set out in its February discussion paper, United Kingdom producers would be severely disadvantaged.

Green Premiums

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the extent to which the proposed levels of green premiums payable to farmers will be sufficient to compensate farmers for the loss of income brought about by *(a)* the use of less intensive farming techniques and *(b)* the reduction in subsidies from the CAP.

Mr. Curry: There are no proposals yet from the European Commission for green premiums.

Livestock Rendering

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many companies in the livestock rendering industry have gone out of business in the last 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available centrally. However, since 1 April 1990 10 renderers in Great Britain have asked to have their names removed from the register of protein processors under the Processed Animal Protein Order 1989.

Green Currency

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek the abolition of the green currency system.

Mr. Curry: It is Government policy to seek the removal of the monetary gaps created by the green currency system by the end of 1992 at the latest.

Blue Ear Disease

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by his Department to ensure that blue ear disease in pigs is kept out of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Under European Community rules, member states are not permitted to send breeding or production pigs to other member states from holdings or, where appropriate, municipalities where the new blue ear pig disease exists.

The disease has been confirmed in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. Because we have no foot and mouth disease quarantine premises approved for the handling of pigs, we do not, in any case, import live pigs from these countries. There is no evidence that pigmeat contributes to the transmission of this disease, but we shall continue to keep a close watch on developments and we shall press for additional controls if these appear justified on the basis of scientific evidence.

Farm Diversification

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek through the policies of the EC to encourage diversification within the rural economy.

Mr. Curry: This has been our policy for several years and we have already secured the adoption of Council regulation 3808/89, which extends the scope of the Community provisions for capital grants for farmers to include grants for diversification.

Production Methods

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the common agricultural policy to improve and widen incentives to production methods which enhance environmental protection and countryside management.

Mr. Curry: Our aim is to secure greater integration of environmental and agricultural policies so as to encourage farming methods which protect the environment and enhance the natural beauty of the countryside.

Farms (Environmental Benefits)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to seek amendment to the common agricultural policy to make environmental benefits available to farmers and landowners irrespective of the size of their property.

Mr. Curry: Our policy is to ensure that schemes offering incentives to farmers and landowners to adopt environmentally friendly farming systems continue to apply irrespective of farm size.

Set-aside Scheme

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support the European Commission's proposal for a more effective and attractive set-aside scheme.

Mr. Curry: We favour making the set-aside scheme more effective and attractive. In particular we need to ensure more even uptake throughout the Community and to make set-aside more environmentally friendly. The Commission's proposal for a one-year set-aside scheme linked to refund of cereals co-responsibility levy does not meet these objectives; therefore we do not support it.

Farming Techniques

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies his Department has made or intends to make of incentives to encourage farmers to move towards less-intensive farming techniques.

Mr. Curry: Socio-economic and environmental evaluation studies are being carried out in respect of the environmentally sensitive areas, nitrate sensitive areas and pilot beef and sheep extensification schemes.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the number and location of all new buildings or extentions commissioned by his Department in each of the past five years which *(a)* had contracts worth between £3 million and £5 million and *(b)* had contracts worth more than £5 million.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry took on responsibility for vote accounting and project sponsorship for major new building projects three years ago. Before this the Department of the Environment, Property Services Agency held this responsibility and I have details therefore only of commissions placed after the date of the change.

New buildings commissioned by this Department over these last three financial years in the categories requested are:

(i) value between £3 million and £5 million 1989-90. One at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.

(ii) value over £5 million 1988-89. One near Sand Hutton, Yorkshire. One at Weymouth, Dorset.

There were no extensions.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Curry: Expenditure by the Department in the financial year 1982-83 and each subsequent year was as follows:

	(a) *TV*	*(b)* *Radio*	*(c)* *Press advertising* £	*(d)* *Other publicity material* £
1982-83	nil	nil	3,000	n/a
1983-84	nil	nil	27,000	n/a
1984-85	nil	nill	26,000	575,000
1985-86	nil	nil	29,000	656,000
1986-87	nil	nil	54,000	825,000
1987-88	nil	nil	12,000	693,000
1988-89	nil	nil	380,000	1,004,000
1989-90	nil	nil	116,000	2,373,000
1990-91	nil	nil	53,000	2,379,000

Figures for publicity advertising prior to 1982-83 are not available as the information for those years includes recruitment and other types of advertising. Information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in newspapers and that in the press generally. Separate figures for expenditure on other publicity material prior to 1984-85 are available only at disproportionate cost.

The overall publicity budget for 1991-92 is estimated to be £4·4 million.

Fish Imports

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of imports of Icelandic fish, both as a total figure and as a percentage of all imports of fish.

Mr. Curry: In 1990, the latest year for which we have complete figures, United Kingdom imports of fresh, chilled and frozen fish from Iceland totalled 109,198 tonnes. This is 36 per cent. of the total United Kingdom imports for 1990, or 302,313 tonnes.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his reasons for refusing to grant permission for the publication in the *New Scientist* of a scientific paper by scientists from his Ministry about the behaviour of radioactive caesium in the soil following the contamination of British soil arising from the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Gummer: My Department took the initiative for and prepared this article. A text for publication was submitted to the *New Scientist* on 4 April, and I hope that it will publish it in a future edition. The hon. Member's information is therefore not correct.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the area in acres and hectares, the number of sheep, and the number of farms currently under restriction, including the county or counties involved, as a result of the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Gummer: Following the release of some areas from restriction this January, the information for England is as follows:

county: Cumbria
area: approximately 104,000 acres (42,000 hectares)
holdings: 144
sheep: 130,000 (estimated post-lambing figure).

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all actions taken by his Department since the Chernobyl accident to mitigate the effects upon United Kingdom farmers of the radioactive fallout from the Soviet accident.

Mr. Maclean: Full details of the Department's actions were submitted to the Agriculture Select Committee in May 1988. The development of live-monitoring techniques and the introduction of "mark and release" arrangements were designed to minimise disruption of normal husbandry practices of those farmers whose sheep have been caught by post-Chernobyl movement and slaughter restrictions and the Government have so far paid over £8 million in compensation to the farmers concerned. In addition, we have funded an extensive scientific research programme aimed at obtaining a better understanding of the behaviour of radiocaesium in the affected upland ecologies and at identifying any options for remedial treatment of either the land or the sheep which graze it. However, our first priority has been to ensure that consumers remain fully protected at all times and, by successfully maintaining public confidence in the quality and safety of British produce, the Government have helped to sustain healthy markets for British farmers both at home and overseas.

Clenbuterol

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any evidence of the use of clenbuterol in cattle; what precautions have been taken to detect the importation of clenbuterol from Community countries; what new controls have been introduced this year to control the importation from the Republic of Ireland of beef strengthened by clenbuterol; and if he will make a statement on the existence and use of clenbuterol in the beef industry.

Mr. Maclean: Clenbuterol is the active ingredient in three veterinary medicinal products licensed under the Medicines Act for use, only on prescription, to treat respiratory disease in calves and horses and as an aid to cattle at the time of calving. At present, there is no evidence of any existence or use of illegal clenbuterol in the beef industry in Great Britain.

Last year, around 300 liver samples were taken from slaughterhouses in Great Britain and tested for clenbuterol. No positives were detected. Surveillance in 1991 is being stepped up, both in terms of the number of animals tested, and the age range of cattle covered. Within the Ministry's imported meat monitoring programme, which includes checks on meat from EC countries such as the Republic of Ireland, 114 liver samples have been tested and no positives found.

Carcases (St. Tudwals)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the results of his Department's investigations into the carcases of red deer and sheep on the island of St. Tudwals, near Abersoch, Gwynedd.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply.

Samples were submitted for examination to the veterinary investigation centre at Bangor by a private veterinary surgeon. This was an ordinary commercial transaction and as with all such work the results are confidential.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 26 April 1991

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners in Police Cells

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on prisoners in police cells in Greater Manchester and surrounding areas; what is the number of convicted and remand prisoners held in cells and the number of places available in prisons, which are not available due to industrial action; and when it is expected police cells will be free of such prisoners.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 25 April there were 444 prisoners in police cells as a result of the loss of accommodation at Manchester prison following the disturbance last year. Prison Service management is giving priority to the resolution of this problem, but is constrained by the availability of accommodation and by the policy of the Prison Officers' Association not to accept into local prisons and remand centres inmates from outside the catchment areas of those establishments. Of the 444, 101 are adult remand prisoners, and this element of the population can be removed from police cells when further refurbished accommodation in Manchester becomes available this summer.

I have been especially concerned at the numbers of young men on remand held in police cells. There were 55 on 25 April. The principal difficulty in respect of such inmates is the limited capacity of Hindley remand centre. Prison Service management has been working to transfer some young men awaiting trial to Stoke Heath remand centre to create space for those on remand. The Stoke Heath branch of the Prison Officers' Association was initially unwilling to agree that the establishment should accept prisoners awaiting trial, but I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Member that management has reached agreement with the union branch and that trial prisoners should begin to be transferred from 7 May. This means that young men on remand should be cleared from police cells over the next few weeks.

Prison Service management is seeking to transfer convicted inmates in police cells to training prison accommodation. While most of the training prison estate is being operated at a very high level of occupancy, new accommodation is available at Full Sutton—192 places—and Acklington—152 places. This accommodation could be used to relieve other northern establishments so as to provide space within the prison system both for adult sentenced inmates, of whom there were 149 in police cells on 25 April, and for convicted persons awaiting sentence, of whom there were 98 in police cells. I very much regret that the local POA branches at these establishments have so far refused to allow this accommodation to be used. As a result, convicted prisoners are being held unnecessarily in police cells. If these places could be brought into use, and the spaces created at northern local prisons, the use of police cells could be substantially reduced immediately.

My right hon. Friend and I are most grateful to the Greater Manchester police and to other police forces for the way that they have coped with the burden placed on them by the Prison Service's recourse to police cells. Prison Service management remains committed to removing that burden in the shortest possible time.

Public Servants (Death)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions apply to the disclosure of the method of murder or suicide by police officers or other public servants before an inquest or court case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Apart from the sub judice rule, there are no legal restrictions on the amount of information about a homicide or suicide which police officers or other public servants can disclose, but they will not want to publicise details which may be of potential use in an investigation and as evidence against a suspect. It is for the courts to decide on the actual cause of death.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the percentage of *(a)* police personnel and *(b)* police financial resources that are devoted in the Metropolitan area overall to (i) foot patrols, (ii) traffic regulation, (iii) parking regulation and (iv) diplomatic, royal and VIP protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the available information is as follows. Fourteen per cent. of available police man-days are devoted to foot patrols, including home beats and other street duties, 3·3 per cent. to protection duties and 3·5 per cent. to traffic and parking regulation combined.

Twenty-six per cent. of Metropolitan Police current expenditure is devoted to patrol, which includes officers engaged on foot patrols, home beats, vehicle patrols, and dog handlers and mounted branch officers engaged on local patrol, 6·6 per cent. to traffic and parking regulation combined, which includes the work of the traffic warden service, and 3·4 per cent. to protection duties.

Isle of Man (Human Rights)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what indications he has given to the authorities in the Isle of Man of the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the steps to be taken by the Isle of Man to honour its obligations under the European convention of human rights in relation to the liberties of lesbians and gay men.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have made clear to the Isle of Man authorities that, in order to enable the United Kingdom to conform with its obligations under the convention, the island's legislation on homosexuality should be amended; that it is desirable that the Isle of Man should itself amend the legislation; but that, if necessary, the United Kingdom will legislate on the island's behalf.

Prison Deaths

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all deaths that have occured in 1990 of persons detained in prison department establishments, stating, in each case, the age and sex of the inmates and cause of death, the inquest verdict, whether the inmate was sentenced or on remand, the establishment where the inmate was detained, and whether the death occurred there or in an outside hospital and for where the death occurred within the prison whether the inmate was segregated either on the hospital wing or in the punishment block.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is given in the table. Deaths occurred within the establishment unless otherwise indicated. None of the inmates located in the prison hospital at the time of death was segregated under rule 43 of the prison rules.

Deaths of inmates in Her Majesty's prison service custody in 1990

Date	*Establishment*	*Age*	*Sex*	*Status*	*Cause of death*	*Inquest verdict*	*Location at time of death*[1]
6 January	Durham	20	M	S	Hanging[2]	Not yet held	OL(SH)
6 January	Bristol	22	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
10 January	Lincoln	46	M	R	Suffocation	Open	PH(SI)
14 January	Winchester	69	M	R	Angina	Natural	PH(SI)
22 January	Liverpool	47	M	S	Hanging	Open	PH(SI)
25 January	Manchester	37	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
10 February	Reading	35	M	S	Brain haemorrhage	Natural	OH
14 February	Winchester	19	M	R	Hanging	Open	OL(SH)
21 February	Camp Hill	24	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
22 February	Bedford	29	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SH)
28 February	Hindley	18	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OH
2 March	Brixton	29	M	R	Hanging	Open	PH(SI)
2 March	Manchester	37	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SH)
3 March	Pentonville	34	M	R	Asphyxiation	Misadventure	OL(SI)
14 March	Wakefield	56	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	Yard
16 March	Durham	27	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
23 March	Bristol	31	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	SEG(SI)
29 March	Coldingley	24	M	S	Unknown	Accidental	—[3]
3 April	Swansea	25	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	SEG(OP)(SH)
7 April	Dartmoor	27	M	S	Fire	Suicide	OL(SI)
8 April	Highpoint	59	M	S	Asphyxia	Suicide	OL(SI)
8 April	Stocken	35	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OL(SI)
11 April	Wandsworth	31	M	S	Undetermined	Open	Recess
15 April	Wakefield	49	M	S	Heart failure	Natural	OL(SI)
19 April	Channings Wood	61	M	S	Carcinomatosis	Natural	OH
23 April	Wayland	50	M	S	Heart failure	Natural	OL(SI)
26 April	Wandworth	27	M	R	Meningitis	Natural	PH(SI)
9 May	Wellingborough	54	M	S	Heart failure	Natural	OL(SI)
11 May	Wakefield	58	M	S	Carcinoma bronchus	Natural	OH
18 May	Exeter	31	M	R	Coronary sclerosis	Natural	OL(SH)
19 May	Wormwood Scrubs	25	M	R	Hanging	Misadventure	OL(SH)
19 May	Ashwell	61	M	S	Cancer	Natural	OH
20 May	Acklington	26	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
28 May	Cardiff	70	M	S	Cancer	Natural	OH
4 June	Durham	35	F	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
20 June	Liverpool	54	M	S	Cancer	Natural	OH
22 June	The Verne	40	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OL(SI)
25 June	Hindley	18	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	SEG(GOAD)(SI)
25 June	Hindley	18	M	R	Hanging	Suicide in circumstances aggravated by lack of care	SEG(GOAD)(SI)
26 June	Bedford	27	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	PH(SI)
7July	Wakefield	52	M	S	Cerebral oedema	Open	OH
13 July	Swansea	15	M	R	Hanging	Open	OH[4]
18 July	Long Lartin	27	M	S	Stab wound	Not yet held	OH
20 July	Wandsworth	29	M	S	Pneumonia	Natural	OH
21 July	Parkhurst	55	M	S	Lung cancer	Natural	OH
25 July	Lewes	32	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	SEG(OP)(SI)
29 July	Standford Hill	25	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OL(SI)
30 July	Parkhurst	43	M	S	Drug overdose	Accidental death	SU(SI)
1 August	Parkhurst	42	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	PH(SI)
5 August	Winchester	41	M	S	Hanging	Suicide in circumstances aggravated by lack of care	OL(SI)
12 August	Wakefield	31	M	S	Unknown	Natural	OH

Date	Establishment	Age	Sex	Status	Cause of death	Inquest verdict	Location at time of death[1]
12 August	Leeds	17	M	R	Hanging	Open	OH[3]
15 August	Bristol	23	M	S	Hanging	Open	SEG(OP)(SI)
17 August	Pentonville	43	M	R	Hanging	Suicide while balance of mind disturbed	PH(SI)
1 September	Wandsworth	22	M	S	Hanging	Suicide while balance of mind disturbed	PH(SI)
5 September	Birmingham	35	M	S	Hanging	Not yet held	OL(SI)
7 September	Brixton	38	M	R	Hanging	Accidental	OH[4]
14 September	North Sea Camp	37	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	—[6]
15 September	Oxford	23	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
16 September	Brixton	39	M	R	Hanging	Accidental	OH
21 September	Lewes	30	M	S	Hanging	Accidental	SEG(OP)(SI)
24 September	Channings Wood	50	M	S	Cerebral oedema	Misadventure	—[7]
28 September	Liverpool	29	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
28 September	Wormwood Scrubs	36	M	S	Coronary thrombosis	Natural	OL(SI)
29 September	Hull	20	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	OH[4]
4 October	Grendon	39	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	PH(SI)
12 October	Brixton	29	M	R	Cerebral oedema	Suicide	OH
13 October	Liverpool	27	M	R	Hanging	Not yet held	OH[5]
13 October	Wakefield	36	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
19 October	The Verne	38	M	S	Hanging	Open	SEG(GOAD)(SI)
20 October	Wandsworth	51	M	S	Cancer	Natural	OH
26 October	Glen Parva	15	M	S	Hanging	Open	OL(SI)
26 October	Wakefield	44	M	S	Pneumonia	Natural	PH(SI)
4 November	Liverpool	28	M	S	Hanging	Not yet held	PH(SI)
11 November	Durham	29	M	S	Hanging	Suicide	OL(SI)
13 November	Wakefield	59	M	S	Astrocytoma	Natural	OH
13 November	Reading	34	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OL(SH)
16 November	Frankland	35	M	S	Drug misuse	Accidental	OL(SI)
19 November	Lincoln	52	M	R	Hanging	Suicide	Recess
19 November	Maidstone	56	M	S	Shooting	Not yet held	—[3]
27 November	Stocken	60	M	S	Heart attack	Natural	OH
1 December	Wymott	45	M	S	Heart attack	Not yet held	OH[3]
3 December	Brixton	28	M	R	Hanging	Suicide in circumstances brought about by lack of care	PH(SI)
13 December	Liverpool	68	M	S	Heart disease	Not yet held	OH
16 December	Haverigg	69	M	S	Heart attack	Not yet held	OL(SH)
24 December	Manchester	38	M	R	Hanging	Not yet held	OL(SI)
29 December	Canterbury	52	M	R	Induced heart failure	Not yet held	OL(SI)
31 December	Portland	19	M	S	Hanging	Open	SEG(GOAD)
31 December	Brixton	18	M	R	Hanging	Not yet held	—[5]

[1] Key to location:
OL—Ordinary location within the establishment.
PH—Located in the prison hospital (including F wing at Brixton).
SEG(OP)—Located in the segregation unit for the inmate's own protection (rule 43).
SEG(GOAD)—Located in the segregation unit for reasons of good order and discipline (rule 43).
SU—Located in special unit for management of very disruptive prisoners.
OH—Outside hospital.
SH—Shared cell or room.
SI—Single cell or room.

[2] Another inmate has been convicted of murder.

[3] Inmate died while on home leave or temporary release.

[4] The inmate was found hanging in a single cell; death occurred in an outside hospital.

[5] The inmate was found hanging in a shared cell; death occurred in an outside hospital.

[6] Inmate died after absconding.

[7] Inmate died while trying to escape.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The deputy commissioner tells me that the complement and the staff in post in the press and public relations office of the Metropolitan police on 1 April in each year are as shown in the table.

Year	Complement	Strength
1979	71	58
1980	70	55
1981	69	70
1982	67	63
1983	59	64
1984	61	76
1985	63	74
1986	58	72
1987	58	72
1988	60	83
1989	87	82
1990	91	94
1991	92	92

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The table below shows the staff in post on 1 April in the Home Office public relations branch, which includes a press office and a publicity section, for each year from 1979 to 1991. The figures combine members of the information officer grades and administrative and support staff.

Year	Numbers
1979	35
1980	39
1981	38
1982	33
1983	32
1984	32
1985	39
1986	34
1987	41
1988	36
1989	43
1990	50
1991	49

Merseyside Probation Committee

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Merseyside probation committee budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Merseyside probation committee has proposed a budget increase in 1991-92 of 12·8 per cent. I have received request for a determination of its proposed budget from the Metropolitan boroughs of Sefton and St. Helens. Clearly the probation committee and the boroughs need to know the final budget as soon as possible in order to manage expenditure properly this financial year. Full consideration must, however, be given to the objections raised by the boroughs and to the committee's detailed response. The determination will be announced as soon as possible.

Family Conciliation Services

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding his Department provides to national or local family conciliation services; what plans he has to increase such funding to take account of planned legislative changes in divorce and child support procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We do not fund any national or local family conciliation services apart from in-court conciliation work done by probation services. We have no plans to fund any other such services.

Armley Prison

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest suicide of a prisoner in Armley gaol; what preventive measures were taken in screening prisoners; and how many recommendations to the chief inspector of prisons relating to Armley have been implemented.

Mrs. Rumbold: The circumstances relating to this very sad death will be fully and openly investigated at the coroner's inquest. It would not be right for me to comment until the jury has reached its verdict on the cause of death.

The hon. Member will be aware, from the statement which my right hon. Friend made on publication of the report by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons into Leeds prison last year, that the Government are fully committed to improving conditions in the prison. The task is a substantial one but much has already been achieved. Overcrowding has been considerably reduced and the treble occupancy of cells ended. Levels of out-of-cell activity for prisoners have improved. The length of family visits to prisoners has sharply increased; it is now common for unconvicted prisoners to enjoy regular visits of 45 minutes or longer. Meanwhile, a major redevelopment programme is under way, which will see the building of two new wings and a new hospital, kitchen and sports hall by 1992, and in due course the refurbishment of the whole establishment, including the provision of integral sanitation. The new establishment opening this year at Moorland, near Doncaster, will provide considerable relief for Leeds. In particular, it will offer more suitable accommodation for all the young unconvicted prisoners currently held at Leeds and Hull prisons.

Asylum

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government have to increase resources for dealing with claims for asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In view of the growth in the number of asylum claims which have been made in the course of the past two years, I intend to increase over the next 12 months the number of staff in the asylum and special cases division of the Home Office from 120 to over 500. This will allow for the quicker recognition of genuine refugees and the refusal of applications from those with no valid claim. Additional resources are also being made available for interviewing and for removing rejected applicants who fail to leave voluntarily. In addition, the Government plan substantially to increase their contribution to the refugee unit of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, which provides advice and counselling to asylum seekers.

ENVIRONMENT

Spray Irrigation

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor the quantities of water used by spray irrigation of golf courses in England and Wales.

Mr. Baldry: Either the local water company or the National Rivers Authority is responsible for such monitoring, depending on the source of supply. The chairman of the NRA will write to my hon. Friend.

Toxic Waste (Wath upon Dearne)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether contact is maintained between his Department and the relevant local authorities and public agencies in regard to the problems prescribed by the large number of drums of toxic waste held in Wath upon Dearne.

Mr. Baldry: Waste at Wath recycling has been safely drummed and stored in accordance with the requirements of the local waste disposal authority and relevant Government inspectorates. The site is regularly inspected by the waste disposal authority. There are no immediate problems requiring further steps by any of those concerned.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any evidence that metal drums used for the containing or oil of chemical material are likely to be subject to such changes as allow leakage at the point of the top cover or at the lip; and if such leakage is likely to occur where toxic wastes are contained, as at Wath upon Dearne, near Rotherham, at a site know to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Baldry: I have no such evidence.

West Midlands Police Authority

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the West Midlands police authority regarding its standard spending assessment.

Mr. Key: Representations were received from the West Midlands police authority, during the period of consultation on the proposed revenue support grant settlement for 1991-92, about the adequacy of its provisional standard spending assessment in relation to its proposed budget from 1991-92. These representations were fully taken into account before final decisions were taken for 1991-92.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the formula he uses for determining the standard spending assessment of the West Midlands police authority.

Mr. Key: The formula is set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) as amended by the Revenue Support Grant Distribution (Amendment) Report which was debated and approved by the House of Commons on 29 January 1991. Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recently released report prepared jointly by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Nuclear Energy Agency and the International Atomic Energy Agency on radioactive waste disposal.

Mr. Baldry: The Government welcome the report recently published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, entitled "Disposal of Radioactive Waste: Can Long-Term Safety be Evaluated?". It concludes that safety assessment methods are available today to evaluate adequately the potential long-term radiological impacts of a carefully designed radioactive waste disposal system on humans and the environment. I will place copies of the report in the Library shortly.

Chernobyl

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what emergency preparations are in hand in the event of the Soviet sarcophagus at the damaged Chernobyl reactor collapsing and releasing radioactive dust into the atmosphere.

Mr. Baldry: The national response plan for handling the consequences for the United Kingdom of overseas nuclear accidents sets out the arrangements which would be activated if we were notified of an accident involving a significant release of radioactivity to the environment, or if the RIMNET monitoring system detected radioactivity arriving in this country. These arrangements are set out in the booklet "The National Response Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET) —Phase I", published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what offers of technical assistance have been *(a)* sought from and *(b)* made by his Department to the Soviet atomic energy authorities in the clean-up and long-term management of radioactive waste arising from the Chernobyl accident in April 1986.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the Soviet Union has not requested any assistance from the United Kingdom Government in respect of these matters. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom is prepared to give sympathetic consideration to any such requests.

Minerals Industry

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the results of the work undertaken by Groundwork on the minerals industry and the environment.

Mr. Yeo: The study contains six recommendations. The most important of these is that each company should establish a system of environmental management as an integral part of its organisation. This would include publishing a corporate environmental policy statement, regular monitoring of performance and a periodic

environmental audit. The report also recommends training, production of design manuals and codes of practice, and promotion of the importance of the industry and its environmental achievements. The role of the trade associations in achieving these aims is emphasised.

We fully endorse the recommendations, particularly the emphasis on self-regulation. Minerals are an important national resource and it is essential that the country has a continual and adequate supply. But as we said in the Environment White Paper this has to be balanced against amenity and other environmental considerations. Although the industry has made major steps in raising standards there is scope for more to be done. We believe the Groundwork report has identified a number of positive and beneficial initiatives which are to be commended to the industry. It is our intention to discuss with industry how this can be done and I look forward to their continuing support and co-operation.

As an immediate follow-up to the study the Department is to fund an initial pilot study by Groundwork to encourage the improvement of the environmental performance of the minerals industry with the aim of formulating an industry wide initiative. The project forms part of the Department's geological and minerals planning research programme and is planned to start this summer.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Green Belt

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the chairman of the London Green Belt council concerning his predecessor's assurance that land covered by the London and Home Counties Green Belt Act 1938 is inalienable; and if he will make a statement setting out his present policy with regard to proposals by local authorities to dispose of properties acquired under the Act.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 April 1991]:* The chairman of the London Green Belt council wrote on 18 November 1990 and 5 January and 6 February 1991, receiving replies from my officials. The Government remain committed to ensuring that land held under the 1938 Act continues to fulfil green belt objectives. In considering any applications for consent to disposal under section 5 of the 1938 Act, one of the factors which my right hon. Friend will take into account is whether retention of the land in public ownership is necessary or desirable as a means of securing those objectives. Right to buy considerations arise only in respect of dwellings occupied by secure tenants; the same considerations would not be relevant to proposals to dispose of open land.

TRANSPORT

A65

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve the western section of the A65 road between Kirkby Lonsdale and the M6.

Mr. Chope: There are two schemes in the road programme for this section of the A65. These are the Hornsbarrow diversion and the Moss Side to Lupton improvement.

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of road accidents, together with the numbers of injuries and deaths, on the western stretch of the A65 road between Kirkby Lonsdale and the M6 for each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The following table shows the details of personal injury road accidents on the section of the A65 from the west and of Kirkby Lonsdale to the M6 motorway.

Year	Personal injury road accidents	Casualties: Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total
1986	6	0	3	8	11
1987	6	0	3	3	6
1988	9	0	3	10	13
1989	13	0	3	16	19
1990	8	0	3	9	12
Totals	42	0	15	46	61

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the volume of carcinogenic substances emitted on a yearly basis by the average motor car; and if he will take steps to monitor the future pattern of such emissions.

Mr. Chope: Estimates of the emissions of benzene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)—the substances in question—vary greatly. Recent work by the university of East Anglia for the Department of Transport suggests that about 11,000 tonnes of benzene and 40 tonnes of PAHs are emitted each year from road transport. The estimates are too general to allow the figures to be calculated for the average motor car, as a substantial portion of the emissions comes from trucks and buses.

The amount of benzene and PAHs emitted by new petrol-engined cars will be greatly reduced when catalysts become standard fitment at the end of 1992. The EC directive that will provide for this will also require the control of evaporative emissions from cars, restricting another way that benzene escapes to the atmosphere.

Diesel engines fitted to trucks and buses are the primary source of PAHs from road traffic, and the tight new standards for these engines agreed in the Community last month address this area.

Part of the Department of Transport's research effort is directed at producing better estimates of these emissions. The Department of Environment is also stepping up its monitoring of the atmospheric concentrations of hydrocarbons, including benzene.

Speed Limits

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about EC plans to standardise speed limits within the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: In 1989, the Commission proposed a directive harmonising goods vehicle and coach speed limits in the EC. This has yet to be considered by the Council of Ministers.

HGV Speed Limiters

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about EC plans for heavy goods vehicle speed limiter legislation.

Mr. Chope: The European Commission has proposed a technical standard for speed limiters, based on a standard agreed in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Under the Commission proposal, member states could not refuse to register a vehicle on the grounds that it was fitted with a speed limiter conforming to the standard, but there has been no Commission proposal for mandatory fitment.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to fit speed limiters to heavy goods vehicles on a retrospective basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We have consulted about a proposal to require speed limiters to be fitted to new heavy goods vehicles of more than 7·5 tonnes gross vehicle weight. We also invited views about fitting speed limiters to vehicles already on the road. These views are being considered and an announcement will be made shortly.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr.McLoughlin: The number of staff employed in the press and public relations office of the Department of Transport on 1 April 1989, 1990 and 1991 is as follows:

	Staff in post	*Complement*
1 April 1991	17	18
1 April 1990	17	18
1 April 1989	17	not known

Before 1989, these staff formed part of the common services of this Department and the Department of the Environment and separate figures are not readily available.

DEFENCE

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities have been made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As yet we have received no formal request from the St. John Ambulance Brigade about this appeal. Should such a request be received, we will consider the extent of the support we might offer.

RAF Finningley

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *358*, to the hon. Member for Don Valley, from which countries the three personnel came.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Canada, Germany and the United States of America.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of service personnel and civilians employed on press and public relations work in the MOD in the years 1982-83 to 1990-91 is as follows:

Years	*Numbers employed*	*Complement*
1982-83	222·0	n/a
1983-84	290·0	n/a
1984-85	282·5	n/a
1985-86	249·5	n/a
1986-87	215·0	217
1987-88	206·0	217
1988-89	213·0	217
1989-90	212·0	221
1990-91	221·0	221

The estimate for 1991-92 is similar to 1990-91.

Figures for 1979-80, 1980-81 and 1981-82 are not available. The numbers given for 1983-84 onwards include all service personnel and civilians in complemented PR and PR support posts in London and commands and districts at home and overseas: the 1982-83 figure was not prepared on this comprehensive basis.

Chieftain Tanks (Replacement)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the suitability of German manufactured tanks as a replacement for Chieftain tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department is making a full assessment of the suitability of the German Leopard 2 (Improved) tank as equipment for our future main battle tank fleet.

MOD Civilian Guard

Mr. Mates: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is now able to make a statement about the formation of a new Ministry of Defence civilian guard service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has decided to establish a new Ministry of Defence civilian guard service in Great Britain on 1 April 1992. Its headquarters and training staff will form before that date. It is our proposal that the new guard service, which will be formed from the Department's various existing civilian guard forces, comprising guarding, patrolling and watching grades, together with new entrants, will have a common uniform, common professional standards, common pay and conditions of service, a common staffing structure and common centralised training. The guard service will contribute fully to the mix of service, Ministry of Defence Police and civilian guard forces dedicated to the security of the Department. The guards' new pay scales and conditions of service will be appropriate to the work which they will be required to do.

While commanding officers and heads of establishment will remain responsible for the command and control of the guards at their units, the professional management of the guard service as a whole will be the responsibility of the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence Police, with a professional head of guard service reporting to him. Training will be provided at the MDP Police Training school and the Royal Military Police training centre by MDP, service and civilian instructors. Professional standards and entry qualifications will be set by the chief constable and monitored by his regional staff, who will be based in the regions and answerable to the head of guard service. There is no present intention that any members of the guard service should be armed. Consultations about the new arrangements are proceeding with the trade unions concerned. It is the Government's intention that the new guard service should build on the excellent work done by our present guards; and that it should become the fully professional, well-trained and well-equipped service that the high terrorist threat requires.

Over-the-Horizon Radar

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any developments in his plan to conduct a trial of a relocatable over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I announced on 30 March 1990, at columns *328-9* that we had decided in principle to undertake, in collaboration with the United States, a trial of the potential value of a relocatable over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom. Following my right hon. Friend's statement on Options for Change on 25 July 1990 at columns 470-88, we have been reviewing our equipment plans and have decided not to proceed with this project.

HEALTH

Dentures

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the average amount paid by patients for the provision of dentures under the national health service and *(b)* the amount paid to dentists for the laboratory content of their fee for the provision of dentures in the categories (i) complete acrylic dentures, (ii) one to three tooth partial acrylic dentures, (iii) four to eight tooth partial dentures, (iv) nine to 13 tooth partial acrylic dentures, (v) one to three tooth partial chrome cobalt dentures, (vi) four to eight tooth partial chrome cobalt dentures and (viii) complete chrome cobalt dentures.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not available on the average amount paid by patients for the provision of dentures under the national health service. The table shows the amounts which are attributed to dental laboratory costs in the fees paid to dentists for the national health service treatments listed in the current scale of fees which came into effect on 1 October 1990.

Dentures in synthetic resin (including all necessary backing and tagging)

	£
Full upper and full lower dentures	47·00
Partial denture bearing:	
One, two or three teeth	18·44
Four to eight teeth	27·04
Nine or more teeth	33·98

Metal based dentures (excluding backing)

	£
Plate design partial denture bearing:	
One, two or three teeth	64·58
Four to eight teeth	73·68
Nine to twelve teeth	74·98
Skeleton design partial denture with single connecting bar bearing:	
One, two or three teeth	65·47
Four to ten teeth	72·97
Skeleton design partial denture with multiple connecting bars bearing:	
One, two or three teeth	70·11
Four to ten teeth	77·40
Full upper or full lower denture in chrome cobalt or stainless steel	57·24

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are used by his Department for the control of the quality of dentures provided under the national health service by dentists and dental laboratories.

Mr. Dorrell: Dentures should be made of first quality material and to the highest standards of dental laboratory practice. The Department supports the activities of the certification authority for dental laboratories and suppliers and also distributes to dentists in the NHS information to assist them in selecting the most suitable materials.

The Department approves brand name products on the basis of their compliance with national and international standards and funds a number of projects concerned with the quality of dental laboratory work.

The clinician is responsible for quality of work used on the patient. This work is monitored by the Dental Practice Board through the dental reference service.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the new cases of oral cancer reported each year can be held to arise from the wearing of dentures.

Mr. Dorrell: We are not aware of any evidence which would establish a positive correlation between oral cancer and the wearing of dentures.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the pathological conditions, of which 50 per cent. of denture wearers have shown evidence, have been malignant or pre-malignant.

Mr. Dorrell: We know of no scientifically based epidemiological survey or report which suggests that 50 per cent. of denture wearers in England suffer from pathological conditions or the oral mucosa.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of complaint arising from the provision of dentures were investigated by dental service committees during the most recent five years; and how many complaints regarding the provision of dentures were taken through to judgment by family practitioner committees during the most recent five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dentists

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the figure of target average net income payable to dentists under the national health service as set by the Dental Rates Study Group.

Mr. Dorrell: Target average net income—TANI—for general dental practitioners is determined by the Government in the light of recommendations from the independent Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body. For 1991-92, the Government accepted the review body's recommendation but decided to implement it in two stages. The effect has been the equivalent of setting TANI at the rate of £31,970 per annum for the period 1 April 1991 to 30 November 1991, with implementation of the full TANI of £33,010 per annum, as recommended by the review body, from 1 December 1991.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have withdrawn from the provision of dental treatment under the national health service since the introduction of the new dental contract.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 16 April at columns *151-58*.

Information is not available in the form requested. Between 1 October 1990, the date the new contract was introduced, and 28 February 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, there was a net decrease of 115, less than 0·7 per cent., in the total number of entries on family health services authority, FHSA, dental lists. A dentist may be on more than one list.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's information division.

Figures for 1 April 1989 to 1 April 1991 are given in the table:

Information for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 is not available in the form requested.

Date	*Staff in post*	*Complement*
1 April 1989	31	52·0
1 April 1990	52	57·0
1 April 1991	54	62·5

Thirty-three of the staff currently employed are information officers.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the HEA/HEC.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Donald Maitland, the chairman of the Health Education Authority, for details.

South East Thames RHA

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library the document submitted to his Department by South East Thames regional health authority about projected activity levels for 1991-92 for hospitals and districts in that region.

Mr. Dorrell: South East Thames regional health authority has submitted to the Department a plan for 1991-92, putting forward its key objectives for the year together with supporting information setting out planned levels of activity to be purchased for residents of the region. This has yet to be agreed.

Nursing Prescribing

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in commissioning the cost-benefit analysis recommended in the recent report on nurse prescribing.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have commissioned the consultants Touche Ross to assess the costs and benefits of allowing nurses working in the community who have a district nurse or health visitor qualification to prescribe from a limited formulary. For the purposes of this work, the illustrative formulary in the report of the advisory group on nurse prescribing is being used. The consultants have been asked to include in their assessment the resource effects of potential changes in the volume and type of drugs etc. prescribed and in pharmacists' dispensing fees, any additional training required, necessary administrative arrangements and any changes in the time worked by nurses and general practitioners. The results are due by the end of of August.

PRIME MINISTER

Overseas Aid

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister how much extra would be needed each year for the United Kingdom to meet its United Nations target on overseas aid over the next five years.

The Prime Minister: Under the public expenditure survey system, plans for expenditure on the aid programme have only been made up to 1993-94. Forecasts for nominal gross national product are available only to 1994-95. However, on present trends, to reach the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP spent on official development assistance would require a total aid programme of some £5·2 billion in 1995-96, £3·3 billion greater than the presently planned aid programme for 1993-94.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister: Seven people including support staff were employed in 10 Downing street on 1 April 1991 on press and public relations activities. There is one vacant post at present. Detailed figures were not recorded separately prior to 1987-88; since then the total staff complement has remained at eight. The complement for 1991-92 is eight.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: The number of staff employed on press and public relations activities in the Cabinet Office on 1 April each year is as follows:

	Number
1984	12
1985	12
1986	11
1987	10
1988	10
1989	10
1990	7
1991	7

There were no vacant posts in any year.

Similar information for the years prior to 1984 is not available.

South Africa

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he received and from whom concerning British policy towards South Africa prior to his meeting with President de Klerk on 22 April 1991.

The Prime Minister: I have received representations from a number of hon. Members, trades unions and organisations with an interest in British policy towards South Africa.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether he raised with Mr. de Klerk at their meeting on 22 April the failure of the South African Government to take legislative action to repeal the Internal Security Act and other repressive security laws as required under the United Nations declaration on South Africa of December 1989.

The Prime Minister: The South African Government are currently conducting a review of all such legislation, including the Internal Security Act. I did not discuss this specific issue. However, we have often stressed to the South African Government the need to repeal those legislative provisions, such as detention without trial, which are contrary to international norms of human rights.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether he raised with Mr. de Klerk at their meeting on 22 April the need for him to implement the agreement he made on 6 August 1990 that all political prisoners would be released by 30 April 1991.

The Prime Minister: We discussed progress on the implementation of the agreement of 6 August 1990 reached between the South African Government and the African National Congress. President de Klerk reaffirmed his Government's commitment on the release of political prisoners.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether he raised with Mr. de Klerk at their meeting on 22 April the need for him to implement the agreement for the granting of indemnity for political exiles by 30 April.

The Prime Minister: We discussed arrangements for the granting of indemnity for political exiles. President de Klerk reaffirmed the South African Government's commitment to implement arrangements agreed between the South African Government and the African National Congress.

WALES

Education Service

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimates or statistics he has on the cost of insurance premiums paid and claims made by education authorities in Wales in relation to teacher absence through sickness in 1988, 1989, 1990.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No information is available.

A483 and A470

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Mongomeryshire for a consultative meeting with local government and community representatives concerning his Department's future strategy for the A483 and A470 roads; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to do so. The Government's policy for improving the A483 and A470 routes is clearly set out in "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s" published in 1989 and the supplement published earlier this year.

Welshpool Bypass

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the proposed starting date for construction of the Welshpool bypass.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Work is planned to start in the current financial year as indicated in the 1991 departmental report published in February. I cannot be more precise at this stage.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Iraq (Refugees)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list how many officials from the Overseas Development Administration have visited concentrations of refugees on either side of the borders between *(a)* Iraq and Turkey and *(b)* Iraq and Iran, since 27 March.

Mrs. Chalker: Officials from the British embassies in Ankara and Tehran have made regular visits to both areas. The Overseas Development Administration's chief medical adviser, Dr. Nabarro, also visited Turkey from 9-14 April. He accompanied the Minister for Overseas Development and her team, including two officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration, on a visit to Turkey and Iran from 18-21 April. Dr. Nabarro is now based in Turkey as the United Kingdom's co-ordinator of the relief effort, and is supported by a member of the British embassy in Ankara.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each date since 3 April, what tonnage of aid was delivered into the hands of Iraqi refugees in areas on both sides of the borders between *(a)* Iraq and Turkey and *(b)* Iraq and Iran.

Mrs. Chalker: The tonnage of aid, delivered by RAF C130 Hercules and Chinook helicopter airdrops to the refugees on the Turkish border with Iraq up to 24 April was as follows:

Date	*C130s*	*Chinooks*
8 April	10·3	—
10 April	31·0	—
11 April	21·1	—
12 April	20·5	—
13 April	19·2	—
14 April	18·3	—
15 April	17·3	—
17 April	9·3	—
18 April	22·8	—
19 April	25·4	—
20 April	20·5	—
21 April	27·1	[1]10
22 April	[1]23·4	[1]30
23 April	[1]23·4	[1]30
24 April	[1]23·4	[1]30
Total	313·0	[1]100

[1] Denotes estimate.

We estimate that, as of 23 April, allied cargo planes and helicopters had delivered 5,915 tonnes of relief supplies as a whole—4,056 tonnes from United States, 921 tonnes from United Kingdom, 252 tonnes from France, 179 tonnes from Canada, 476 tonnes from Germany, and 31 tonnes from Italy—to sites along the Turkey-Iraq border. Daily totals for other donors are not available. Further supplies from donors have been distributed by the Turkish Red Crescent.

As of 25 April, an estimated total of 240 tonnes of aid supplies have been flown by the Overseas Development Administration to Iran. Onward delivery has been carried out by the Iranian Red Crescent. Daily totals of supplies delivered to the refugees are not available.

Minister for Overseas Development (Engagements)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the official engagements of the Minister for Overseas Development for each day since Tuesday 26 March.

Mrs. Chalker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, since 26 March my time has been increasingly taken up with matters concerning relief to the Iraqi refugees. This situation has continued on a daily basis regardless of any other official or private business and has been maintained by telephone and facsimile line during periods when I was out of the country.

My main official engagements since 26 March, excluding a large number of meetings and other official engagements, are as follows:

On Tuesday 26 March I met the Kenyan Finance Minister and Vice-President, hosted a reception for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and attended European Standing Committee B for its debate on African, Caribbean and Pacific countries' debt.

On Wednesday 27 March I met the British Red Cross official dealing with the Iraqi refugees and addressed the London chamber of commerce.

On Monday 8 April I met the British High Commissoner from Kampala and our ambassador designate for Peking as well as the French ambassador, with whom I discussed European Bank for Reconstruction and Development matters and Iraqi refugee needs.

On 9 and 10 April I met with senior officials in the State Department and the National Security Council in Washington.

On 11 April I met with the UN Secretary-General.

On Monday 15 April with the Secretary of State I held meetings with representatives of non-governmental organisations dealing with assistance for Iraqi refugees and attended the inauguration and the main business session of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

On Tuesday 16 April I met the Presidents of Tanzania and Cyprus, the French Overseas Development Minister and our ambassadors to Zaire and Senegal. I also addressed the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development meeting and made arrangements for the Turkey-Iran visit.

On Wednesday 17 April I had meetings with the West Indian commission, and the Sudanese Finance Minister. I also gave evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee on our assistance for Iraqi refugees among other subjects.

I visited Turkey and Iran between 18 and 21 April.

On Monday 22 April I called on the President of the Republic of South Africa. I had a meeting with the head of the British Red Cross. I answered oral questions in the House and made a statement on Iraqi refugees.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the moneys allotted to overseas aid *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* revalued in 1991 terms and *(c)* as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: Figures for expenditure by calendar year for the net aid programme are available up to 1989 as follows:

	£ million
1979	1,016
1980	797
1981	1,081
1982	1,028
1983	1,063
1984	1,070
1985	1,193
1986	1,195

	£ million
1987	1,168
1988	1,489
1989	1,578

For the other information requested I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) on 18 April at column *205*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Flying Boat (Shore Facilities)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider protecting from unsuitable development the remaining flying boat shore facilities.

Mr. Needham: Yes. The fact that a site has been used as a flying boat facility would be taken into account in the processing of a planning application by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. Following a request from the Lough Erne Aviation museum, the Department is currently considering the statutory listing of the slipway and concrete service bays at Goblusk bay, Lower Lough Erne.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many old flying boat shore facilities are undeveloped.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is aware of at least three sites where some facilities for flying boats still remain. A comprehensive list of such sites is not kept by the Department.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list each consultant's report commissioned by his Department relating to Northern Ireland Electricity in the past two years, with the fees paid in each case, and the total of consultancy fees paid.

Mr. Needham: The information sought is as follows:

Consultant and title of report	*Fees paid* £
Coopers and Lybrand Competition and interconnection study	154,851
Coopers and Lybrand Review of NIE performance aims 1989-90	14,732
Coopers and Lybrand Review of NIE performance aims 1990-91	18,814
PJR Management Organisation Consultants NIE organisational capability review	52,225
Ewbank Preece Ltd. Inspection of generating plant at Belfast West and Coolkeeragh	3,898
Touche Ross Advance long form report	140,320
Touche Ross Supplementary privatisation study	8,173
Ewbank Preece Ltd. Development of power station site	[1]—

[1] Not yet paid.

Total fees paid to consultants (including those advising the Department of Economic Development on the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity) in the two years to 31 March 1991 were £3,582,418.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what representations he has had from members of the board of Northern Ireland Electricity on the effect of restructuring the industry;

(2) what representations he had from the former chairman of Northern Ireland Electricity during his term of office on the privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Needham: The Government consulted the chairman and board of Northern Ireland Electricity in drawing up their proposals to privatise the industry. In responding to these proposals, the board made known its preference for NIE to be privatised as a single entity with strong regulation but accepted the Government's objectives in privatising the industry and committed itself to make the new structure a success.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will postpone the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity; and if he will establish an inquiry into the stewardship of the chief executive of Northern Ireland Electricity from the time of his appointment to date.

Mr. Needham: No. Privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity will further strengthen the Northern Ireland economy by laying the foundation for a more efficient electricity supply industry and there is no reason to postpone it. The day-to-day management of Northern Ireland Electricity is a matter for its board, in which the Government's confidence remains unaltered.

Local Government Finance

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show the rate struck by each council in Northern Ireland for the 1991-92 financial year, the percentage increase and the cash increase in each case and also the same information for the regional rate indicating the reduction for each council area and for the regional rate as a result of the Budget statement by the Chancellor of the the Exchequer.

Dr. Mawhinney: The normal regional rate for 1991-92 —that is, that payable by the non-domestic sector—was not changed following the Budget statement and stands at the figure of 165·40 p which was announced on 7 March 1991, an increase of 17·13 p or 11·55 per cent. on 1990-91. The reduction given to domestic ratepayers was increased by 82 p following the Budget statement, from 12 p to 94 p. Compared with 1990-91, the regional rate for domestic ratepayers has been reduced by 64·87 p or 47·60 per cent. The following table gives the district council rates and the overall rates, regional and district, payable in each district council area by non-domestic and domestic ratepayers for 1991-92 and comparisons with 1990-91.

	District rate			Regional (non-domestic) and district rate			Regional (domestic) and district rate		
	1991-92 Pence	Increase Pence	Increase Per cent.	1991-92 Pence	Increase Pence	Increase Per cent.	1991-92 Pence	Reduction Pence	Reduction Per cent.
Antrim	56·50	2·00	+3·67	221·90	19·13	+9·44	127·90	62·87	−32·96
Ards	6·22	11·22	+17·26	241·62	28·35	+13·31	146·62	53·65	−26·66
Armagh	54·00	6·50	+13·68	219·40	23·63	+12·07	125·40	58·37	−31·76
Ballymena	51·00	4·00	+8·51	216·40	21·13	+10·82	122·40	60·87	−33·21
Ballymoney	59·75	5·75	+10·65	225·15	22·88	+11·31	131·15	59·12	−31·07
Banbridge	59·83	4·95	+9·02	225·23	22·08	+10·87	131·23	59·92	−31·35
Belfast	96·73	8·65	+9·82	262·13	25·78	+10·91	168·13	56·22	−25·06
Carrickfergus	76·45	6·95	+10·00	241·85	24·08	+11·06	147·85	57·92	−28·17
Castlereagh	52·04	7·65	+17·23	217·44	24·78	+12·86	123·44	57·22	−31·67
Coleraine	61·00	6·00	+10·91	226·40	23·13	+11·38	132·40	58·87	−30·78
Cookstown	56·00	4·25	+8·21	221·40	21·38	+10·69	127·40	60·62	−32·24
Craigavon	76·05	5·28	+7·46	241·45	22·41	+10·23	147·45	59·59	−28·78
Derry	90·50	6·50	+7·74	255·90	23·63	+10·17	161·90	58·37	−26·50
Down	73·50	3·50	+5·00	238·90	20·63	+9·45	144·90	61·37	−29·75
Dungannon	52·33	4·58	+9·59	217·73	21·71	+11·08	123·73	60·29	−32·76
Fermanagh	61·50	4·00	+6·96	226·90	21·13	+10·76	132·90	60·87	−31·41
Larne	75·00	10·32	+15·96	240·40	27·45	+12·89	146·40	54·55	−27·15
Limavady	58·51	8·01	+15·86	223·91	25·14	+12·65	129·91	56·86	−30·44
Lisburn	57·83	2·27	+4·09	223·23	19·40	+9·52	129·23	60·60	−32·63
Magherafelt	52·95	3·95	+8·06	218·35	21·08	+10·69	124·35	60·92	−32·88
Moyle	79·57	5·35	+7·21	244·97	22·48	+10·10	150·97	59·52	−28·28
Newry and Mourne	62·10	4·10	+7·07	227·50	21·23	+10·29	133·50	60·77	−31·28
Newtownabbey	73·25	8·56	+13·23	238·65	25·69	+12·07	144·65	56·31	−28·02
North Down	74·88	5·64	+8·15	240·28	22·77	+10·47	146·28	59·23	−28·82
Omagh	69·90	5·60	+8·71	235·30	22·73	+10·69	141·30	59·27	−29·55
Strabane	72·75	5·50	+8·18	238·15	22·63	+10·50	144·15	59·37	−29·17

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Family Conciliation Service

Mr. Gregory: To ask Mr. Attorney-General, what is the Government's policy with regard to the Family Conciliation Service; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Government recognise the valuable contribution made in the area of family law by conciliation services. The Government are at present reviewing all aspects of divorce reform and conciliation is under review as part of that review.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Attorney-General what is the level of Government funding for the principal family conciliation services; if he will list this by name of service and date since 1979-80; and whether he plans to conduct a reappraisal of its support for these agencies.

The Attorney-General: Other than the funding by the Home Office of the Bristol courts family conciliation service in 1982-83 and 1983-84, no direct or specific central Government funding is or has ever been available for conciliation services, although indirect help is provided through the courts, the probation service and the legal aid fund in some cases. The Government are reviewing the future of, and funding for, conciliation services as part of their consideration of proposals to reform the divorce law.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

The Attorney-General: As at 1 April 1991, there were six permanent staff employed in the press office of the Lord Chancellor's Department. Since that date, the number of staff in post has increased to seven, four of whom are members of the Government information service.

	Staff in post
1984-85	1
1985-86	2
1986-87	3
1987-88	5
1988-89	6
1989-90	6
1990-91	[1]6

[1] and one on secondment from another Government Department for six months.

For the years up to 1985-86 the staff in post were the same as the complement. In 1986-87 complements were abolished, but the authorised staff levels since that date have been the same as the staff in post.

There were no such staff employed in the period up to 1983-84.

Crown Prosecution Service (Vacancies)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies there were for professionally qualified staff in the Crown prosecution service on 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have taken the hon. Gentleman's question to be confined to lawyer vacancies.

On 1 April 1991, there were 323·3 vacancies for lawyers in the Crown prosecution service against 1,800 lawyers in post, representing a welcome reduction from 23 per cent. to 15 per cent. over the previous year.

Divorce

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Attorney-General what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of divorce in terms of legal costs.

The Attorney-General: The net amount of legal aid paid for divorce, and related matters, in England and Wales during 1989-90 was £117,397,000.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places for (i) employment training and (ii) youth training were available in 1990-91; and how many places are expected to be available in 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: For 1990-91 there were 215,000 places available for people eligible for employment training and 380,000 places available for young people eligible for youth training. The provision of places in 1991-92 is a matter for training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training places are available in England and Wales; and how many 16 and 17-year-olds are registered as seeking a place.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the number of youth training places available or the number of 16 and 17-year-olds seeking places in England and Wales is not held centrally.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Robson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, (1) the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department;

(2) the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the Training Agency and the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is given in the table below:

	In post 1st April	*Complement*
1979-80 to 1987-88	n/a	n/a
1988-89	62·5	57·5
1989-90	118·0	123·0
1990-91	120·0	126·0
1991-92	119·0	115·5

Figures for 1988-89 are for Training Agency's information branch services branch only. Figures for the Department of Employment are not available. Figures for 1989-90 onwards represent the total numbers for the Department's information branch. The branch was formed during 1989 by merging the Department of Employment's information division and the Training Agency's information services branch.

Earnings

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the proportion of *(a)* males, *(b)* females and *(c)* all workers in the county of Northumberland earning less than *(a)* £100 per week, *(b)* £120 per week, *(c)* £150 per week, *(d)* £180 per week and *(e)* £200 per week at the latest available date.

Mr. Jackson: The information available from the new earnings survey is given in the following table:

Full-time employees in Northumberland on adult rates whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence as at April 1990.

Percentage with weekly earnings, including overtime, less than:

	£100	*£120*	*£150*	*£180*	*£200*
Men	1·8	6·6	14·8	30·1	38·9
Women	9·3	24·0	47·5	67·8	74·9
All	4·5	12·8	26·4	43·5	51·7

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workers in each of the 10 standard industrial classification divisions, within the county of Northumberland earned less than £180 per week and less than £170 per week at the latest available date.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Accommodation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Lord President of the Council how it would be decided whether *The Times* room would be better used as an extension of the Table Office.

Mr. MacGregor: Any such proposal would be considered by the Services Committee.

Victoria Tower (Cleaning)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *300*, what is his estimate of the total costs of the cleaning operation on the Victoria Tower.

Mr. John MacGregor: The estimated cost of the project to repair and restore the stonework of the Victoria Tower, being undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is £7·5 million.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Head Teachers

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he advises local education authorities and school governing bodies to consider as a relevant consideration any inspector's report on a shortlisted candidate for appointment as a head teacher.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has not issued formal guidance on procedures to be adopted by local education authorities and governing bodies when selecting head teachers. This is a matter for the individual governing bodies and LEAs concerned. However, the Department has commissioned a school governor training package which gives guidance on good practice in making staff appointments, including the use of references.

GCSE

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the spending per head for secondary school pupils and the proportion of eligible pupils obtaining grades A-C in GCSE, for the most recent year, for all English counties.

Mr. Fallon: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 12 February 1991 in *Official Report*, columns *437-442*.

Birmingham Polytechnic

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the current salaries of members of the directing staff at Birmingham polytechnic.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not available to the Department.

Degree Courses

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to introduce two-year degree courses.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. Course design and content are essentially for individual universities, polytechnics and colleges to consider. Institutions will however need to review what they offer, including where appropriate the balance between two year sub-degree courses and longer degree level courses, in responding to the increased demand from a more diverse student body.

Polytechnics

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the formula for determining the salaries of the directing staff of polytechnics.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There is no formula: the salaries of these staff are set as part of individual contracts.

Education Budgets

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science using the latest figures, if he will show, for each English county, what proportion of standard spending assessment for education is being spent and what proportion of the education budget is being retained for administration, in rank order.

Mr. Fallon: The latest available figures showing the amount that each shire county authority budgeted to spend on education compared with the education element of their standard spending assessment in 1990-91 are given in the following table. Information about the proportion of the education budget that each authority retains for administration is not held centrally.

Local education authority	*Education standard spending assessment*	*Budgeted expenditure on education*	*as proportion of education SSA*
	£ million	*£ million*	*Percentage*
Kent	456·635	434·043	95
Cornwall	140·824	138·336	98
Berkshire	229·252	225·469	98
West Sussex	183·940	181·805	99
Lincolnshire	179·312	177·303	99
Hereford and Worcester	196·842	197·342	100
Norfolk	209·872	212·391	101
Hampshire	453·266	461·580	102
Essex	458·657	472·463	103
Surrey	257·425	266·984	104
Buckinghamshire	206·348	214·468	104
Isle of Wight	36·532	38·047	104
East Sussex	168·819	176·212	104
Cambridgeshire	193·391	202·693	105
Lancashire	445·622	467·334	105
Devon	276·355	290·463	105
Bedfordshire	175·531	184·802	105
Cleveland	202·966	214·430	106
Northamptonshire	179·549	190·199	106
Staffordshire	302·935	321·768	106
Warwickshire	142·196	151·144	106
Wiltshire	163·364	174·677	107
Humberside	277·145	296·792	107
North Yorkshire	196·440	211·188	108
Dorset	157·560	169·468	108
Shropshire	128·216	138·087	108
Cheshire	294·559	318·739	108
Durham	183·819	199·467	109
Nottinghamshire	311·592	338·799	109
Suffolk	172·628	188·230	109
Hertfordshire	293·468	320·460	109
Gloucestershire	148·565	163·654	110
Leicestershire	276·819	305·248	110
Cumbria	142·882	159·102	111
Northumberland	89·824	100·350	112
Oxfordshire	151·459	169·252	112
Somerset	128·613	146·238	114
Avon	254·787	303·570	119
Derbyshire	271·798	326·789	120
Total shire LEAs	8,739·807	9,249·386	106

Note: Information on budgeted expenditure is taken from local authorities' returns to the Department of the Environment on Forms RA90/91 and RA(SG)90/91. Figures have been repriced to outturn.

University Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will extend his proposal that teachers' pay and conditions should in future be determined by an independent review body to include university teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No. It is for the universities to settle these matters through the universities academic salaries committees.

Vacation Hardship Allowance

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from Mr. Mark A. Santos, vice-president of Hull university union, with responsibility for education and welfare, on the subject of the withdrawal of the students' vacation hardship allowance; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Representations have been received from Mr. Santos and an official reply, explaining the reasons for withdrawing the allowance, will be made to him shortly.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The information is given below:

	In post	*Vacancies*
1979	42	—
1980	39	1
1981	38	—
1982	38	—
1983	38	—
[1]1984	[2]24	—
1985	n/a	n/a
[1]1986	[2]23	—
1987	n/a	n/a
1988	n/a	n/a
1989	39	2
1990	38	4
[1]1991	37	3

[1] Figures for 1984 are as at 1 March, those for 1986 are as at 1 January, and those for 1991 are as at 15 April
[2] Excludes figures for administrative staff which are not available.

Wandsworth CTC

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the date, purpose and location of all meetings held between Wandsworth city technology college and the principal sponsor, ADT plc.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no detailed information and require none. Such meetings are a matter for the principal sponsor and the college.

East Birmingham Task Force

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how often the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education has met or visited the East Birmingham task force.

Mr. Alan Howarth: During the course of my various visits to Birmingham I have so far visited the area of the task force four times, and I shall be visiting there again shortly. I have had two other meetings with the task force leader.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Special Car Tax

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to abolish the special car tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to abolish car tax.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reasons underlie the delay in publishing figures for import penetration in the Central Statistical Office's monthly digest of statistics; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the figures for the years 1989 and 1990 together with the corresponding figures for imports from the EC.

Mr. Maples: Import penetration figures published in the latest monthly digest of statistics are the most up-to-date. As a result of recommendations in the 1989 review of Department of Trade and Industry statistics which considered the arrangements for collection of economic statistics by DTI and the burdens placed on businesses, quarterly sales data for most manufacturing industries, which are used in the calculation of this ratio, are no longer collected. Data for 1989 and 1990 are therefore not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reasons underlie the delay in publishing figures for the exchange rate and other countries' export values for manufactures in the monthly review of external trade statistics.

Mr. Maples: The delay in publishing exchange rates in table F1 of the monthly review of external trade statistics was the result of an oversight which occurred during the changeover to a new computer system; however, this data is widely available in other publications including "Economic Trends". Up-to-date information was published in the April 1991 edition of the review. The delay in the publication, in table E2 of the review, of main manufacturing countries—MMCs—shares of exports arises because the calculation of the shares requires statistics for manufacturing exports for all MMCs. While statistics on exports of manufactures are available for most MMCs within a few months of the period to which they relate, some countries' statistics are not available until much later.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount invested by business in 1989 compared to 1979; how much was invested by manufacturing other than food, drink and tobacco; how much was invested, in each case, in plant and machinery; and what the cost would have been in each of the four cases of constant allowances in 1989 and the 1979 notes.

Mr. Mellor: The table provides the available comparisons.

Business investment

	£ million current prices	
	1979	*1989*
All fixed assets	24,816	66,457
Plant and machinery	12,979	33,842

Manufacturing investment[1] other than food, drink and tobacco

	£ million			
	Current prices		*1985 prices*	
	1979	*1989*	*1979*	*1989*
All fixed assets	5,614	10,824	8,701	9,426
Plant and machinery	4,362	8,975	6,728	7,964

[1] Excludes leased assets, for which no industrial analysis is available.

Petrol Prices

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *272*, he will give the estimated effects on petrol prices in the United Kingdom if the European Commission's minimum rates of duty for mineral oils are accepted; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Our rates of duty for petrol are currently above the proposed European Community minimum rates. If the minimum rates were to be accepted this would not affect petrol prices in the United Kingdom.

Inward Investment

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total net direct inward investment in the United Kingdom from overseas in 1990 for each quarter; and which countries were the main sources of such investment.

Mr. Mellor: The figures are published in table A9, on direct investments in the March issue of "Economic Trends", published by the Central Statistical Office. A country analysis of the quarterly estimates is not available. However a geographical analysis is available for cross-border acquisitions and mergers by overseas companies in the United Kingdom in 1990. This is published in table 7 of Business Bulletin 23/91 "Cross border acquisitions and mergers (Q4 1990)". Copies of both publications are in the Library. It should be noted that cross-border acquisitions and mergers do not always give rise to direct investment capital flows and direct investment may be in forms other than acquisitions.

Tax Office

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he makes of any additional cost involved in a separate tax office dealing with the tax affairs of a non-working spouse.

Mr. Maude: None.

The tax office in which the tax affairs of non-working spouses are handled depends on their individual circumstances: for example, if they receive an occupational pension, it is the tax office dealing with that pension scheme; if they have investment income liable to tax it is their local tax office; and where the individual is claiming a repayment of tax suffered on investment income, the claim will be handled in one of the new Inland Revenue offices specialising in this work. These arrangements are the most cost-effective way to provide a good all-round service to taxpayers.

Where the tax office is remote from the person's home, any personal inquiries can be directed to the local tax inquiry centre.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving *(a)* rates of inflation, *(b)* growth in gross domestic product, *(c)* growth in gross domestic product less oil, *(d)* manufacturing output, *(e)* employment, *(f)* real average earnings for the whole economy and *(g)* real average earnings for manual workers for (i) France and (ii) the United Kingdom, for each year since 1985.

Mr. Maples: The latest available information can be obtained from the following publications:

(a) rates of inflation

Separate tables showing consumer price indices are given in both countries in "Main Economic Indicators Historical Statistics 1969-1988" and in part I (indicators by subject) in the monthly "Main Economic Indicators" both published by OECD. *(b)* growth in gross domestic product and *(c)* growth in gross domestic product less oil. Part III (appendix) in "Main Economic Indicators" published monthly by OECD gives GDP for both countries. Data on a comparable basis are not available for gross domestic product excluding oil.

(d) manufacturing output

"Industrial Trends Theme 4 Series B" published monthly by Eurostat contains the latest data for both countries.

(e) employment

Information on occupied population is given in table O in "National Accounts ESA Aggregates 1970-1988 Theme 2 Series C" published by Eurostat.

(f) real average earnings for the whole economy and *(g)* real average earnings for manual workers.

Information on compensation of employees which includes all payments in cash and in kind made by employers in remuneration for the work done by their employees is given in Table J in "National Accounts ESA Aggregates 1970-1988 Theme 2 Series C" published by "Eurostat". Data in respect of manual workers are not separately available.

Copies of all these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of the Treasury.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of press and public relations staff employed in my Department on 1 April, with the full budgeted provision shown in brackets was as follows:

	Staff
1986-87	10 (12)
1987-88	10 (10)
1988-89	10 (10)
1989-90	10 (10)
1990-91	10 (10)
1991-92	9 (9)

The information for earlier years is not available in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Trusts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the relationship between the £100 million in lost revenue that the Chancellor referred to in his Budget statement under the section dealing with trusts, *Official Report*, 19 March, column 174 and the figure of £10 million that is shown in the Red Book on page 45 in table 4·1 against item 45, "Non-Resident Trusts: Anti-Avoidance Measures".

Mr. Maude: The figure of £10 million in table 4·1 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Review" is the expected increase in receipts in 1992-93 from the measures concerning non-resident trusts in the Finance Bill. The annex to the table states that, without these measures, there could be a significant loss of tax: this loss was estimated, by my rt. hon. Friend in his Budget statement, to be up to £100 million in a full year.

P11D Forms

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many P11D forms for the year 1989-90 have not yet been processed by the Inland Revenue; and how many taxpayers are estimated to be affected by these forms.

Mr. Maude: Approximately 120,000 remain to be examined. Nearly all of these are for separate individuals and are returns for 1989-90.

Income Tax

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the gross amount of assessed income tax excluding PAYE and unassessed companies payments collectable for 1988-89; how much had been assessed by 31 July 1989; how much had been remitted by 31 October 1989; and how much had been stood over or suspended by 31 October 1989.

Mr. Maude: The amount of assessed income tax excluding PAYE and unassessed companies' payments collectable for the accounts year ended 31 October 1989 was £11,489.3 million.

The amount stood over in the year ended 31 October 1989 and not included in the above was £5,188.7 million.

The amount of assessed income tax excluding PAYE and unassessed companies payments remitted in the year ended 31 October 1989 was £227.6 million, although most if not all of this would relate to assessments raised in earlier years.

The amount of tax assessed by 31 July 1989 cannot be ascertained as the Inland Revenue do not hold such figures on a month-by-month basis.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the collectable balance of assessed income tax excluding PAYE and unassessed companies' payments at 31 July 1989; how much of this collectable balance was remitted during the period from 1 August to 31 October 1989; and how much of this collectable balance was stood over or suspended during the period from 1 August to 31 October 1989.

Mr. Maude: These figures for part years cannot be obtained as the Inland Revenue only makes up accounts for the whole year, ending on the last Friday in October.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give separate figures for the spending by the Treasury on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 April 1991]:* The expenditure for 1988-89 was £49,310, that for 1989-90 was £52,486 and that for 1990-91 was £43,581, none of which was on television or radio advertising. The 1991-92 budget is £53,693 none of which is likely to be on television or radio advertising.

Comparable figures for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 are not available because of machinery of Government changes and could only be given at disproportionate cost.

Duty Free Shopping

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* the representations he has received concerning the proposed abolition of duty free shopping in the single European market; what replies he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 April 1991]:* In the past 15 months, Treasury Ministers have replied to over 100 letters and several parliamentary questions and have held six meetings with representative trade bodies, including two with the Duty-Free Confederation.

Although no specific proposals have been put forward, the European Commission has made clear its view that, as a consequence of the completion of the single market, duty-free shopping for travellers within the Community should cease.

The Government understand the Commission's view, but equally are aware of the significance of the duty-free trade for United Kingdom producers, vendors and the transport industry in general. We are examining very carefully all the evidence put to us in representations, and hope to be able to announce our view shortly.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which medical and paramedical toiletries attract VAT.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 April 1991]:* Toiletries are normally chargeable with the standard rate of VAT. However, goods prescribed for the treatment of a patient by a registered medical practitioner and dispensed by a registered pharmaceutical chemist are zero-rated.

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since his last announcement on 31 January, *Official Report*, column *584*.

Mr. Renton: Since that announcement, I am pleased to inform the House that five further offers have been accepted. These consist of a collection of paintings and drawings by Alexander Runciman, a collection of papers relating to the geologist George Bellas Greenough, a watercolour by Whistler, a collection of musical instruments and two paintings by Nasmyth. These offers satisfied £196,000, £26,600, £7,000, £126,956 and £56,000 tax respectively. No decision has yet been taken on the allocation of these items except for the Nasmyth paintings, which will go to the Whitworth art gallery, Manchester in accordance with the condition on which the offer was made.

I am also pleased to announce the allocation of three offers previously accepted in lieu of tax. A painting by Sickert entitled "Girl at a Window, Little Rachel", will be allocated to the Tate gallery, a collection of works by and relating to John Piper will go to the Wolverhampton art gallery and a collection of photographs by and of Cecil Beaton will go to the National Portrait gallery.

CIVIL SERVICE

Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will issue a statement on the acknowledgment by the Civil Service Appeal Board that it was approached by Ministry of Defence representatives over the Colin Wallace affair.

Mr. Renton: That private communications took place between representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the chairman of the hearing before Mr. Wallace's appeal to the Civil Service Appeal Board is not in dispute. The Government accept that the communications should not have occurred; and the present chairman of the Civil Service Appeal Board has confirmed that it is not the board's practice to engage in private discussions with Departments in advance of an appeal hearing about matters which may be material to the outcome of the appeal and that it would refuse to entertain any request to engage in such discussions.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Arms Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many licences were *(a)* applied for and *(b)* granted under the export control system of the Department of Trade and Industry for arms exports in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sainsbury: Separate statistics are not maintained for the export of arms. Export licence applications received and granted for all military equipment for the years 1987 to 1990 and for the first quarter of 1991 were as follows:

Year	*Applications Received*	*Licences Granted*
1987	17,590	16,745
1988	15,697	[2]16,005
1989	14,601	13,584
1990	14,996	14,603
[3]1991	3,313	2,993

[1] Figures include applications for temporary export.
[2] Carry-over of applications from 1987.
[3] First quarter.

Statistics were not maintained in this form before 1987 and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

About one third of the above totals represents licences for firearms for personal, Government and police use.

Iraqi Currency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now allow companies in the United Kingdom to tender for the production of Iraqi currency; and when he last refused permission for companies to produce Iraqi currency.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is up to companies to decide whether they wish to tender for this business. However, it is not our present policy to grant licences in such cases. One company has recently sought advice about the possibility of obtaining a licence.

Optical Manufacturing Market

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the estimated size of the optical manufacturing market in the years ended *(a)* 31 March 1989 and *(b)* 31 March 1990.

Mr. Leigh: The latest available figures are for the year to December 1989. Estimates for that year and for 1988 as shown as follows:

United Kingdom market[1]

£ million

Industry[2]	*1988*	*1989*
Spectacles and unmounted lenses	230	272
Optical precision instruments	212	185
Photographic and cinematographic equipment	661	683
	1,103	1,140

Source:
Business monitors PAS 3731, PAS 3732 and PAS 3733.

[1] United Kingdom figures devised by manufacturers' sales less exports plus imports.
[2] Activity headings 3731, 3732 and 3733 respectively of the standard industrial classification.

Car Trade

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the changes in volume of car exports and of car imports over the past year; and what has been the effect on the balance of payments.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information in the volume of car and taxi exports and imports is regularly published in the monthly statistical review of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, available in the House of Commons Library. The balance of trade in cars and taxis narrowed from minus £5,008 million in 1989, to minus £4,175 million in 1990, a reduction of £833 million.

SIM's Law

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations have been made *(a)* to him and *(b)* him about Italy's SIM's law.

Mr. Redwood: The International Stock Exchange wrote to me on 21 January drawing my attention to the law, and it has kept in touch with my Department. The ISE, the Securities and Investments Board and my Department have all made strong representations to the Italian authorities about the effects of the law on United Kingdom firms wishing to do investment business in Italy. The law may be in breach of the treaty of Rome and the Government are considering asking the Commission to take this up with the Italian authorities.

Newspapers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ask the Office of Fair Trading to review restrictive practices affecting the distribution and sale of daily and Sunday newpapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Director General of Fair Trading is currently conducting a review of a number of issues

concerning the distribution of newspapers. The Director General will decide in the light of this review whether further action under the competition legislation for which he is responsible is required. It would not be appropriate for me to comment in advance of the completion of the Director General's review.

GATT

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how negotiations on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement and GATT round are progressing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The future of the multi-fibre arrangement pending the conclusion of the Uruguay round is to be addressed by a meeting of the textiles committee in Geneva scheduled for 16 May. The Community has recently begun to discuss the details of the mandate which will guide the Commission in that negotiation. All member states have agreed that a 17-month extension of the MFA should be sought. In the wider GATT negotiations, we hope that the good progress which was made towards a satisfactory textiles agreement at Brussels last December can be maintained now that the talks have resumed.

Football Premier League

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer the proposed football premier league to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: No. Any agreement between organisations and clubs may, however, constitute a registrable agreement under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976. This would be a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading.

The Gulf (Arms Sales)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was his Department's allocation, in each of the last five years, to that part of the British Overseas Trade Board charged with encouraging arms sales to countries in the Gulf.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. The British Overseas Trade Board has no remit specifically to promote defence sales and there is no part of the board charged with encouraging arms sales.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the budget allocated by the British Overseas Trade Board for exporters of military equipment taking part in past arms fairs in Baghdad, Iraq for *(a)* travel, *(b)* accommodation, *(c)* exhibition stands, *(d)* shipping costs and *(e)* in total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has never provided financial support for companies attending the Baghdad arms fair.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the budget allocated by the British Overseas Trade Board for exporters of military equipment taking part in (i) Dubai '91, (ii) Arabian security and technology exhibition, Riyadh, September 1991, (iii) International Defence Equipment and Aviation, Ankara, 13 November 1991 and (iv) Middle East defence exhibition, Bahrain 1992 *(a)* for travel, *(b)* for hotel or accommodation, *(c)* for exhibition stands, *(d)* for shipping costs and *(e)* in total; and if he will make a statement as to the entitlement of exhibitors to apply for a share of that money.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is no separate budget for exporters of military equipment.

Support provided by my Department for companies participating in British groups at certain overseas trade fairs takes the form of the provision of stands at subsidised rates and contribution to the travel costs of up to two company representatives attending the fair. No provision is made for hotel or accommodation or for shipping costs.

Car Prices

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to equalise British car retail prices with those charged elsewhere in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is currently investigating the United Kingdom car market, including car prices in the United Kingdom. When the Commission's report is available, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will need to consider whether there is scope for any action in the light of it.

Iraq and Libya (Arms Supplies)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will obtain a copy of the special report commissioned by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre on western suppliers of unconventional weapons and technologies to Iraq and Libya, for his Department's library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 24 April 1991]:* My Department obtained a copy of the report last year. The report consists of information obtained from various press sources. Her Majesty's Government were aware of the information contained in the report on British companies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 21 March, *Official Report*, column *192-93*, to the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), if he will detail the reasons why the United Kingdom has not yet ratified the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; and if he is now able to state when it is Her Majesty's Government's intention to do so.

Mr. Hogg: In the reply of 21 March given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) we announced the United Kingdom mainland position in respect of the convention. We are considering with the United Kingdom islands and dependent territories their positions and when these have been established we will ratify the convention.

Polish Resettlement Act 1946

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to reach a decision on implementing some assistance under the Polish Resettlement Act 1947.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

The Polish Resettlement Act 1947 was passed to enable the Government of the day to look after the welfare of members of the Polish armed forces and their dependents, in recognition of their gallant service alongside their British allies in the second world war, and Polish civilian refugees.

It enabled several Government Ministries to provide help for those Poles who elected to remain in this country and seek employment, or with arrangements and financial assistance for those who wanted to return to Poland or to emigrate to a third country.

There are no proposals to re-introduce assistance.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The full complement of staff including posts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic wing news department and the aid wing press office for each year from 1979-80 is as follows:

Year	*Complement*
1979-80	29·0
1980-81	28·0
1981-82	27·0
1982-83	26·0
1983-84	26·0
1984-85	26·0
1985-86	26·5
1986-87	25·5
1987-88	19·0
1988-89	18·0
1989-90	18·0
1990-91	18·0
1991-92	18·0

The number of staff actually employed on 1 April 1990 and 1991 was 18. Figures for staff actually employed on 1 April in the preceding years 1979-80 to 1989-90 are not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Iraq (Refugees)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position of insurgents and refugees in the south of Iraq and on the Iran-Iraq border; and what aid Her Majesty's Government has sent and is proposing to send specifically for this area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 25 April to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, once the safe havens have been duly established in Iraq and have been in working order for a while, he will arrange for a delegation of hon. Members to visit these sites.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall certainly ensure that hon. Members are kept fully informed of progress on the establishment of safe havens for Iraqi refugees and shall consider how this can best be done, if appropriate by including visits to the sites.

Nuclear Suppliers Group

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the purpose of the meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in the Hague on 5 to 7 March; who represented the United Kingdom; when the previous Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting was held; what plans were made for the next Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting; and if he will make a statement on the role of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The meeting of states adhering to the Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines focused on the strengthening of existing nuclear-related export controls and possible expansion of the group. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Energy and the Department of Trade and Industry represented the United Kingdom. The last meeting of the full group had been in 1978. The participants in the recent meeting agreed to meet again in the future, but no firm date was set. The role of the group is to draw up and administer guidelines for the control of nuclear-related exports.

Hong Kong

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Hong Kong will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The report is being published and laid before Parliament today. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Doncaster Benefits Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the overall cost to date of the computerisation of the payment system of benefits to claimants at his Department's offices in the Doncaster area; and what will be the final cost on completion of the system.

Miss Widdecombe: The computerisation of the social security payment system, otherwise known as the operational strategy, is being undertaken on a nationwide basis and it is therefore impracticable to apportion development costs to any one location.

Widowed Parent Allowance

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what would be the annual cost of extending widowed mothers' allowance to widowed fathers where at least one of the children is under five years;

(2) what would be the annual cost of extending widowed mothers' allowance to widowed fathers where at least one of the children is under 11 years.

Miss Widdecombe: It is not possible to estimate accurately the cost of extending the widowed mothers' allowance to widowed fathers for those with children in the specified age groups.

Appeals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has concerning the delays in weeks between the notification of appeals against the decisions taken by adjudication officers on *(a)* claims for benefit relating to vibration white finger disability and other manual-occupation inflicted disability and *(b)* claims for the payment of arrears of reduced earnings allowance, in local DSS offices in Stranraer, Greenock and Port Glasgow, and the hearing of such appeals by social security appeals tribunals and medical appeals tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The question of delay between appeal and hearing involves not only the Department of Social Security but also the office of the president of social security appeal tribunal, which is independent of the Department and falls within the responsibility of the Lord Chancellor. Information as to the time taken to prepare appeals for hearing of specific benefits, by specific local offices is not kept and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *91*, how many family credit entitlements of less than 50p a week were decided in 1990; and what would be the cost of *(a)* paying family credit of less than 50p a week and *(b)* entitling families with such awards to social fund payments and remission of NHS charges.

Mr. Jack: Information is not readily available for the whole of 1990 as retrieval from records could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information for the period from August 1990 to date indicates there are about 4,800 claims for family credit a year where the entitlement is less than 50p a week and therefore is not payable.

The cost of paying the assessed entitlement in those cases would be around £30,000 a year. There would also be additional administration costs.

Non-entitlement to family credit does not prevent some further help being given to families. For example, help with NHS charges is also available to anyone on a low income through the NHS low income scheme. People can also apply for crisis loans from the social fund whether or not they are in receipt of family credit, and if they are in receipt of housing benefit or community charge benefit, they can also receive funeral payments. The additional cost of entitling families with family credit awards of less than 50p to maternity and funeral payments from the social fund and to automatic full remission of NHS charges would depend on the extent to which they were already entitled to such benefits and to the extent to which they needed to make use of them. From information available about social fund maternity and funeral payments to existing family credit recipients the extra cost is estimated at around £20,000 a year at 1990-91 levels. Information is not available to enable estimates to be made on the same basis in respect of remission of NHS charges.

Severe Hardship Provision

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for the latest available date, the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds for whom a direction was made enabling income support to be awarded under the severe hardship provision who were *(a)* living independently and *(b)* in lodgings.

Mr. Jack: The latest information available, for the four weeks commencing 25 March 1991, shows that 2,240 directions enabling income support to be awarded to young people living independently were made under the severe hardship provision. Of those, 308 were made to those in board and lodging accommodation and 223 to those in hostels, including night shelters.

Appeals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals were heard by social security appeal tribunals in each month since January 1990; in how many cases no presenting officer appeared; and what information he has regarding the outcome of these appeals compared with those where a presenting officer was present.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

Statistics relating to social security appeal tribunal hearings are collated on a quarterly basis. The latest figures available are for the quarter ending 31 March 1990, when there were 17,851 hearings.

No figures are available on the number of cases at which a presenting officer was not present, although it would be exceptional for a presenting officer not to be in attendance.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon Catches

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest provisional figures available to his Department for salmon catches by all methods in United Kingdom waters, and what were the comparable figures for previous years.

Mr. Curry: The provisional catch data for salmon in the United Kingdom during 1990 has recently been estimated at 943·5 tonnes. The components of the catch are calculated as follows:

	Tonnes
England and Wales	297
Scotland	542·5
Northern Ireland	104

All data are provisional since not all catch returns have been received.

Responsibility for the publication of salmon catch data for England and Wales now rests with the National Rivers Authority, which is expected to publish detailed figures for 1989 shortly. Figures for 1989 in Scotland and Northern Ireland are already available.

Data for earlier years in respect of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, have been published by the fisheries departments, and are available in the Library of the House.

Spray Irrigation

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions his officials have had with the National Farmers Union and Country Landowners Association about the need to ban spray irrigation in certain areas during the coming summer months.

Mr. Curry: Officials have had numerous discussions recently with the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association and with the National Rivers Authority and other interested organisations. The objective has been to encourage responsible water use in order to avoid, if at all possible, the complete ban on abstraction for spray irrigation which was imposed in some areas in 1990.

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Curry: The information requested for the press office in my Department is as follows:

	Staff-in-post	*Complement*
1979-80	[1]—	22
1980-81	[1]—	22
1981-82	[1]—	20
1982-83	[1]—	20
1983-84	[1]—	24
1984-85	[1]—	24
1985-86	[1]—	24
1986-87	[1]—	24
1987-88	[1]—	27
1988-89	[1]—	27
1989-90	24	26
1990-91	23	24
1991-92	22	22

[1] Staff-in-post records prior to 1989-90 do not distinguish between staff dealing with press and public relations matters and other information division staff.

In addition, approximately five staff years are devoted to press and public relations activities within the regional organisation.

Foxes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will institute a review of the nuisance experienced by farmers from predation by foxes, and of the means of fox control needed by farmers so as to limit that nuisance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No reviews of the nuisance experienced by farmers from predation by foxes or of the methods of fox control are planned.

Montgomeryshire

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his statement in the debate of 18 April, *Official Report*, column 602, when he last paid an official visit to Montgomeryshire.

Mr. Gummer: I visited Montgomeryshire on 21 March 1987 and 27 April 1988, as Minister of State in this Department.

Net Limitation Orders

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what net limitation orders are currently in force in the Northumbria sea fisheries area; and when these are due for renewal.

Mr. Curry: There is one such order to limit netting for salmon and migratory trout, made under section 26 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. This is the Northumbrian Water Authority (Limitation of Net Licences) Order 1981. This order expires in February 1992.

SCOTLAND

Health Service

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many doctors, nurses and ancillary workers were employed in hospitals in East Lothian during the first three months of 1981 and 1991, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on staffing levels is not available centrally on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Strathclyde Police

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the percentage change in the number of crimes in the K division of Strathclyde police for each year since 1980, and for each category of crime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following table:

Number of crimes and offences recorded by the police and percentage change for each year since 1980
K division, Strathclyde region police authority

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Numbers											
Total crimes and offences	29,068	28,784	31,390	30,256	33,534	32,758	34,372	36,125	33,301	36,007	37,332
Total crimes	16,224	17,330	19,491	19,113	21,633	21,350	22,031	23,346	21,758	23,555	25,943
Group 1 non-sexual crimes of violence	337	419	443	499	575	584	595	820	714	630	749
Group 2 crimes of indecency	173	178	148	128	163	162	130	150	117	138	134
Group 3 crimes of dishonesty	12,430	13,662	15,500	14,831	16,526	15,998	16,594	17,901	16,738	18,048	19,948
Group 4 fire-raising, vandalism etc.	3,081	2,817	3,103	3,342	4,007	4,141	4,238	3,857	3,443	3,912	3,967
Group 5 other crimes	203	254	297	313	362	465	474	618	746	827	1,145
Total offences	12,844	11,454	11,899	11,143	11,901	11,408	12,341	12,779	11,543	12,452	11,389
Group 6 miscelleaneous offences	5,334	5,291	5,170	5,071	5,305	5,500	5,893	5,844	5,412	5,169	4,594
Group 7 motor vehicle offences	7,510	6,163	6,729	6,072	6,596	5,908	6,448	6,935	6,131	7,283	6,795

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Annual percentage change											
Total crimes and offences	—	−1	9	−4	11	−2	5	5	−8	8	4
Total crimes	—	7	12	−2	13	−1	3	6	−7	8	10
Group 1 non-sexual crimes of violence	—	24	6	13	15	2	2	38	−13	−12	19
Group 2 crimes of indecency	—	3	−17	−14	27	−1	−20	15	−22	18	−3
Group 3 crimes of dishonesty	—	10	13	−4	11	−3	4	8	−6	8	11
Group 4 fire-raising, vandalism etc.	—	−9	10	8	20	3	2	−9	−11	14	1
Group 5 other crimes	—	25	17	5	16	28	2	30	21	11	38
Total offences	—	−11	4	−6	7	−4	8	4	−10	8	−9
Group 6 miscelleaneous offences	—	−1	−2	−2	5	4	7	−1	−7	−4	−11
Group 7 motor vehicle offences	—	−18	9	−10	9	−10	9	8	−12	19	−7

Source: Reports of the chief constable of Strathclyde.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been charged over the last five years for drug-related offences in the K division of Strathclyde police; and what is the rate of such charges in K division relative to other Strathclyde police divisions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on numbers of persons charged is not held centrally.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many car thefts were reported in the K division of Strathclyde police in the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is given in the following table.

Number of thefts of motor vehicles recorded by the police K division, Strathclyde region police authority

Year	Number recorded
1986	1,573
1987	1,310
1988	1,470
1989	1,978
1990	2,106

Source: Reports of the chief constable of Strathclyde.

Legal System

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons were *(a)* recruited to the procurator fiscal service in the past year, *(b)* how many left because of retirement age and *(c)* how many resigned for other than retirement reasons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the year from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 *(a)* 94 persons were recruited to the procurator fiscal service, *(b)* eight retired, and *(c)* 62 resigned. These figures refer to all staff in the procurator fiscal service.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Crown Office policy on plea bargaining.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: "Plea bargaining" is generally understood to involve an agreement whereby an accused will tender pleas in return for an assurance as to the sentence which will then be imposed by the court. No such arrangements can be made in Scotland and accordingly "plea bargaining" is an inappropriate term in Scotland. The prosecution does retain the right in the public interest to abandon proceedings, amend the charges, or accept a partial plea of guilty, at any stage prior to the final determination of proceedings. This may be done by the prosecutor for a variety of reasons. As with the decision to institute proceedings, it is left to the discretion of advocate deputes or procurators fiscal. In specified circumstances individual prosecutors may be required to consult senior members of the procurator fiscal service, Crown counsel or the law officers before taking such a course.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many criminal trials in the past six months started within 10 days of the legal termination that would have been applied by the 110-day rule.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage of prosecutions when measured against the total number of charges reports submitted to procurators fiscal in each sheriffdom at the latest available full year; and if he will give the comparable figures for each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information which is set out in the tables below refers to court proceedings as a percentage of reports submitted to procurators fiscal. The first column details the number of reports received in each year. The subsequent columns detail the disposals for each year, although some of the disposals may relate to reports received in the preceding year.

North Strathclyde Sheriffdom

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Reports received	43,973	45,254	41,459	42,530	40,779
Number proceedings	3,559	3,488	6,180	6,003	7,588
Number[1] further proceedings	1,068	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]
Non-court proceedings					
Warning letters	1,960	1,736	1,780	2,322	2,218
Conditional offers	11,577	11,528	7,392	6,860	5,604
Fiscal fines	3,629	3,450	1,984	n/a[3]	n/a[3]
Diversions	95	119	112	n/a[4]	n/a[4]

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Court proceedings	22,085	24,933	24,011	27,345	25,369
Court proceedings as percentage of Total	50·22	55·10	57·92	64·30	62·21

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Fiscal Fines were introduced in 1988.
[4] No figures are available for the numbers of Diversions in 1986 and 1987. Such disposals would have been recorded as "Number proceedings".

South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway Sheriffdom

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Reports received	64,284	62,471	59,308	57,820	52,757
Number proceedings	4,907	5,166	7,329	4,781	4,521
Number[1] further proceedings	499	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]
Non-court proceedings					
Warning letters	1,977	2,163	2,448	2,447	2,617
Conditional offers	17,273	16,787	15,396	14,210	10,236
Fiscal fines	3,423	3,509	1,809	n/a[3]	n/a[3]
Diversions	164	83	63	n/a[4]	n/a[4]
Court proceedings	36,041	34,763	32,263	36,382	35,383
Court proceedings as percentage of Total	56·07	55·65	54·40	62·92	67·07

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Fiscal Fines were introduced in 1988.
[4] No figures are available for the numbers of Diversions in 1986 and 1987. Such disposals would have been recorded as "NO PROS".

Lothian and Borders Sheriffdom

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Reports received	58,551	60,419	54,880	57,970	74,123
Number proceedings	5,815	5,472	6,855	12,789	31,522
Number[1] further proceedings	3,814	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]
Non-court proceedings					
Warning letters	1,829	1,909	1,943	2,930	3,076
Conditional offers	16,544	17,917	14,666	11,775	8,488
Fiscal fines	1,746	1,912	860	n/a[3]	n/a[3]
Diversions	353	296	300	n/a[4]	n/a[4]
Court proceedings	28,450	32,913	30,256	30,476	31,037
Court proceedings as percentage of Total	48·59	54·47	55·13	52·57	41·87

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Fiscal Fines were introduced in 1988.
[4] No figures are available for the numbers of Diversions in 1986 and 1987. Such disposals would have been recorded as "NO PROS".

Glasgow and Strathkelvin Sheriffdom

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Reports received	80,543	79,126	70,477	75,434	69,868
Number proceedings	14,377	19,066	18,514	19,772	10,824
Number[1] further proceedings	5,644	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]
Non-court proceedings					
Warning letters	3,897	4,826	6,223	6,393	5,986
Conditional offers	21,077	14,198	10,297	8,680	5,790
Fiscal fines	2,366	1,963	1,048	n/a[3]	n/a[3]
Diversions	264	296	178	n/a[4]	n/a[4]
Court proceedings	32,918	38,777	34,217	40,589	47,268
Court proceedings as percentage of Total	40·87	49·01	48·55	53·81	67·65

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Fiscal Fines were introduced in 1988.
[4] No figures are available for the numbers of Diversions in 1986 and 1987. Such disposals would have been recorded as "NO PROS".

Grampian, Highlands and Islands Sheriffdom

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Reports received	46,090	42,231	41,204	39,654	44,216
Number proceedings	3,798	3,388	5,038	7,471	8,486
Number[1] further proceedings	106	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Non-court proceedings					
Warning letters	1,211	1,004	840	1,691	1,326
Conditional offers	12,597	10,240	9,075	6,617	8,699
Fiscal fines	2,244	2,359	2,393	n/a[3]	n/a[3]
Diversions	337	312	336	n/a[4]	n/a[4]
Court proceedings	25,797	24,928	23,522	23,875	25,705
Court proceedings as percentage of Total	55·97	59·03	57·09	60·21	58·14

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Fiscal Fines were introduced in 1988.
[4] No figures are available for the numbers of Diversions in 1986 and 1987. Such disposals would have been recorded as "NO PROS".

Tayside, Central and Fife Sheriffdom

	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986
Reports received	73,031	69,459	67,976	65,151	62,243
Number proceedings	8,357	7,489	8,581	8,203	8,287
Number[1] further proceedings	1,172	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]	n/a[2]
Non-court proceedings					
Warning letters	2,771	2,669	3,202	3,260	3,417
Conditional offers	20,723	19,766	17,981	13,479	11,596
Fiscal fines	3,577	2,363	1,210	n/a[3]	n/a[3]
Diversions	190	69	25	n/a[4]	n/a[4]
Court proceedings	36,241	37,103	36,977	40,209	38,943
Court proceedings as percentage of Total	49·62	53·42	54·40	61·72	62·57

[1] Proceedings discontinued.
[2] Not separately recorded.
[3] Fiscal Fines were introduced in 1988.
[4] No figures are available for the numbers of Diversions in 1986 and 1987. Such disposals would have been recorded as "NO PROS".

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the staffing levels in each office of the procurator fiscal service for the latest available year and each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table below.

Staffing levels

1 April each year

Office	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Aberdeen	34·0	35·0	37·0	37·5	36·5
Airdrie	27·0	25·0	28·0	29·0	30·0
Alloa	5·5	5·5	5·5	5·5	5·5
Arbroath	3·5	4·5	4·5	4·5	5·0
Ayr	20·5	19·0	18·0	20·5	21·0
Banff	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Campbeltown	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Cupar	4·0	4·0	4·5	5·0	5·0
Dingwall	3·5	3·5	3·5	3·5	3·5
Dornoch/Tain	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·5	5·0
Dumbarton	23·0	22·0	23·0	23·0	24·0
Dumfries/Kirkcudbright	20·0	20·0	20·0	22·0	22·0
Dundee	32·5	32·5	36·5	38·5	38·5
Dunfermline	14·0	15·0	15·0	15·0	16·0
Dunoon	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Duns/Jedburgh	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0
Edinburgh	115·0	115·0	123·5	130·5	135·5
Elgin	6·0	6·5	6·5	6·5	7·0
Falkirk	14·0	17·0	17·0	14·0	19·0
Forfar	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	4·0
Fort William	2·5	2·5	2·5	3·0	3·0
Glasgow	273·5	282·5	278·0	287·5	285·5
Greenock/Rothesay	21·5	21·0	19·0	18·0	20·0
Haddington	6·0	6·0	6·5	8·0	7·0
Hamilton	55·0	60·5	63·5	66·0	64·5
Inverness	14·0	15·0	16·0	17·0	17·0
Kilmarnock	32·0	32·0	28·5	33·0	35·0
Kirkcaldy	17·0	17·0	17·0	19·0	18·0
Kirkwall/Wick	5·0	4·0	5·0	6·0	4·0
Lanark	4·5	5·0	3·0	5·5	5·5
Lerwick	2·5	3·0	3·0	3·0	2·0
Linlithgow	16·0	17·0	17·0	17·0	17·0
Lochmaddy/Portree	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Oban	2·0	2·5	2·5	2·5	2·5
Paisley	35·0	37·0	38·0	38·0	40·5
Peebles	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·5	2·5
Perth	15·0	16·5	17·5	20·0	18·5
Peterhead	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5
Selkirk	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Stirling	12·0	12·0	12·5	13·0	14·0
Stonehaven	3·5	3·5	3·5	3·5	3·5
Stornoway	2·0	2·0	1·0	2·5	2·5
Stranraer	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·5	5·5
	878·0	901·0	913·0	955·5	968·0

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many specialist drug offences units exist within the procurator fiscal service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no specialist drug units within procurator fiscal offices. Restraint and confiscation procedures in relation to drug trafficking are dealt with by the fraud and specialist services unit at the Crown office.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the salary scales for the procurator fiscal service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information which is set out in the table below refers to the minimum and maximum points on the scale for each legal grade. An officer on the maximum point for his grade may be eligible for performance pay.

	£	£
Crown Agent (grade 2)	59,020	—
Regional procurator fiscal (Glasgow and Edinburgh—Grade 3)	47,090	—
	Min.	*Max.*
Regional procurator fiscal (Aberdeen, Dundee, Hamilton and Paisley); Senior assistant procurator fiscal, deputy crown agent	40,116	41,681
Upper level procurator fiscal; Assistant procurator fiscal; Assistant solicitor	32,551	36,997
Lower level procurator fiscal; Senior depute	23,407	31,851
Senior legal assistant	22,399	30,481
Legal assistant	15,156	19,348

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons charged with drugs offences connected with dealing had the charges reduced in severity on the day of trial at Glasgow sheriff court in each of the past six months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show the number of legal staff by age ranges in each procurator fiscal office.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table below.

Office	*25-35*	*36-45*	*46-55*	*56+*
Aberdeen	5	3	1	2
Airdrie	5	2	—	1
Alloa	—	1	1	—
Arbroath	1	—	—	1
Ayr	3	2	—	1
Banff	—	1	—	—
Campbeltown	—	—	1	—
Cupar	1	—	—	1
Dingwall	—	1	—	—
Dornoch/Tain	—	—	1	—
Dumbarton	4	1	—	2
Dumfries	2	1	1	1
Dundee	3	6	—	—
Dunfermline	2	1	1	—
Dunoon	—	1	—	—
Duns/Jedburgh	—	—	—	1
Edinburgh	9	9	5	2
Elgin	1	—	—	1
Falkirk	2	1	2	—
Forfar	—	—	—	1
Fort William	—	—	—	1
Glasgow	31	29	3	1
Greenock/Rothesay	3	2	1	—
Haddington	1	1	—	—
Hamilton	9	8	—	1
Inverness	3	1	1	—
Kilmarnock	2	4	3	—
Kirkcaldy	—	3	—	—
Kirkwall/Wick	—	1	—	—
Lanark	—	2	—	—
Lerwick	—	1	—	—
Linlithgow	1	—	2	1
Lochmaddy/Portree	—	1	—	—
Oban	—	1	—	—
Paisley	7	2	2	—
Peebles	—	—	—	1
Perth	1	4	—	1
Peterhead	—	1	—	—
Selkirk	—	—	1	—
Stirling	—	2	1	1
Stonehaven	—	—	1	—
Stornoway	—	—	1	—
Stranraer	—	—	1	—

Court Hearings (Scotland)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Paymaster General what information he has regarding the delay in weeks between pleading and trial hearings in *(a)* each sheriff court and *(b)* each district court in Scotland for the quarters ended 30 June 1990, 30 September 1990, 31 December 1990 and 31 March 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures for the quarter ended 31 March 1991 are not yet available. The figures for the other quarters are set out in the tables below:—

Interval (in weeks) between pleading and trial diets
A. Sheriff Courts
Sheriffdom-Glasgow and Strathkelvin

	Quarter ending		
	30 June 1990	*30 September 1990*	*31 December 1990*
Glasgow	12	15	13

Sheriffdom-Grampian, Highland and Islands

	Quarter ending		
	30 June 1990	*30 September 1990*	*31 December 1990*
Aberdeen	19	13	14
Stonehaven	12	12	9
Banff	12	9	7
Peterhead	12	9	12
Dingwall	11	10	12
Tain	9	10	4
Wick	9	8	8
Dornoch	15	11	10
Elgin	10	11	11
Inverness	12	11	13
Fort William	12	11	6
Portree	4	8	4
Stornoway	10	10	10
Lochmaddy	12	12	4
Lerwick	14	10	8
Kirkwall	11	8	8

Sheriffdom-Lothian and Borders

	Quarter ending		
	30 June 1990	*30 September 1990*	*31 December 1990*
Edinburgh	21	15	18
Peebles	12	9	8
Haddington	12	12	10
Linlithgow	17	10	18
Jedburgh	12	10	7
Duns	12	9	7
Selkirk	12	6	4

Sheriffdom-North Strathclyde

	Quarter ending		
	30 June 1990	*30 September 1990*	*31 December 1990*
Dumbarton	18	18	20
Campbeltown	10	8	8
Oban	14	12	12

	Quarter ending 30 June 1990	30 September 1990	31 December 1990
Greenock	14	10	10
Paisley	14	17	15
Dunoon	14	12	12
Rothesay	15	10	8
Kilmarnock	12	14	13

Sheriffdom-South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway

	Quarter ending 30 June 1990	30 September 1990	31 December 1990
Airdrie	14	15	19
Hamilton	20	22	24
Lanark	11	10	10
Ayr	11	12	12
Dumfries	10	9	7
Kirkcudbright	10	12	12
Stranraer	10	10	8

Sheriffdom-Tayside, Central and Fife

	Quarter ending 30 June 1990	30 September 1990	31 December 1990
Arbroath	18	10	13
Forfar	9	8	8
Perth	8	8	8
Dundee	5	5	5
Falkirk	10	14	12
Stirling	7	7	13
Alloa	10	10	11
Cupar	8	19	10
Kirkcaldy	10	12	13
Dunfermline	8	12	11

B District courts

	Quarter ending 30 June 1990	30 September 1990	31 December 1990
Aberdeen	19·0	20·0	12·0
Airdrie	18·0	16·5	17·0
Alloa	12·0	8·0	17·0
Arbroath	4·0	4·0	4·0
Ayr	14·5	9·5	10·0
Banff	9·0	9·0	8·0
Campbeltown	4·0	8·0	4·0
Cupar	12·0	10·0	16·0
Dingwall	4·0	4·0	4·0
Dornoch	10·0	10·0	10·0
Dumbarton	12·0	10·0	12·0
Dumfries	12·0	12·0	12·0
Dundee	13·0	15·0	17·0
Dunfermline	17·0	11·0	14·0

	Quarter ending 30 June 1990	30 September 1990	31 December 1990
Dunoon	8·0	8·0	8·0
Duns	4·0	4·0	4·0
Edinburgh	19·0	20·0	19·0
Elgin	14·0	11·0	11·0
Falkirk	21·0	16·0	10·5
Forfar	22·0	16·0	10·0
Fort William	6·0	4·0	6·0
Glasgow	15·5	16·0	16·5
Greenock	7·0	6·0	8·0
Haddington	9·0	11·0	11·0
Hamilton	14·0	13·0	11·0
Inverness	8·0	8·0	10·5
Jedburgh	6·0	6·0	6·0
Kilmarnock	11·0	13·0	10·0
Kirkcaldy	12·0	10·0	15·0
Kirkcudbright	10·0	10·0	10·0
Kirkwall	0·0	0·0	0·0
Lanark	10·0	12·0	10·0
Lerwick	0·0	0·0	0·0
Linlithgow	14·0	9·0	8·0
Lochmaddy	0·0	0·0	0·0
Oban	2·0	12·0	12·0
Paisley	9·5	13·5	16·0
Peebles	8·0	8·0	8·0
Perth	7·0	4·0	8·0
Peterhead	13·0	10·0	18·0
Portree	8·0	4·0	8·0
Rothesay	8·0	4·0	12·0
Selkirk	6·0	6·0	6·0
Stirling	6·0	7·0	5·5
Stonehaven	15·0	10·0	11·0
Stornoway	10·0	6·0	6·0
Stranraer	13·0	5·0	4·0
Tain	8·0	10·0	10·0
Wick	3·0	3·0	3·0

Renewable Energy

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the annual expenditure in each year since 1979 on renewable energy programmes in or for Scotland; and if he will break down the total sum spent among *(a)* solar active and passive, *(b)* photovoltaics, *(c)* biofuels, *(d)* wind, *(e)* tidal, *(f)* wave, *(g)* geothermal, *(h)* hydro power (including small systems,) and *(i)* others.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretay of State for Energy administers the Government's programme of expenditure on renewable energy in order to stimulate development for the UK as a whole. The table below gives expenditure within that programme since 1979. There is no specific allocation for Scotland.

Department of Energy R, D & D Expenditure on Renewable Energy (£ million)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Wind	0·6	0·8	0·9	2·5	2·5	4·8	5·4	3·7	4·0	3·9	4·8
Wave	3·0	3·3	4·4	3·1	1·0	0·4	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1
Geothermal Aquifers	1·3	1·7	2·6	1·5	1·8	1·1	0·3	0·1	—	0·1	0·2
Geothermal hot dry rocks	6·0	0·6	5·6	3·0	2·9	4·6	3·5	3·5	3·6	3·5	3·3
Solar	1·2	0·9	0·7	1·4	0·9	0·5	0·7	0·9	1·1	1·4	1·9
Biomass[1]	0·1	0·4	0·4	1·2	0·7	1·1	0·8	1·3	2·2	1·5	1·4
Tide	0·6	1·4	0·4	—	—	0·3	0·1	0·1	1·4	1·2	1·1
Hydro/general studies	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·8	0·8	0·8
Technology transfer and promotion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·7	1·0	1·6
ETSU services	1·4	2·2	2·3	2·0	2·9	2·1	2·0	2·3	2·3	2·5	2·7
	8·2	11·3	17·3	14·7	11·7	14·9	13·2	12·0	16·3	16·0	17·9

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
External contributions	0·7	0·9	1·9	3·2	2·0	3·3	2·1	3·1	3·9	4·7	5·3
Total	8·9	12·2	19·2	17·9	13·7	18·2	15·3	15·1	20·2	20·7	23·2

[1]Includes expenditure on "waste as a fuel" projects unde the energy efficiency office demonstration scheme.

Notes:

1. Where available external contributions include both private sector, generating boards and the European Commission.
2. Up to 1986-87 total for RED also includes expenditure on low head hydro and general studies to 1986-87. These are separately identified for 1987-88 and include work carried out by the chief scientist group ETSU.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of renewable energy potentials in Scotland by type of source including *(a)* solar active and passive, *(b)* photovoltaics, *(c)* biofuels, *(d)* wind, *(e)* tidal, *(f)* wave, *(g)* geothermal, *(h)* hydro power (including small systems) and *(i)* others.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The potential for the development of renewable energy in the United Kingdom was described in the Department of Energy Paper No. 55 published by HMSO in 1988 "Renewable Energy in the United Kingdom—The Way Forward". It was estimated on a United Kingdom basis that renewable energy might provide by the year 2025:

Electricity producers	*TWh/year*
Wind power onshore	0·30
Tidal	0·28
Geothermal HDR7	0·10
Wave	0·0·2
Small-scale hydro	0·3-0·7
Electricity producers	*Mtce/year*
Passive solar	1-2
Biofuels:	
Wet and dry wastes	3-10
Forestry	1-5

Working Hours and Earnings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will (1) publish figures showing the *(a)* average earnings, *(b)* average gross hours and *(c)* average overtime hours for (i) male, (ii) female and (iii) all workers in full-time employment in each of the Scottish regions and islands area for each year from 1979 to 1990, inclusive;

(2) publish figures showing *(a)* average earnings, *(b)* average gross hours and *(c)* average overtime hours for (i) male, (ii) female and (iii) all workers in full-time employment in Scotland for each year from 1979 to 1990, inclusive.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The available information is given for 1990 in the table below. Since such a large volume of information has been requested, I will write to the hon. Member giving the equivalent information for each year from 1979 to 1989 inclusive. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Average weekly earnings, total hours and overtime hours[1] for Scotland and Scottish regions April 1990

	Average weekly earnings £ per week	*Total hours*	*Overtime hours*
Borders			
Males	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
Females	145·4	38·0	0·6
All	205·7	[2]—	[2]—
Central			
Males	276·7	41·6	3·7
Females	169·3	37·5	1·0
All	238·5	40·1	2·7
Dumfries and Galloway			
Males	252·4	42·3	3·9
Females	169·8	—	—
All	226·5	40·6	2·7
Fife			
Males	255·9	42·9	4·4
Females	182·3	38·3	1·1
All	228·7	41·3	3·2
Grampian			
Males	327·6	44·4	4·7
Females	188·3	37·7	0·9
All	287·6	42·2	3·5
Highland			
Males	261·4	42·0	3·7
Females	175·9	37·1	0·6
All	229·2	40·0	2·5
Lothian			
Males	274·3	40·8	3·2
Females	197·4	37·0	0·7
All	244·8	39·3	2·2
Strathclyde			
Males	273·8	42·2	4·1
Females	190·1	37·5	0·9
All	243·1	40·4	2·9
Tayside			
Males	251·6	41·5	3·3
Females	177·2	36·8	0·5
All	222·4	39·6	2·2
Islands			
Males	253·1	[2]—	[2]—
Females	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
All	243·4	[2]—	[2]—
Highlands and Islands			
Males	259·4	41·8	3·5
Females	184·7	37·3	0·8
All	232·3	40·1	2·5
Scotland			
Males	276·4	42·1	3·9
Females	187·2	37·4	0·8
All	244·0	40·3	2·7

Source: Employment Department.

[1] Earnings, total hours and overtime hours of adults in full-time employment whose pay was not affected by absence.

[2] Denotes sampling error too high or sample numbers too low for reliable information to be given.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will (1) publish figures showing the distribution of earnings in Scotland for (i) all, (ii) male and (iii) female full-time workers earning *(a)* median, *(b)* the point below

which the lowest 10 per cent. of workers fall and *(c)* the point above which the highest 10 per cent. of workers fall, for each year between 1979 and 1990, inclusive;

(2) publish figures showing the distribution of earnings in each Scottish region and islands area for (i) all, (ii) male and (iii) female full-time workers earning *(a)* median, *(b)* the point below which the lowest 10 per cent of workers fall and *(c)* the point above which the highest 10 per cent. fall, for each year beween 1979 and 1990, inclusive.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The available information for 1990 is given in the table below. Since such a large volume of information is involved, I will write to the hon. Member giving the equivalent information for each year from 1979 to 1989 inclusive. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Median and decile distribution of gross weekly earnings[1] for Scotland and Scottish regions: April 1990

£ per week

	Lowest decile percentage	*Median percentage*	*Highest decile percentage*
Borders			
Males	[2]	n/a	[2]
Females	92·1	n/a	251·5
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Central			
Males	149·6	n/a	408·0
Females	101·1	n/a	285·1
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dumfries and Galloway			
Males	132·7	n/a	413·5
Females	96·7	n/a	314·5
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fife			
Males	140·6	n/a	399·6
Females	101·6	n/a	314·7
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Grampian			
Males	149·4	n/a	573·0
Females	101·4	n/a	314·2
All	n/a	n/a	na/
Highland			
Males	134·5	n/a	406·7
Females	98·7	n/a	314·0
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lothian			
Males	144·1	n/a	441·8
Females	115·4	n/a	314·2
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Strathclyde			
Males	142·7	n/a	424·4
Females	105·7	n/a	313·8
All	120·3	n/a	389·1
Tayside			
Males	130·7	n/a	407·2
Females	105·5	n/a	312·1
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Islands			
Males	137·7	n/a	421·5
Females	[2]	n/a	[2]
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Highlands and Islands			
Males	[2]	n/a	[2]
Females	[2]	n/a	[2]
All	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scotland			
Males	142·3	243·3	443·2
Females	104·4	163·5	313·5
All	119·5	n/a	398·9

Source: Employment Department.

[1] Earnings of adults in full-time employment where pay was not affected by absence.

[2] Denotes sampling error too high or sample numbers too low for reliable information to be given. Information on medians and deciles other than that shown is obtainable only at disproportionate cost, and is designated n/a on the table.

St. John Ambulance Brigade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities he has made available to staff in his Department to contribute to the appeal that has been launched for people with the name of John to help raise £5 million for the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Mr. Lang: My Department has not made facilities available to staff to contribute to the appeal. The St. John Ambulance Brigade does not operate Scotland.

Housing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* each private sector landlord and local authority who has expressed an interest in acquiring the former Scottish Special Housing Association housing stock in the Border region to date; and when he expects to announce a deadline after which further applications will be too late to be considered.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Expressions of interest in acquiring Scottish Homes housing stock will be registered with that agency, which will then screen them in accordance with the procedures published by Scottish Homes in October 1989. Any proposals acceptable after the initial screening stage will be notified to the tenants and made public by means of a press release. There is no requirement for Scottish Homes to make available the names of those making unsuccessful proposals.

Scottish Homes asked for registration of interest to be submitted to it by 6 April. Applications received after that date will not be considered.

MFV Antares

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any information concerning the date and location of the forthcoming fatal accident inquiry into the deaths of the crew of the MFV Antares; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Investigations are continuing into the deaths of the crew of the MFV Antares. The date and location of the fatal accident inquiry have yet to be fixed.

Child Abuse

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many criminal convictions there have been for offences against children where children were abused by a parent in the Renfrew division of Strathclyde region in the last two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the relationship between offenders and their victims is not colleced centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to reduce delays in court proceedings in child abuse and sexual cases; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Considerable priority is given initially by the prosecution authorities and subsequently by the courts to the speedy handling of cases involving children.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to introduce in court proceedings concerned with child or sexual cases video recordings of testimony from child witnesses as evidence; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Certain of the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission in its report on the evidence of children and other potentially vulnerable witnesses were implemented in the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990. We are considering whether it might be appropriate to bring forward legislative provisions implementing the remaining recommendations of the Commission. These recommendations include the possible taking of the evidence of a child on commission with the proceedings being video recorded for subsequent replay at the trial.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what are his latest estimates for 1990-91 and budgets for 1991-92.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 April 1991]:* For 1988-89 to 1990-91, the figures were:

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £
Television advertising	576,000	974,000	741,000
Radio advertising	40,000	85,000	188,000
Newspaper advertising	378,000	1,022,000	613,000
Other promotional material	933,000	1,001,000	1,098,000

For 1979-80 to 1987-88 an analysis in the form requested is not available.

Total expenditure on information publicity was:

	£
1979-80	263,000
1980-81	362,000
1981-82	393,000
1982-83	386,000
1983-84	360,000
1984-85	704,000
1985-86	677,000
1986-87	857,000
1987-88	1,094,000

Provision for expenditure by the Scottish Office on information campaigns in 1991-92 is £2·2 million. The breakdown of expenditure by different media is not available.

The above figures do not include the running costs of the Scottish Office information directorate.

ENERGY

Press and Public Relations Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each year from 1979-80, including 1991-92, the number of staff actually employed on 1 April and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts in the press and public relations office of his Department.

Mr. Wakeham: The staffing of my Department's press office, including the speech writing unit and the public inquiry point where appropriate, has been as follows:

	Numbers
1991	13
1990	13
1989	13
1988	[1]13
1987	[2]11

[1]at 1 July 1988.
[2]at 1 December 1987

It is not possible to identify separately the staffing of the press office before 1987.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been undertaken by his Department in the five years since the Chernobyl accident to evaluate the long-term costs of a nuclear accident, in the United Kingdom or nearby continential Europe, involving the equivalent energy and radiation release as occured in the Soviet accident.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since the Chernobyl accident, the approach of the United Kingdom Government and nuclear industry has been to concentrate on ensuring that the high standards of safety employed in the design, construction and operation of United Kingdom nuclear installations are maintained. These standards mean that the likelihood of any accident at a United Kingdom nuclear plant resulting in a significant off-site release of radioactivity is extremely small. The chance of an accident involving a release on the scale of that which occurred at Chernobyl is widely acknowledged as being considerably more remote.

Extensive programmes of research and development funded both by Government and the nuclear industry are being carried out to underpin the maintenance of the United Kingdom's high safety standards.

Despite the extremely low chance of an accident on the scale of Chernobyl at a United Kingdom nuclear installation, the Government have thoroughly reviewed nuclear emergency planning arrangements since the Chernobyl accident. In collaboration with the safety regulatory authorities, the industry, and other bodies involved in emergency planning at both central and local level, a number of improvements have been put in place. These should ensure a continuation of high standards of emergency planning for responding to a nuclear accident. and protecting the public from any consequences.

There is no reason to suppose that the standard of safety adopted in nearby continental Europe are any less rigorous than those applied in the United Kingdom, and international conventions on early notification provide for early warning of events likely to have trans-boundary

consequences. The Department of the Environment has developed a national response plan to provide a framework for dealing with any consequences for the United Kingdom of an overseas accident; it includes the establishment of a nationwide network of monitoring stations, the Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network, RIMNET, designed to detect independently any radioactivity arriving in this country.

Chernobyl

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what British nuclear expert assistance has been offered by the Government to the Soviet atomic energy authorities managing the Chernobyl sarcophagus to obviate the threat of radioactive dust pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the Soviet Union has not requested any assistance from the United Kingdom Government in respect of this matter. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom is prepared to give sympathetic consideration to any such requests.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many scientists from *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the nuclear installations inspectorate and *(c)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, respectively, have visited the Chernobyl reactor complex since 1986.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the information requested is as follows:

(a) no scientists from my Department have visited the Chernobyl reactor complex;
(b) two principal inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate have made such visits;
(c) six scientists from the Atomic Energy Authority have made such visits.

In addition, since the accident, members of both the nuclear installations inspectorate and the Atomic Energy Authority have made visits to the Soviet Union to further collaboration on various aspects of nuclear safety. The United Kingdom has also participated in discussions held under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Advanced Nuclear Fuels (Uranium Shipment)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the outcome of the investigation by EURATOM into the mistaken shipment by Advanced Nuclear Fuels of Lingen, Germany, of 130 kg of enriched uranium to the United States of America; and what assessment has been made of the implications for the application of EURATOM nuclear safeguards in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not for the United Kingdom Government to comment on such matters. EURATOM safeguards will continue to apply to all civil nuclear material in the United Kingdom.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 189**

SESSION 1990–91

15th April—26th April 1991

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1
214w
Road works 450w

A2
Road works 349-50w

A6
176w

A12
450w

A13
Road works 351-2w, 525-6w

A14
Contracts 214w

A19
Lighting 176w
Road accidents 175w

A38
Road works 527-8w

A55
Road construction 409-10w

A65
Road accidents 570w
Road works 569w

A66
Road works 351-2w

A69
Road works 761-2

A303
Speed limits 754-5

A453
525w

A470
578w

A483
578w

A494
Road safety barriers 225w

A590
760

Abbott, Ms Diane
Questions
Commuters, Greater London 762
Drug crimes, Stoke Newington 446w
False imprisonment, Compensation 6w
Interest rates 243w
Miscarriages of justice, Compensation 7w
Miscarriages of justice, Ex gratia payments 372w
Nigeria, Debts 1075
Patients, Ethnic groups 395w
Prerogative of mercy 6-7w

Aberdeen
Railway accidents 527w

Aberdeen Royal Infirmary
NHS trusts 196w, 548w
Publicity 338w

Abortion
78w
King's College Hospital 396w

Access to buildings
Family doctors 401w
Wheelchairs 401w

Access to countryside
Forests (16:04:91) 165-6

Accidents
Playgrounds 430w

Act Now
516w, 519w

Active citizenship
Curriculum 403w

Adams, Mrs Irene
Questions
Council tax, Members' secretaries 1205-6
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 402-3

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 999-1000
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 763-4
Lebanon, Hostages 1080-1

Administration of justice
Scotland 409-10

Administrative costs
Community charge 184w
National Health Service & Community Care Act 1990 147w
NHS administration 147w

Admissibility of evidence
Child abuse 619w

Adoption
283w
Romania 233w, 1087-8

ADT
City technology colleges 176-7w, 589w

Adult education
Expenditure 308-9w

Advanced Nuclear Fuels
Transport of radioactive materials 622w

Advertising
Dept of Education & Science 505w
Dept of Employment 509-10w
Dept of Energy 500w
Dept of Health 516-7w
Dept of Social Security 540-1w
Dept of the Environment 492w
Dept of Transport 524-6w
Drinking & driving 350w
Expenditure 492w, 500w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 520-1w
Home Office 535-6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 556w
Ministry of Defence 531-2w
Scottish Office 619w
Treasury 593w
Welsh Office 538-40w

Advertising codes of practice
Tobacco advertising 234-5w

Advice & Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(16:04:91) 382-92

Advice & Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(16:04:91) 382-92

Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay & Conditions
see Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay

Advisory services
Alcoholism 396-7w
Civil servants 18-9
Drug abuse 396-7w
Local government services 265w, 357w

Africa
Disaster relief 299w, 769
EC aid 188w
Famine 299w
Food aid from UK 188w

Aggregate external finance
125-6w

Agricultural land
Compulsory purchase 489w

Agricultural production
555-6w
Commonwealth 299w

Agricultural production*—*continued
Developing countries 228w
Environment protection 555w
Milk 42w
Vegetables 41-2w

Agricultural Scientific Services
Civil service agencies 160w

Agricultural subsidies
553w
Common agricultural policy 553w

Agriculture
476w
Diversification 554w
Water pollution 360w

Agriculture & Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Money res & Ways & Means res (22:04:91) 873-4

Agriculture Select Committee
Microwave ovens 143-4w

AIDS
Health education 82-3w

Aids for handicapped
Technological change 6, 89w

Air force
Job evaluation 483w
Kurdistan 529w

Air force bases
Defence equipment 164w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 530w

Air force strength
RAF Finningley 571-2w

Air pollution
Benzene 435-6w
Coke 306w, 357w
Iran 183w
Kuwait 65-6w, 102-4w, 106w, 183w, 225-6w, 230w, 256w, 1208

Air pollution control
Local government functions 493w

Air pollution monitoring
435-6w
Meteorological Office 65w
Meteorological satellites 66w
Nitrogen oxides 356-7w
Sulphur dioxide 357w

Air safety
Smoke hoods 451w

Airlines
350w

Airports
Northern Ireland 581w
Property development 581w

Albany Prison
1197

Alcohol & crime
Scotland 336w, 427w
Young offenders 427w

Alcoholic drinks
Public order offences 296w
Young people 1198-9

Alcoholism
Advisory services 396-7w
Charities 428w

Aldershot
530w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 616
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 35

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 625-7

Alison, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Questions
Family credit, Expenditure 1-2
Navigation, River Humber 419w
Shipping accidents, Bridges 419-20w

Allason, Mr Rupert
Questions
Interception of Communications Tribunal, Public appointments 133w

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
Clifton bypass, Road construction 525w
Disability living allowance, Elderly 270w
Handicap benefits 269-70w
Industrial injuries, East Midlands 511w
Nuclear weapons policy 40w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits rates 5-6
Social Fund, Expenditure 270w
Timesharing, Misleading advertising 303-4w

Alphachloralose
Rodents 271w

Alternative energy
225w
Contracts 498-9w
Expenditure 614-6w
Scotland 459w, 614-6w

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Housing, Liverpool 61-2w
King's College Hospital, Abortion 396w
Lung cancer, Liverpool 148w
Property insurance, Council tenants 536w
Royal Liverpool Hospital, Multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus 395w
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool, Hospital closures 154-5
Small claims 494w

Ambulance services
Greater London (18:04:91) 666-74

Amendments & new clauses
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 199, 248

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 24

Amess, Mr David
Questions
Fenchurch Street Station, Railway travel 345w

Amnesty International
1075-6

Amos, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Health & Safety at Work (Tobacco Smoking) Bill, 1R (24:04:91) 1088
Smoking, Health hazards (23:04:91) 1062-6
Questions
A69, Road works 761-2
Chewing gum, Nicotine 150w
Educational assessment, Primary education 884-5
Railway network, Tyne & Wear 763
Tobacco advertising, Advertising codes of practice 234-5w

Anaemia
Kuwait 460w

Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979
Questions
226w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Antarctic (26:04:91) 1400, 1406
Questions
Middle East, Peace negotiations 452-3w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 1084-5

Animal cruelty
St Tudwal's Island East 558w

Animal experiments
Codes of practice 4w
Cosmetics 443w
Dogs 273-4w
Inspections 274-5w
Public petitions (24:04:91) 1183
Royal Postgraduate Medical School 274w

Animal welfare
Export of live animals 361-2w
Local government staff 447-8w
Pigs (26:04:91) 1370-92
Treaty of Rome 430w
Wales 407w

Antarctic
109w, (26:04:91) 1398-406
Argentina 230w
EC internal relations 110w
Mineral resources 411w, 1078-9
Norway 230w

Antarctic Treaty
109-10w, 230w, 411w, (26:04:91) 1398-406
Mining 109w

Apartheid
South Africa 453-4w

Appeals
Eleven plus 87w
School choice 176w
Uniform business rate 62-3w

Arbuthnot, Mr James
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 722
Private Members' Bills, Point of order (19:04:91) 742
Smoke Detectors Bill, 2R order read (26:04:91) 1396
Water Requirements (Planning) Bill, 2R adjourned (19:04:91) 737, 739-40
Questions
Local government revenue 1208

Archaeological sites
Law reform 226w
Wales 323w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Middle East, Peace negotiations 452-3w

Archway Road
Government buildings 214w

Argentina
Antarctic 230w

Argyll & Clyde Health Board
Contracts for services 544w

Armagh
Flags 218w

Armed conflict
Iraq 413w

Armed forces
Arms trade 529w
Community charge exemptions (16:04:91) 164
Mental health services 484w
Middle East 102w
Photographs 102w
USSR 485w

Armed forces casualties
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 530w

Armed forces civilians
Manpower 379w

Armed forces deployment
Germany 379w
Iraq 135w, 531w, 1082
Middle East 378w
RAF Lakenheath 379w

Armed forces deployment—continued
US bases 486w

Armed forces discharges
Housing 485w
Training 485w

Armed forces housing
Building repairs 302-3w

Armed forces pay
Middle East 483w

Armed forces storage depots
529w

Armed forces training
Honduras 164w

Arms control
1072-3
Defence procurement 138w
Middle East 452w
USSR 1074

Arms control negotiations
293w

Arms exports
Export licensing 28w, 595w
Export promotion 597w
International Military Services 104w
Sheffield Forgemasters 272w

Arms trade
Armed forces 529w
CFE Treaty 488w
Cyprus 229-30w, 285-6w
East Timor 28w
Germany 110w
Gulf states 597w
India 487w
Indonesia 206w
Iraq 219-20w, 223w, 272w, 597-8w
Libyan Arab Republic 598w
Middle East 597-8w
Trade fairs 484w, 597w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Family credit, Social security recipients 90w
Nursery schools, Educational finance 889
Schools, Ministers' domestic visits 900
Special education 306-7w

Army bases
Documents 530w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 374
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 524, 534-5
Questions
A2, Road works 349-50w
Broadcasting controls, Sports 178w
Community care, Kent 145
Community service orders 532w
Iraq, Armed forces deployment 1082
Mobility allowance, Take-up 4
Reading 402-3w

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Questions
M66, Road construction 354w
Nuclear physics, Daresbury 263w

Arrests
Fox hunting 372w

Arson
Schools 427w
Scotland 427w

Arthritis Care
429w

Arts
Greater London 16
Prison education services 534w

Arts centres
Handicapped 14-5
Ministers' domestic visits 13-4

Arts Council
Arts finance 463-5w

Arts finance
9w
Arts Council 463-5w
Community charge 8w
London boroughs grants scheme 13-7
London City Ballet 16
North West region 8w
Regional arts boards 463-5w
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra 8w

Asbestos
School buildings 440w

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
English language, Languages education 897
Kurdistan, Oppression 158

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Questions
Community care 145
Fires, Bedding 206-8w
Hearing aids 344w
Hearing therapists 344w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 822
Funerals (22:04:91) 789, 792-3, 801, 804, 807-9
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 910

Aspinwall, Mr Jack
Questions
Over-the-horizon radar 573w

Association of British Travel Agents
27w

***Atkins, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education & Science (Sport)*
Questions
Physical education, Cricket 401w
Playing fields, Schools 402w
Sports, Schools 404w
Swimming, Derbyshire 403w
Young people, International conferences 321w

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 34
Questions
China, Religious freedom 412w
Fairgrounds, Planning permission 358w
Finance Act 1984, Holiday accommodation 383-4w
Health authorities, Public appointments 344w
Hospital admissions 514-5w
Members' facilities, Facsimile transmission 482w
Optical charges, Pensioners 156
VAT, Holiday accommodation 26w

Atomic Weapons Establishment
(24:04:91) 1092-148

Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (24:04:91) 1092-148

Attendance allowance
Social security recipients 236w

Attendance Allowance Board
Members' correspondence 100w

Audit
District health authorities 78w, 150w
Licensing 222w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
78w, 150w

Average earnings
Scotland 615-8w

AWE Aldermaston
302-3w, (24:04:91) 1092-148
Building repairs 276-7w

AWE Burghfield
302-3w

Ayr Hospital
NHS trusts 547w

Ayrshire & Arran Health Board
NHS trusts 546w

Baby milks
EC law 478w

Bail
446w

***Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Advertising, Home Office 535-6w
Alcoholic drinks, Young people 1198-9
Bail 446w
Broadcasting controls, Sports 178w
Burglary, Leyton 446w
Cars, Burglar alarms 1202
Child abuse, Blyth Valley 443-4w
Confessions, Convictions 532w
Crime prevention, Young people 1198
Criminal investigation, Homicide 374w
Criminal statistics, Blyth Valley 445w
Drinking & driving 375w
Family conciliation services, Finance 565-6w
Fire services, Breathing apparatus 373w
Fire services, Greater London 443w
Fire services, Privatisation 372w
Fire services, Underground railways 373w
Government buildings, Home Office 535w
Homicide, Life imprisonment 1200
Interception of Communications Tribunal, Public appointments 133w
Life imprisonment, Police deaths on duty 1200-1
Miscarriages of justice 534w, 1192-3
Motor vehicle theft 1199
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 1201-3
Motor vehicle theft, Fixed penalties 1202
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 133w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 566w
Probation, Family conciliation services 373-4w
Probation, Performance indicators 373w
Probation & aftercare, Costs 444-5w
Probation Committees, Merseyside 565w
Property insurance, Council tenants 536w
Public relations, Home Office 565w
Relate, Government grants 442w
Rights of accused, Police interrogation 532w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Home Office 294w
Silcott, Winston 1201
Television 131-2w
Television reception, Scotland 375-6w
Visas 178-80w
Young offenders, Children in care 373w
Young offenders, Punishment 1199

Balance of payments
470-1w
Oil revenues 180w

Balance of trade
387-8w
Cars 596w
Drinks 472w
Food 472w
Manufactured goods 468-9w, 503w
UK trade with EC 468-9w

***Baldry, Mr Tony**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment*
Questions
Air pollution, Coke 357w

***Baldry, Mr Tony**—continued*
Air pollution monitoring 435-6w
Benzene, Petrol 390w
Benzene, Water pollution 490-1w
Bird scarers, Codes of practice 436w
Countryside stewardship scheme 490w
Countryside stewardship scheme, Nature conservation 490w
Dog whelk, Nature conservation 434w
Environment, International conferences 359w
Environment protection, Treaties 362w, 493w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 66w, 144-5w
Hazardous wastes, Wath upon Dearne 567w
Iran, Air pollution 183w
Kuwait, Air pollution 65-6w, 183w, 225-6w
Kuwait, Oil pollution 359w
National parks, International conferences 358w
National Rivers Authority, Surveys 434w
Nature conservation, EC action 145w
Nitrogen oxides, Air pollution monitoring 356-7w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 568w
Nuclear accidents, Technical assistance 568w
Persian Gulf, Ecology 65w
Persian Gulf, Nature conservation 65w
Persian Gulf, Oil pollution 65w, 183w, 185-6w
Plankton, Climate 492w
Radioactive waste disposal 568w
Rhododendron, Weed control 265w
Severn Estuary, Special protection areas 490w
Special protection areas, EC law 145w
Sulphur dioxide, Air pollution monitoring 357w
Sulphur dioxide, EC law 356w
Tarmac Construction, Derbyshire 146w
Waste disposal, Estuaries 66w
Water pollution 435w
Water pollution, EC law 435w
Water resources, Sports facilities 567w
Water sports, Noise control 54w
Water supply, Chelmsford 436w
Water supply, Horticulture 390-1w
Water supply industry, Billing 359w
Wild animals, Import controls 358w

Baltic republics of USSR
European Security Conference 1071-2

Bank for Reconstruction & Development of Europe
see European Development Bank

Banking Insurance & Finance Union
1207-8

Banks, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 687, 696, 701, 715
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 575
Questions
Council house sales, Harrogate 437w
Hospital beds, Harrogate Health Authority 400w
New businesses, Yorkshire & Humberside 511w
North Yorkshire Police, Manpower 374w
Pupil-teacher ratios, North Yorkshire 406w
Strikes, Lost working Days 422-3w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 591
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 582
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 424, (22:04:91) 784-5
Members' interests, Points of order (22:04:91) 787
Oral question time intervention (15:04:91) 17, (22:04:91) 762
Questions
Arts finance, London boroughs grants scheme 15

Banks, Mr Tony—continued
Channel tunnel, Railway network 757-8
Dept of Social Security local offices, Greater London 13
Fox hunting, Arrests 372w
Fox hunting, Prosecutions 372w
Hong Kong, Ivory 112-3w, 232w
Hong Kong, Sharks 112w, 288w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence equipment 483w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence expenditure 483w
London Zoo, Government grants 387-8w
Parking offences, Dept of the Environment 64w
Public order policing, Sports 296w
Whales, EC action 552w
Whales, Japan 551-2w
Whales, Nature conservation 551-2w
Wild animals, Import controls 358w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 595-6
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 839, 846-7
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 580-1
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 426-7, (22:04:91) 785
Questions
Crime victims, Departmental publications 210w
Environment, International conferences 228-9w, 359w
Kurdistan, Overseas aid 507-8w
Parliamentary questions 293-4w
Tarmac Construction, Derbyshire 146w
Zoological Society of London, Disclosure of information 226w
Zoos, EC countries 226w

Barnes, Mrs Rosie
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 441

Barnsley
62w
Family doctors 82w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 826-7, 834-5, 852-6, 858-9, 862-3, 866-7, 871
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 913
Questions
Combined heat & power, Government buildings 218w

Barrow in Furness
Railway network 761

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 591-2
Questions
Bees, Import controls 64w
Trades Union Congress, Economic policy 565

BATNEEC
66w

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 462
Questions
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 238w
Fish, Imports 557w
Hospital waiting lists, Bradford 156
Prisoners' transfers, Complaints 6w
Regional arts boards, Yorkshire & Humberside 8w
Unemployment benefits, Part-time employment 541-2w

BBC
131-2w, 375-6w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 780
Questions
British Petroleum 899

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Questions
VAT, Inflation 557-8

Bedding
Fires 206-8w

Beef
Food contamination 143w
Food imports 476-8w
Hormone treatments 476-8w
Intervention prices 476w
Republic of Ireland 143w

Bees
Import controls 64w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 443
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 134w
NHS trusts 152
Northern Ireland Electricity, Consultants 581-2w
Northern Ireland Electricity, Privatisation 582w
Obstetrics, Belfast 198-9w
Teachers, Career structure 404w
University teachers, Pay settlements 588w

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 863, 868
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 906
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 523, 528, 538-9
Questions
A1, Road works 450w
Charities 242-3w
Economic & Social Committee, Public appointments 518-9w
Fire services, Scotland 408
Unemployment 562

Belfast
167w
Obstetrics 198-9w

Belfast City Hospital
198w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 955-6, 962, 1013, 1019-20, 1025, 1043-5

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1029
Questions
Crime prevention, Housing estates 1193-4
Iraq, War crimes 1082
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 455w

Bellotti, Mr David
Questions
Hedgehogs, Export of live animals 389-90w
VAT, Secondhand goods 273w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
Occupational pensions, Sex discrimination 466-7w

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Antarctic (26:04:91) 1402
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 824-5, 827-8, 837-8

Benn, Rt Hon Tony—continued
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 426

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Questions
Channel tunnel, Greater Manchester 350w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 66w, 144-5w
Hospital safety, Stockport 151w
Lord Chief Justice, Pay 289w
Pensioners, Low incomes 5
Police custody, Greater Manchester 559-60w
St Thomas More School Denton, Curriculum 438w

Bennett, Mr Nicholas, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 271
Questions
Children in care, Homelessness 36w
Community councils, Local government reform 37w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Wales 34w
Drugs, Waste disposal 407-8w
Haemophilia, Factor VIII 538w
Housing construction, Wales 324w
Land pollution, Wales 275-6w
Lead pipes, Wales 275w
National Rivers Authority, Wales 275w
Outdoor recreation, Safety 225w
Prince of Wales' Hospital Cardiff, Hospital closures 276w
Rent officers, Wales 182w, 223-4w
Surgery, Wales 35w
Water supply, Lead 275w

Benzene
Air pollution 435-6w
Petrol 390w
Water pollution 490-1w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
Tootal Group, Takeovers 27w

Billing
Small businesses 282w
Water supply industry 359w

Biology
Curriculum 505w

Bird scarers
Codes of practice 436w

Birds
Special protection areas 145w

Birmingham
City action teams 217w
Inner cities initiative 589w

Birmingham Polytechnic
Pay 587w

Birmingham Six
289w, 766-7, 1196-7, 1201

Blackburn
62w

Blackpool
Family credit 3

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 26
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 231-2w
EC integration, Intergovernmental conference 231w
Kurdistan, Refugee camps 567
South Africa, Economic sanctions 1083

Blood
Blood transfusion services 247-9w

Blood alcohol levels
523w

Blood tests
Cholesterol 474w

Blood transfusion services
Blood 247-9w
Scotland 248-9w

Blue ear pig disease
554w

Blunkett, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 917
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 539-40
Questions
Council tax 896
Local government services, Advisory services 265w, 357w
Public transport, Privatisation 393-4w
Urban programme 62w

Blyth Valley
Child abuse 443-4w
Community charge 4w
Criminal statistics 445w
Income support 88-9w
Motor vehicle theft 445w
Youth training 365w

Boateng, Mr Paul
Questions
Child benefit 564-5

Body, Sir Richard
Debates etc.
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1370-4, 1379-81
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1339, 1346-7, 1351, 1359, 1362, 1365
Questions
Children in care 76-7w

Bolton
62w

Bomb disposal
Kuwait 102-3w, 257-8w

Bombs
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 103w

Books
Cost per pupil 438w

Border security in Ireland
Road traffic control 88w

Borders region
Public sector housing sales 119-22w, 618w

Boscawen, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 639-40

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 713-5, 723
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 52, 57
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 135
Questions
Airports, Property development 581w
Building societies, Taxation 9-11w, 300-1w
Coroners, Disclosure of information 560w
Drinking & driving, Advertising 350w
Drinking & driving, Death 475-6w
Drinking & driving, Disclosure of information 350-1w
Drinking & driving, Scotland 336w
Driving offences, Northern Ireland 371w
Evening Standard 306w
Headteachers, Recruitment 307w, 586w
Inland Revenue, Judicial review 301w
Judicial review 433w
Local government borrowing, Interest rates 387w

Bottomley, Mr Peter—continued
Overseas aid 205w, 576w
Road safety, EC action 416-7w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings, Tax administration 301w, 591w
Table Office, House of Commons accommodation 586w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 767
Times, Parliamentary Press Gallery 537w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia, Minister of State, Department of Health
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 510-7
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1393-4
Smoking, Health hazards (23:04:91) 1067-70
Questions
Adoption 283w
Adoption, Romania 233w
Advertising, Dept of Health 516-7w
AIDS, Health education 82-3w
Breast cancer, Screening 342w
Cancer Services Advisory Committee 395-6w
Chewing gum, Nicotine 150w
Children in care 76-7w
Children in care, Homelessness 80w
Community care 145-6
Community care, Kent 145
Community care, Voluntary organisations 146
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 516w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Costs 81-2w
District health authorities, Devon 153
Divorce, Marriage guidance 147w
Drugs, Prices 79w
Drugs, Waste disposal 233-4w
Family doctors, Barnsley 82w
Family doctors, Budgeting 78w, 150w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 343w
Health authorities, Conflict of interests 83-4w
Health authorities, Public appointments 344w
Hearing therapists 344w
Heart diseases, Health education 153-4
Hospital admissions 514-5w
Hospital waiting lists 146-7w, 204w
Hospital waiting lists, Haringey 78-9w
King's College Hospital, Abortion 396w
Medical students, Patients 234w
National Health Service & Community Care Act 1990, Administrative costs 147w
NHS administration, Administrative costs 147w
NHS internal market, Hospital admissions 399-400w
NHS reform 396w
NHS trusts 148w
NHS trusts, Coventry 148w
Northwick Park Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 147-8
Nurses, Career structure 79w
Nurses, Pay 396w
Nurses, Prescriptions 576w
Nurses' training 515w
Optical charges, Eye tests 156-7
Optical charges, Pensioners 156
Optical charges, Spectacles 517w
Opticians, Manpower 517w
Perinatal mortality 401w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 79-80w
Prescription charges 149w
Prescription charges exemptions 149w
Public relations, Dept of Health 575w
Speech therapists, Manpower 77-8w
Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee, Public appointments 203w
Sterilisation 517w
Sterilisation, Costs 81w
Sterilisation, District health authorities 80w
Sterilisation, Research 80-1w

Bovine somatotropin
Licensing 478w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
Northern Ireland 371w
Slaughterhouses 41-2w
Veterinary services 477w
Wales 410w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Community care, Fees & charges 345w
Home annuities 23w
Long stay patients, Social security benefits 328w
Tax allowances, Home annuities 23w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 757-8

Bowis, Mr John
Debates etc.
Funerals (22:04:91) 790, 794-5
River Safety Bill, 1R (17:04:91) 447-9
Questions
Arts finance, London boroughs grants scheme 13-4
Arts finance, Regional arts boards 463-5w
Economic situation 159
Israel, Occupied territories 186-7w
London assessment studies, Public transport 346w
Passive smoking, Health hazards 283w
Pensioners, Personal income 90w
School administration, Budgeting 323w
Visas 178-80w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Questions
AWE Aldermaston, Building repairs 276-7w

Bradford
City technology colleges 887-8
Hospital waiting lists 156
NHS trusts 146-7, (24:04:91) 1184-90
Training & enterprise councils 509w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 478-81, 515

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Questions
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 89-90w

Bramble, Nigel
Special education 287w

Brand, John
1196-7

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 835-7, 840, 842, 845, 851
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 915
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 435
Questions
Electricity supply industry, Immingham 28w, 53w
Prescription charges exemptions 149w
Tootal Group, Takeovers 304w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 176, 178, 184-91, 194, 202-3
Questions
Science & technology research, Research finance 884

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1139, 1143-4
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 578
Questions
Census of population, Northern Ireland 173w

Brazier, Mr Julian—continued
Divorce, Legal costs 584-5w
Family conciliation services, Finance 583w

Brazil
Human rights 288w

Breast cancer
Cumbria 342w
Scotland 122w
Screening 122w, 342w

Breathing apparatus
Fire services 209w, 373w

Brewing industry
Public houses 480w

Bridges
River Severn 214-5w
Shipping accidents 419-20w

Bridlington
237w

British Aerospace
Defence contracts 104w
Prosecutions 368w

British Coal Corporation
(22:04:91) 819-72

British dependent territories
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 287w

British Fluoridation Society
Government grants to voluntary organisations 285w

British Gas
222w
Upper Waiting Hall 53w

British Nuclear Fuels
497w

British Overseas Trade Board
597w

British Petroleum
899

British Rail
2w, 757-8, 762-3
Channel tunnel 347-8w
Nationalised industries borrowing 133w
Pay settlements 757
Privatisation 347w, 756-7, 763-5
Procurement 347w
Share option scheme 756-7

British Railways (No 3) Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

British Steel Corporation
Trade & Industry Select Committee 338w

British Technology Group
Privatisation (16:04:91) 167-211, 381

British Technology Group Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (16:04:91) 167-211, 381

British Telecom
Government shareholding 471w

Broadcasting
Departmental responsibilities 408-9w
Wales 408-9w

Broadcasting Act 1990
Questions
178w

Broadcasting controls
Sports 178w

Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(24:04:91) 1149-82

Bromley Health Authority
(25:04:91) 1313-20

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 683, 687-90, 696, 701-3, 709-10, 712, 721-2
Questions
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991, Government grants to local authorities 183-4w
Economic policy 568
Nurses, Prescriptions 576w
Waltham Toll Bar school, Grant maintained schools 893-4

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service 765
Income tax, Tax burden 13-4w
Personal taxation 14-20w
Tax avoidance, Trusts 592w

Brown, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 581
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 940
Questions
Business statements 1215
Higher education admission, Scotland 407

Bruce, Mr Ian
Questions
Civil servants, Dorset 142w
Corporation tax, EC countries 238w
Kidney machines, Wessex Regional Health Authority 283-4w
Kidney patients, Wessex Regional Health Authority 284w
Kidneys, Transplant surgery 284w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 932
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1386-7
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1010-1
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 121-2, 129-32
Questions
NHS trusts, Grampian 411
Training, Scotland 195w

Brucellosis
181w

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Questions
Capital value rating, Scotland 406
Fish conservation, Scotland 195w

Buckley, Mr George J
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 829

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 31
Questions
Kurdistan, Iraq 1076

Budget March 1991
582-4w

Budgeting
Family doctors 78w, 148-9, 150w, 248w
School administration 137w, 323w

Building alterations
RAF Edzell 103w

Building Conversion & Energy Conservation Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Building industry
PAYE 384w

Building repairs
Armed forces housing 302-3w
AWE Aldermaston 276-7w

Building repairs—continued
Government buildings 226w
Public sector housing 491w

Building societies
Taxation 9-11w, 300-1w

Burglar alarms
Cars 1202

Burglary
Leyton 446w

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Funerals (22:04:91) 789, 801
Questions
Chelmsford bypass, Litter 450w
Chelmsford bypass, Road works 450w
Crown lands & estates, Rates & rating 471-2w
Liverpool street-Chelmsford line, Railway travel 762
M12, Road construction 450w
Water supply, Chelmsford 436w

Burt, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 486-8
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 438-9
Questions
Adoption, Romania 233w
British Gas, Upper Waiting Hall 53w
Driving instruction 355w
European Parliament 1077-8
Nurses, Career structure 79w
Social security benefits 90w

Bus services
Greater London 347w

Business
Information services 31w

Business motions
(15:04:91) 139, (26:04:91) 1395

Business questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (18:04:91) 586, 590, 596, 597, (25:04:91) 1215

Business statements
(18:04:91) 584-98, 1209-22

Butler, Mr Chris
Questions
Air pollution monitoring 435-6w
Benzene, Petrol 390w
Benzene, Water pollution 490-1w
Car tax 589w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 753
Charity Commission, Public appointments 5w
Child Support Agency, Manpower 9-10
Exhaust emissions, Carcinogens 570w
Hydrocarbon oil duties, EC action 590-1w
Hydrocarbon oil duties, Petrol 272-3w
Kidney patients, Health services 473-4w
Passive smoking, Death 473w
Primary education, School administration 405w
Prisoners, Drug abuse 534w
South Africa, Overseas aid 769-70

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 428
National Health Service (17:04:91) 455, 491-3
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1379
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1362
Questions
British Fluoridation Society, Government grants to voluntary organisations 285w
Exchange rate mechanism 555

By election writs
Monmouth (23:04:91) 883

Cabinet Office
Government buildings 519w
Privatisation 442w
Public relations 577w

Cabora, Mr Richard
Questions
South Africa, Human rights 52w
South Africa, Political prisoners 51w
South Africa, Political refugees 52w
South Africa, UN General Assembly 51-2w

Calcutt inquiry
see Colin Wallace Dismissal from Civil Service Inquiry

Calling of Members
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:04:91) 34, 39, (16:04:91) 243, (17:04:91) 422, 429, 432, (18:04:91) 573, (22:04:91) 757, 758, (23:04:91) 891, 892, 999

Cambodia
455w

Cambridge Regional College
Construction 322w
Debts 322w
Property transfer 321-2w
Student accommodation 322w

Camp Hill Prison
1197

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1093-4, 1097-8, 1105, 1112-3, 1121-3, 1128, 1142-3
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 574
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 23-4
Legal aid scheme, Scotland (16:04:91) 382, 385-6, 388-9, 391
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 939
Questions
Business statements 1211-2
Industrial development, Fife 197w
Whales, Nature conservation 431-2w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 989
Questions
Child abuse, Blyth Valley 443-4w
Community charge, Non-payment 4w
Criminal statistics, Blyth Valley 445w
Dental services 204w
Employment training, Northumberland 189w
Hospital waiting lists 146-7w, 204w
Income support, Blyth Valley 88-9w
National income 243w
Pay, Northumberland 585-6w
Youth training, Blyth Valley 365w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 596-7
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 573
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 24-5, 27
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 782-3
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 915
Questions
Business statements 1220
Iraq, Overseas aid 579w
Iraq, Refugees 578-9w
Kurdistan, Iraq 1082
NHS, Northern region 146w
Official engagements 579-80w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 780
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 935
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1268-70
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 126-8
Questions

Canavan, Mr Dennis—continued
Cancer, Scotland 267-8w, 548w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 197-8w
Kurdistan, Overseas aid 768-9
Opencast mining, Scotland 341-2w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 266w
Scottish Assembly 404

Cancer
Scotland 267-8w, 548w

Cancer hazards
Dentures 574w

Cancer Services Advisory Committee
395-6w

Capital
Scottish health boards 160w

Capital allowances
560

Capital value rating
Scotland 405-6

Car tax
589w

Carbon monoxide
104w

Carcinogens
Exhaust emissions 570w

Cardiff
Dept of Social Security local offices 100w
Social Security Commissioners 289w

Cardiff Bay barrage
(16:04:91) 212-380

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL) 1988/89
Debates etc.
Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 212-380

Career breaks
Employment training 421w

Career structure
Nurses 79w
Teachers 263w, 404w

Carers
Community care 250w
Social security benefits 235w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 172, 182-4, 195, 197
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 602-4, 606-7, 614, 636, 647-9
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 926
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, Vacancies 584w
Foxes, Pest control 604w
Montgomeryshire, Ministers' domestic visits 604w
Restrictive trade practices, Newspaper press 596-7w
Roads, Wales 578w
Welshpool bypass, Road construction 578w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
Physical education, Cricket 401w
South Africa 453w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 1085

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1102-11, 1131-4, 1136-9
Questions
Armed forces housing, Building repairs 302-3w
AWE Aldermaston, Building repairs 276-7w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth—continued
Kuwait, Air pollution 102-3w
Radio frequency radiation, Defence research 104-5w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Ministry of Defence 571w

Carnon Consolidated
305-6w

Carr, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 916
Questions
Tootal Group, Company finance 28w
Tootal Group, Takeovers 27-8w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Questions
European Development Bank, UK contributions 770
Health services 474w
London Underground, Crimes of violence 349w
Medical research 474-5w
Sudan, Overseas aid 53w

Cars
Balance of trade 596w
Burglar alarms 1202
EC internal trade 598w
Energy consumption 1-2w
Prices 598w
Speed governors 450w

Carstairs Hospital
Mental patients 130w

Carttiss, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1030-1

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 909-10
Questions
Arms control 1073
Cars, Energy consumption 1-2w
CFE Treaty 456w
Sunday trading, Employment protection 1194-5

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 578
Questions
Nicaragua, Ministers' visits abroad 456w

Castle Court Belfast
Civil service dispersal 167-9w

Castlereagh
City action teams 167w

Cattewater Reclamation Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

Cattle
Clenbuterol 558w
EC external trade 478w

Census of population
Northern Ireland 173w

Central institutions
124-6w

Central Office of Information
Privatisation 470w

Central Statistical Office
11-2w, 589-90w

CFE Treaty
456w
Arms trade 488w
USSR 487w

Chalker, Rt Hon Lynda, Minister for Overseas Development
Debates etc.
Iraq, Ministerial statements (22:04:91) 773-86

Chalker, Rt Hon Lynda—continued
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 769
Africa, EC aid 188w
Africa, Famine 299w
Africa, Food aid from UK 188w
Commonwealth 287w
Commonwealth, Agricultural production 299w
Developing countries, Agricultural production 228w
Developing countries, Debts 769
Eastern Europe, Pollution control 770-1
Environment, International conferences 228-9w, 299-300w
Ethiopia, Overseas aid 229w
European Development Bank, UK contributions 770
Government buildings, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 506w
Group of Seven, Environment protection 508w
Honduras, Overseas aid 139w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 52w
Iraq, Overseas aid 268-9w, 579w
Iraq, Refugees 578-9w
Kurdistan, Foreign aid 768
Kurdistan, Overseas aid 507-8w, 768-9
Libyan Arab Republic, Pest control 432w
Myanmar, Overseas aid 771-2
Nigeria, Overseas aid 297-9w
Non-governmental organisations, Government grants 507w
Official engagements 579-80w
Overseas aid 580-1w
Overseas aid, Middle East 299w
South Africa, Apartheid 454w
South Africa, Foreign policy 522w
South Africa, Human rights 52w
South Africa, Overseas aid 769-70
South Africa, Political prisoners 51w
South Africa, Political refugees 52w
South Africa, Refugees 413w
South Africa, UN General Assembly 51-2w
Sudan, Overseas aid 53w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Middle East 139w

Challenger tanks
486-7w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 537w

Chancellor of the Exchequer

Channel Three
(24:04:91) 1149-82

Channel tunnel
British Rail 347-8w
Fire services 209-10w
Greater Manchester 350w
Railway network 2w, 450w, 525w, 753, 757-60
Railway signals 759
Railway stations 350w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 909

Charitable donations
Tax allowances 556-7

Charities
242-3w
Alcoholism 428w
Scotland 428w
VAT 241-2w, 556-7

Charity Commission
Public appointments 5w

Chelmsford
Water supply 436w

Chelmsford bypass
Litter 450w
Road works 450w

Chemical weapons
Iraq 136w
Libyan Arab Republic 110w

Chemicals
Medical treatments 398w

Chemists shops
Smoking 150w

Chernobyl
Nuclear accidents 519-20w, 528w, 540w, 547w, 557-8w, 568w, 621-2w

Chewing gum
Nicotine 150w

Chieftain tanks
572w

Child abuse
Admissibility of evidence 619w
Blyth Valley 443-4w
Children in care 423-4w
Criminal proceedings 618-9w
Northumberland 443-4w
Renfrew 618w
Scotland 337w, 618-9w

Child benefit
326-7w, 564-5
Social security benefits rates 2-3, 238w
Social security benefits uprating 12

Child care
EC countries 269w

Child dependency additions
191-2w

Child patients
Education 506w
Greater London 506w

Child support
Social security benefits uprating 191-2w

Child Support Agency
11
Manpower 9-10

Child workers
886-7

Children
Dental health 472-3w
Maintenance 11
Railway property 266-7w
Vaccination 343w

Children Act 1989
Questions
76-7w

Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 676-723

Children in care
76-7w
Child abuse 423-4w
Homelessness 36w, 80w, 159-60w
Orkney 268w
Scotland 159-60w, 423-4w
Wales 36w
Young offenders 373w

Children's panels
427w
Orkney 254w

Chile
Official visits 40w
Overseas trade 40w

Chilver Committee
see Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay

China
Human rights 187w
Ministers' visits abroad 111-2w, 188w
Religious freedom 187-8w, 412w

Chlorofluorocarbons
Refrigerators 304w

Cholesterol
282-3w
Blood tests 474w

Chope, Mr Christopher, Under-Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1340
Questions
A1, Road works 450w
A2, Road works 349-50w
A13, Road works 351-2w, 525-6w
A14, Contracts 214w
A19, Lighting 176w
A19, Road accidents 175w
A38, Road works 527-8w
A65, Road accidents 570w
A65, Road works 569w
A66, Road works 351-2w
A69, Road works 761-2
A303, Speed limits 754-5
Archway Road, Government buildings 214w
Cars, Energy consumption 1-2w
Chelmsford bypass, Litter 450w
Chelmsford bypass, Road works 450w
Clifton bypass, Road construction 525w
Cycling, Greater London 214w
Drinking & driving, Advertising 350w
Drinking & driving, Death 523w
Drinking & driving, Driving instruction 523-4w
Driving instruction 355w
Driving licences, Age 354w
Driving licences, Organ donor cards 524w
Environmental impact assessment, EC law 352w
Exhaust emissions, Carcinogens 570w
Exhaust emissions, Complaints 419w
Exhaust emissions, Motor vehicle testing 522-3w
Highway code 355w
London assessment studies, Costs 346-7w
Lorry drivers, Driving licences 175w
M1, Road signs 214w
M6, Road works 522w
M11, Road construction 416w
M12, Road construction 450w
M20, Road construction 355-6w
M62, Road safety barriers 522w
M65, Road construction 524w
M66, Road construction 354w
Motor vehicle safety, Glass 213w
Motor vehicle testing 526-7w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 211-2w
Motorways 345w
Motorways, East coast 350w
Motorways, Lighting 213w, 348-9w
Motorways, Road accidents 526w
MVA Consultancy, Road traffic 4w
North Devon link road, Road signs 523w
Orbital roads, Greater London 347w
Pelican crossings, Kibworth Harcourt 176w
Private roads 415-6w
Road construction, Land acquisition 416w
Road construction, North Devon 346w
Road construction, Public inquiries 3w
Road construction, Sites of special scientific interest 3w
Road safety, EC action 416-7w
Road safety, EC law 449w
Road tolls 352-4w
Road tolls, Road traffic 528w
Roads, Pennines 451w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Transport 354w
Severn bridge, Operating costs 2-3w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 2w, 214-5w, 355w
Speed governors, Cars 450w
Speed governors, EC action 571w
Speed governors, Lorries 175w, 571w
Speed limits, Harmonisation of legislation 570w
Trunk Road Assessment Advisory Committee, Environmental impact assessment 353w

Chope, Mr Christopher*—*continued
Wheel clamps, Private sector 524w

Christianity
Sudan 413w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 577
Questions
Kurdistan, Oppression 158-9
Railway property, Children 266-7w
Youth training, Finance 190w

Citizen's charter
762

City-action teams
Birmingham 217w
Castlereagh 167w
Housing estates 167w

City & Hackney Health Authority
Ethnic monitoring 395w

City of London
Heliports 63w

City of Westminster
Community charge 54w

City technology colleges
ADT 176-7w, 589w
Bradford 887-8
Haberdashers' Aske's School 321w, 440-1w
Wandsworth 176-7w, 589w

Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(17:04:91) 446

Civil Aviation Authority
451w

Civil Jurisdiction & Judgments Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R* (15:04:91) 139

Civil Justice Review
494w

Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(16:04:91) 382-92

Civil proceedings
Community charge 358w

Civil servants
Advisory services 18-9
Dorset 142w
Drug abuse 18-20

Civil servants' visits abroad
Gulf states 18
Occupational health 18

Civil service
EC nationals 39w
Pay 39w
Performance related pay 20-1w

Civil service agencies
37-9w
Agricultural Scientific Services 160w
Dept of Health 204w
Dept of Transport 1w
Fire Service College 132-3w
Privatisation 39w
Service Children's Education Authority 380-1w
Social security benefits 7-8

Civil Service Appeal Board
Ministry of Defence 595w

Civil service dispersal
Castle Court Belfast 167-9w

Civil service manpower
Dept of Social Security local offices 89w
Greater London 21w

Civil service manpower*—*continued
Northern Ireland 202-4w
Political refugees 566w
Public relations 565w, 571-2w, 575-7w, 583-4w, 589w, 592w, 599w, 603w, 620w

Civil Service Occupational Health Service
18

Civil service redundancies
Customs & Excise 88w

Clark, Rt Hon Alan, Minister of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1092
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1287-8
Questions
Armed forces civilians, Manpower 379w
Arms trade, Armed forces 529w
Arms trade, India 487w
Arms trade, Trade fairs 484w
Computers in government departments, Ministry of Defence 484w
Defence equipment, North Atlantic Assembly 486w
Defence procurement, Defence review 486w
Direct fire weapons effect system, Defence procurement 485-6w
Explosives, Defence procurement 104w
International Military Services, Arms exports 104w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence procurement 379w
Over-the-horizon radar 573w
Royal Ordnance, Heckler & Koch 379-80w
Tanks, Defence procurement 277w, 303w, 486-7w, 572w
Tanks, USA 531w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 610-8, 660-1, 663
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Slaughterhouses 41-2w
Environmental health officers, Scotland 340w
Forestry Commission, Public appointments 549-51w
Milk, Prices 359w
Radioactive fallout, Farms 528w, 540w, 547w, 557w
Radioactive fallout, Land pollution 557w

Clark, Rt Hon Sir William
Questions
National income 555

Clarke, Gerald
Hunger strikes 475w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for Education & Science
Debates etc.
School Teachers' Pay & Conditions (No 2) Bill, 1R (19:04:91) 675
Teachers, Ministerial statement (17:04:91) 433-46
Questions
City technology colleges, Bradford 887-8
City technology colleges, Wandsworth 176-7w, 589w
Educational institutions, Ministers' domestic visits 216w
Further education, Scotland 890
Further education colleges 889-90
Further education colleges, Educational finance 889-90
Grammar schools 401w
Grant maintained schools 402w, 894-5
Grant maintained schools, Taunton 893-4
Polytechnics, Educational finance 890-1
Waltham Toll Bar School, Grant maintained schools 893-4

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.

Clarke, Mr Tom*—*continued
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 936
National Health Service (17:04:91) 462-3, 483-5, 516
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 123
Questions
Community care, Scotland 402
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 3-4, 516w, 519w
Film industry 31w
South Africa, Apartheid 433-4w

Clarke Committee
see NHS Policy Board

Cleaning services
Roads 4w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Business statements 1220
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence procurement 379w
Tanks, Defence procurement 277w, 303w, 486-7w, 572w
Tanks, USA 531w

Clenbuterol
Cattle 558w
Northern Ireland 527-9w

Cleveland
Family doctors 343w

Clifton bypass
Road construction 525w

Climate
Plankton 492w

Closed circuit television
Courts 545w
Offences against children 545w

Closure of debate
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 248, 329, 360, 367

Clothing industry
Easington 157w, 303w
Redundancy 157w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 36-8
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 431-2, (22:04:91) 775-6
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 769
Iraq, Overseas aid 268-9w
Thailand, Democracy 412w

Clydesdale
338-9w

Coal Imports Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741, (26:04:91) 1396

Coal mining
Subsidence (22:04:91) 819-72

Coal Mining Subsidence Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (22:04:91) 819-72

Coastal protection
363w
Finance 362-3w
Norfolk 363w
Strangford Lough 167w

Coats Viyella
27-8w, 304w
Company finance 28w

Codes of practice
Animal experiments 4w
Bird scarers 436w
National Cattle Breeders' Association 476-7w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 911-2
London Ambulance Service (18:04:91) 670
Private Members' Bills, Point of order (19:04:91) 741-2
Questions
A13, Road works 352w
Air force, Kurdistan 529w
Armed forces, Mental health services 484w
Arms trade, Trade fairs 484w
Burglary, Leyton 446w
Business statements 1220
Community charge, Civil proceedings 358w
Computers in government departments, Computer software 270w
Deportation, Departmental forms 445w
Ethiopia, Overseas aid 229w
Evidence, Local authorities 433w
Fire services, Breathing apparatus 373w
Fire services, Greater London 443w
Fire services, Privatisation 372w
Fire services, Underground railways 373w
Glass, Safety standards 144w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 530w
Jubilee line, Government grants 353w
London Regional Transport, Finance 349w
M11, Road construction 416w
Motor vehicle safety, Glass 213w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 40-1w, 211-2w
National Rivers Authority, Surveys 434w
NHS reform 396w
Overseas trade, Somalia 272w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 529w
Road construction, Land acquisition 416w
Road tolls 352-4w
Terrorism, Public buildings 63w
Terrorism, Railway stations 212-3w

Coinage
Vending machines 559

Coke
Air pollution 306w, 357w

Cold weather payments
Northern Ireland 174w
Social security claims 174w

Coleraine
169-70w

Colin Wallace Dismissal from Civil Service Inquiry
256w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Water Requirements (Planning) Bill, 2R adjourned (19:04:91) 737-8
Questions
Hampshire Constabulary, Computer applications 1203-4
London City Airport 61w
PSA Services, Privatisation 434w
Public Order Act 1986, Trespass 5w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 307-8w
South Africa 453w

Combined heat & power
Government buildings 218w

Committee stage
Speaker's rulings & statements (26:04:91) 1396-7

Common agricultural policy
(18:04:91) 599-665, 1204-5
Agricultural subsidies 553w
East Germany 477w
EC budget 553w
Environment protection 555w

Common farm prices
181w

Commonwealth
287w
Agricultural production 299w

Commonwealth—continued
Visas 209w, 291w

Community care
145-6
Carers 250w
Family doctors 459-60w
Fees & charges 345w
Kent 145
Scotland 250w, 401-2, 459-60w
Voluntary organisations 146
Wales 479w

Community charge
569, 899-900
Administrative costs 184w
Arts finance 8w
Blyth Valley 4w
City of Westminster 54w
Civil proceedings 358w
Costs 54w
Government grants to local authorities 163w, 276w
Lambeth 265w
Local government revenue 53w
Members' correspondence 182w
Newport Gwent 34-6w
Non-payment 4w, 7w
Pensioners 184-5w
Prison sentences 7w
Public order policing 5w
Scotland 162-3w, 193-5w, 197w, 411-2
Transitional relief 163w
Wandsworth 54w

Community charge benefits
53w
Easington 326w
Gateshead 543w
Social security benefits rules 543w

Community charge capping
900

Community charge exemptions
Armed forces (16:04:91) 164

Community charge grant
183-4w
Scotland 255-6w

Community charge reduction scheme
34-6w, 54w, 146w, 184-5w, (17:04:91) 523-44, 898
Leicestershire 56w
Rates & rating 146w

Community charge register
Scotland 163w

Community charge review
Scotland 194w

Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991
Questions
184-5w
Government grants to local authorities 183-4w

Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill 1990/91
Questions
Standard community charge 35w

Community education
124-6w

Community relations
Northern Ireland 200-1w
Ulster People's College 165-6w

Community service orders
532w

Commuters
Greater London 762

Companies Act 1989
Questions
222w

Company accounts
25w

Company cars
National insurance contributions (25:04:91) 1222

Company finance
Coats Viyella 28w
Tootal Group 28w

Company liquidations
Directors 138w
Greater London 504w
Interest rates 562-3
Rendering industry 554w
Slaughterhouses 476w
Subsidiary companies 28w

Complaints
Exhaust emissions 419w
Prisoners' transfers 6w

Compulsorily detained mental patients
Scotland (17:04:91) 446, (26:04:91) 1395

Compulsory purchase
Agricultural land 489w

Computer applications
Hampshire Constabulary 1203-4

Computer software
Computers in government departments 270w

Computers in government departments
Computer software 270w
Ministry of Defence 484w
Social security benefits 9, 600w

Concrete batching plants
Planning permission 185w

Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe
see European Security Conference

Confessions
Convictions 532w

Conflict of interests
Health authorities 83-4w

Conifers
Pennines 391w

Consultants
Northern Ireland Electricity 581-2w

Consumer councils
Public appointments 29-30w

Consumer credit
Debts 28-30w

Consumer expenditure
469-70w

Consumer goods
Imports 503-4w

Consumer protection
Package holidays 27w

Contingencies Fund
(19:04:91) 675

Contraceptives
Costs 81w

Contractorisation
(24:04:91) 1092-148

Contracts
A14 214w
Alternative energy 498-9w
Kuwait 138w, 253w
NHS trusts 547w

Contracts for services
Argyll & Clyde Health Board 544w
Local government services 493-4w
Police 442w
Scottish health boards 249w
Tayside Health Board 413

Contracts of employment
Dentists 575w
Family doctors 148, 343w

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988
Questions
Mining 279w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
196w, 405-6

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
112w, 389-90w

Convictions
Confessions 532w

Conwy tunnel road scheme
409w

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 450-9, 464, 476, 512
Questions
Dentists, Greater London 152-8w
NHS trusts 152-3
Optical charges, Eye tests 156-7
Prestwich Hospital, Hospital closures 233w
Prestwich Hospital, Planning permission 144w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 423
National Health Service (17:04:91) 494-7
Questions
Educational assessment 403w
Further education, Pay 217w
Hong Kong, Annual reports 600w
Housing construction, Crime prevention 1194
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 1201-2
Student grants, Parental contributions 264w
Turkey, Cyprus 161

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Duration of unemployment 421w
Heart diseases, Health education 153-4
M62, Road safety barriers 522w
Probation, Family conciliation services 373-4w
Probation, Performance indicators 373w
Probation & aftercare, Costs 444-5w
Public sector housing, Building repairs 491w
Social security benefits, Computers in government departments 9

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1151, 1153-8, 1164, 1170, 1174
Questions
Miscarriages of justice 1193

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Antarctic (26:04:91) 1398-403
Coal Imports Bill, 2R order read (19:04:91) 741
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 580
Parish Councils (Access to Information) Bill, 2R order read (19:04:91) 741
Private Members' Bills, Point of order (19:04:91) 742
Trade Descriptions (Animal Testing) Bill, 2R order read (19:04:91) 741
Questions
Archway Road, Government buildings 214w
Armed forces training, Honduras 164w
Defence procurement, Arms control 138w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Finsbury Park 135w
European Social Fund, Training 157w
Friern Barnet Hospital, Hospital closures 151w
Homelessness 186w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy—continued
Honduras, Human rights 139-40w
Honduras, Overseas aid 139w
Honduras, Trade unions 140w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Nuclear reactors 164w
Kurdistan, Political parties 110w
Kurdistan, Refugees 109w
Kuwait, Contracts 138w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, Capital investment 150w
Persian Gulf, Oil pollution 185-6w
Planning permission, Concrete batching plants 185w
Turkey, Cyprus 160-1

Co-responsibility levy
Milk 359w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Questions
Archaeological sites, Law reform 226w

Cornwall
Mining 305-6w

Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority
NHS administration 157

Coroners
Disclosure of information 560w

Corporation tax
238w, 560-2
EC countries 238w, 560
Small businesses 238w
Sports administration 561
Tax yields 472w

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 443w

Cost per pupil
Books 438w
Primary education 407
South Yorkshire 49-50w

Cost per student
Higher education 441w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 915

Council house sales
227w
Harrogate 437w

Council housing
Property transfer 491-2w

Council of Europe
482w

Council of Ministers
107-8w
European Parliament location 111w

Council tax
896-8, (23:04:91) 901-17, 1206
Members' secretaries 1205-6

Council tenants
Property insurance 536w

Country Landowners' Association
603w

Countryside Commission
490w

Countryside stewardship scheme
490w
Nature conservation 490w

Court of Auditors
(18:04:91) 599-665
EC budget (15:04:91) 39

Courts
Closed circuit television 545w

Courts (Research) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 742

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 43-4, 48-9, 78-9, 85-7, 89-90, 101, 105-8
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 914
National Health Service (17:04:91) 497-8
Questions
Arms exports, Export licensing 595w
Low pay, Northern region 366-8w
Perinatal mortality 401w
Science & Engineering Research Council 404w
Tax thresholds, Northern region 302w
Wheal Jane Mine, Government grants 367-8w

Coventry
NHS trusts 148w, 150-1

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Crime, Wandsworth 295-6w
Cyprus, Land ownership & tenure 286w
Cyprus, Turkey 285w
London assessment studies, Costs 346-7w
Mauritius, Deportation 296w
Mauritius, Entry clearances 447w
Mauritius, Immigrants 345w, 447w
Mauritius, Immigration applications 286w
Theft, Wandsworth 295w

Cran, Mr James
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 911
Questions
Motorways 345w
Occupational pensions 91w

Cricket
Physical education 401w

Crime
Wandsworth 295-6w

Crime Concern
1198

Crime prevention
533-4w
Housing construction 1194
Housing estates 1193-4
King's Lynn 1193-4
Motor vehicle theft 40-1w, 211-2w, 1201-3
Norwich 1203
Young people 160, 1198

Crime victims
Departmental publications 210w

Crimes against humanity
Hussein, Saddam 271w

Crimes of violence
London Underground 349w
Mentally disadvantaged 433w

Criminal appeals
Administrative delays 767-8

Criminal injuries compensation
Social security benefits reductions 466w

Criminal investigation
Homicide 374w

Criminal Justice Act 1988
Questions
7w

Criminal Procedure (Insanity & Unfitness to Plead) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (19:04:91) 724-31

Criminal proceedings
Administrative delays 612-4w
Child abuse 618-9w
Homosexuality 535w
Mentally ill (19:04:91) 724-31
Scotland 428w, 606-10w, 612-4w

Criminal statistics
Blyth Valley 445w
Scotland 337w
Strathclyde 604-6w

Crisis loans
236w

Crofters' Commission
Expenditure 115-6w
Manpower 115w

Crofting
Land ownership & tenure 113-4w
Property transfer 114-5w
Scotland 113-7w

Crown lands & estates
Rates & rating 471-2w

Crown Prosecution Service
765
Recruitment 765
Vacancies 584w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Subsidies 305w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1124-8
Business statements (18:04:91) 597
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 214, 217, 288, 295, 298, 379
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 575
NHS trusts, Bradford (24:04:91) 1188-9
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1342-3, 1393, 1398
Oral question time point of order (16:04:91) 147
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1372
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 442
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 126
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security recipients 236w
Business statements 1216
City technology colleges, Bradford 887
Common agricultural policy 1205
Criminal investigation, Homicide 374w
Crisis loans 236w
Factory Inspectorate 68w
Japan, Prisoners of war 110w
Judges, Women 220w
Judiciary, Professional qualifications 220-1w
Leeds Prison, Suicide 566w
NHS trusts, Bradford 146-7
Occupational deafness 377-8w
Prison leave 7w
Rape, Sentencing 209w
Rape, Trials 219w
Whales, Nature conservation 237w

Culloden School
893
Educational standards 406w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 406-7w

Cumbria
Breast cancer 342w
Higher education 403w

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
A19, Lighting 176w
A19, Road accidents 175w
Air pollution, Coke 357w
Books, Cost per pupil 438w
Clothing industry, Easington 303w
Clothing industry, Redundancy 157w
Community charge benefits, Easington 326w
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, Mining 279w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Peterlee 192w

Cummings, Mr John—continued
Drug abuse, Advisory services 396-7w
Durham Prison, Sanitation 445w
East Timor, Human rights 286w
Family doctors, Budgeting 150w
Hard core unemployed, Peterlee 364w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 292w
Kuwait, Human rights 285w
Libraries, Durham 232w
Middle East, Hostages 285w
Occupied territories, Educational institutions 291w
Tourist industry, Northumberland 415w
Turkey, Human rights 291w

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Debates etc.
Funerals (22:04:91) 788-805, 818

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 584-5

Curriculum
Active citizenship 403w
Biology 505w
Religious education 404-5w
St Thomas More School Denton 438w
Shakespeare, William 506w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 33
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 783
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1371-2, 1375, 1387-8
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1330-4, 1355, 1361
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 441
Questions
Balance of trade, Cars 596w
Community charge capping 900
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 587-8w
Employment level, Derbyshire 509w
Foreign investment in UK 591w
Higher civil servants, Women 17
Secondary education, Expenditure 587w
Swimming, Derbyshire 403w

***Curry, Mr David**, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture*
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 556w
Agricultural production 555-6w
Agricultural production, Environment protection 555w
Agricultural subsidies 553w
Agricultural subsidies, Common agricultural policy 553w
Agriculture 476w
Agriculture, Diversification 554w
Agriculture, Water pollution 360w
Baby milks, EC law 478w
Beef, Intervention prices 476w
Bees, Import controls 64w
Cattle, EC external trade 478w
Coastal protection 363w
Coastal protection, Finance 362-3w
Coastal protection, Norfolk 363w
Common agricultural policy, East Germany 477w
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 553w
Common agricultural policy, Environment protection 555w
Common farm prices 181w
EC external trade, Cattle 478w
EC Fisheries Council 362w
Farm & conservation grants scheme 41w
Farmers, Water supply 430w
Farms, Waste disposal 360w
Fish, Imports 557w
Fishing gear, Orders & regulations 604w
Fishing vessels 237w, 362w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 556w

Curry, Mr David—continued
Green rates 554w
Hill livestock allowances, Environmental impact assessment 41w
Irrigation, East Anglia 430-1w
Irrigation, Water conservation 603w
Milk, Agricultural production 42w
Milk, Co-responsibility levy 359w
Potatoes, Plant diseases 552w
Public relations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 603w
River Severn, River pollution 236-7w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 478w
Salmon, Fishing catches 602w
Set-aside schemes 555w
Sheep dipping, Pesticide residues 360-1w
Sugar, EC countries 42-3w
Vegetables, Food imports 41-2w
Whales, EC action 552w
Whales, Japan 551-2w
Whales, Nature conservation 237w, 359-60w, 431-2w, 552w

Custodial treatment
Remission 131w

Customs
EC action (22:04:91) 875

Customs & Excise
Civil service redundancies 88w
Heliports 24w
Northern Ireland 24w, 88w

Cycling
Greater London 214w

Cyprus
Arms trade 229-30w, 285-6w
EC enlargement 229w
Ethnic groups 411w
Land ownership & tenure 286w
Partition 229w
Turkey 160-1, 285w

Dalton-in-Furness bypass
Road construction 760

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1100-1, 1104, 1106-7
Business statements (18:04:91) 597
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 582
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 425, (22:04:91) 783-4
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 939
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1243-5, 1253-4, 1265-6, 1273-5, 1279, 1284, 1288-90, 1291-2, 1302-10, 1311
Questions
Agriculture, Water pollution 360w
Alternative energy 225w
Armed forces, Photographs 102w
Armed forces deployment, Middle East 378w
Arms control negotiations 293w
Business statements 1222
Civil servants' visits abroad, Occupational health 18
Civil Service Appeal Board, Ministry of Defence 595w
Colin Wallace Dismissal from Civil Service Inquiry 256w
Defence equipment, Recycling 104w
Environment protection, Treaties 493w
European Space Agency, UK contributions 51w
Farms, Waste disposal 360w
Fish farming, Pest control 122-3w
HMS Endurance, Decommissioning 102w
Honey, Pesticide residues 360w
Iran, Air pollution 183w
Iraq, Armed conflict 413w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 136w
Iraq, Disaster relief 292-3w
Iraq, Diseases 39-40w

Dalyell, Mr Tam—continued
Iraq, Economic sanctions 766
Iraq, Helicopters 188w, 457w
Iraq, Oppression 135w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Bombs 103w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Costs 558-9
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Religious buildings 113w
Kuwait, Air pollution 65-6w, 102-4w, 106w, 183w, 225-6w, 230w, 256w, 1208
Kuwait, Anaemia 460w
Kuwait, Bomb disposal 102-3w, 257-8w
Kuwait, Contracts 253w
Kuwait, Disease control 196w
Kuwait, Human rights 106-7w, 293w
Kuwait, Oil pollution 106w, 216w, 359w
Kuwait, Refugees 106w
Kuwait, Water pollution 106w
National parks, International conferences 358w
Oil pollution control, Research 405w
Persian Gulf, Ecology 65w
Persian Gulf, Nature conservation 65w
Persian Gulf, Oil pollution 1w, 65w, 183w
Plankton, Climate 492w
Political refugees, Kurdistan 297-8w
Refrigerators, Chlorofluorocarbons 304w
Schools, Technicians 177w
Sudan, Christianity 413w
Teachers, Science education 177w
Trunk Road Assessment Advisory Committee, Environmental impact assessment 353w
Wallace, Colin 219w
Waste disposal, Estuaries 66w

Dangerous Vessels (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(22:04:91) 874-5

Daresbury
Nuclear physics 263w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 939
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1238-41, 1252
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 450w
Community charge, Scotland 194w
Deportation, Middle East 445-6w, 534-5w
Immigration rules, Iraq 374w

Data Protection Registration Fee Order 1991
Debates etc.
(17:04:91) 446

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Questions
Balance of trade, Food 472w
Corporation tax, Tax yields 472w
EC budget repayments 302w
Germany, EC budget 293w
Industrial production, EC countries 304-5w
Local government revenue 514-5w
Motor components industry, Manpower 366w
Public sector debt, Interest charges 302w
Service industries, Pay 302w
VAT, France 302w
VAT, Tax yields 384w
Youth employment, Pay 366w

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Primary health care 150

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 212-3, 215-6, 219, 222, 225-6, 228, 242-3, 246-7, 250, 254-6, 259-60, 270-85, 289, 306, 329, 368, 375-7
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 653-60
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1374-81

Davies, Mr Ron—continued
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1338-9, 1346-7, 1356, 1360, 1362-4
Questions
Alphachloralose, Rodents 271w
Animal experiments, Codes of practice 4w
Animal welfare, Treaty of Rome 430w
Baby milks, EC law 478w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 478w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Veterinary services 477w
Countryside stewardship scheme 490w
Countryside stewardship scheme, Nature conservation 490w
Farm & conservation grants scheme 41w
Hill livestock allowances, Environmental impact assessment 41w
National Cattle Breeders' Association, Codes of practice 476-7w
Salmonella, Surveys 473w
Wild animals, Poisoning 479w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
City action teams, Birmingham 217w
Dental charges exemptions 399w
Dentists, Patients 398-400w
Dentists, Pay 399-400w
Income tax, Tax collection 593w
Income tax, Tax yields 593w
Income tax assessment, Administrative delays 593w
Inner cities initiative, Birmingham 589w

Day, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 473, 477-8
Questions
Drinking & driving, Death 523w

Day surgery
78w, 155-6

Death
Drinking & driving 475-6w, 523w
Passive smoking 473w
Police vehicles 275w, 341w
Prisoners 561-4w
Railway property 266-7w
Smoking 473w

Debt collection
Social Fund 542w

Debts
Cambridge Regional College 322w
Consumer credit 28-30w
Developing countries 769
Nigeria 1075

Defence contracts
British Aerospace 104w

Defence equipment
Air force bases 164w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 483w
North Atlantic Assembly 486w
Recycling 104w

Defence expenditure
Defence review 486w
European Security Conference 486w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 483w

Defence land
379w
Fox hunting 105w

Defence procurement
Arms control 138w
Defence review 486w
Direct fire weapons effect system 485-6w
Explosives 104w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 379w
Tanks 277w, 303w, 486-7w, 572w

Defence research
Radio frequency radiation 104-5w

Defence review
485-6w
Defence expenditure 486w

Defence review—continued
Defence procurement 486w

Defence support agencies
380-1w

Degrees
587w

Democracy
Iraq 1077
Nigeria 1074-5
Thailand 412w

Demolition
Listed buildings 411w

Demonstrations
Trafalgar Square 5w

Dental charges exemptions
399w

Dental health
Children 472-3w
Northern region 472-3w

Dental Rates Study Group
575w

Dental services
204w

Dentists
Contracts of employment 575w
Greater London 152-8w
Patients 398-400w
Pay 399-400w, 575w

Dentures
573-5w
Cancer hazards 574w

Departmental correspondence
Student grants 588w
Taxation 140w

Departmental forms
Deportation 445w

Departmental leaflets
Transport costs 254w

Departmental publications
Crime victims 210w

Departmental responsibilities
Broadcasting 408-9w

Dependants
Social security benefits 95w

Deportation
Departmental forms 445w
Mauritius 296w
Middle East 445-6w, 534-5w

Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries for Scotland
116-7w, 160w

Dept of Education & Science
Advertising 505w
Government buildings 505-6w
Public relations 589w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 404w

Dept of Employment
Advertising 509-10w
Government buildings 510w
Public relations 585w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 365w

Dept of Energy
498w
Advertising 500w
Government buildings 499w
Public relations 620w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 497w

Dept of Health
474w
Advertising 516-7w

Dept of Health*—*continued
Civil service agencies 204w
Government buildings 516w
Public relations 575w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 398w

Dept of Social Security
Advertising 540-1w
Government buildings 541w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 466w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Cardiff 100w
Civil service manpower 89w
Finsbury Park 135w
Greater London 13
Highgate 135w
Peterlee 192w
Seaham 192w

Dept of the Environment
Advertising 492w
Parking offences 64w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 435w

Dept of Transport
3w
Advertising 524-6w
Civil service agencies 1w
Government buildings 525w
Public relations 571w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 354w

Derbyshire
Employment level 509w
Swimming 403w
Tarmac Construction 146w

Developing countries
Agricultural production 228w
Debts 769
Overseas aid 299-300w

Devlin, Mr Tim
Questions
Air force, Job evaluation 483w
Alcoholic drinks, Public order offences 296w
Business statements 1212
Estate Action, Expenditure 357w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 343w
Housing Corporation, Expenditure 266w

Devon
District health authorities 153

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 928-30
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1244
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 117-9, 121-2, 124-5
Questions
Community charge, Government grants to local authorities 163w
Community charge, Scotland 162-3w, 412
Community charge, Transitional relief 163w
Community charge register, Scotland 163w
Drunkenness, Scotland 249-50w, 334-5w
Households, Scotland 161-2w
Housing, Scotland 163-4w
Income support, Scotland 329w
Income support, Social security recipients 89w
Local government expenditure 240-2w
Local government expenditure, Scotland 130w
Local government finance 259-62w
Local government finance, Scotland 19-20w, 245-6w
Local government revenue, Wales 410-2w
Population, Scotland 329-30w
Public expenditure 10w

Dewar, Mr Donald*—*continued
Rate Fund revenue accounts, Scotland 460-3w
Rate support grants, Scotland 194w
Rent rebates, Social security recipients 101w
Sheriffs, Pay 123w
Sheriffs, Scotland 123-4w
Tenants, Scotland 163w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1173, 1178
Business statements (18:04:91) 591
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 695-6
Oral question time intervention (15:04:91) 5
Questions
Birmingham Six 767
Corporation tax 562
NHS trusts 147

Dicks, Mr Terry
Questions
Public service pensions 22w

Diphtheria
343w

Direct fire weapons effect system
Defence procurement 485-6w

Director General of Electricity Supply
498w

Director of Public Prosecutions
766-7
Prosecutions 495w

Directors
Company liquidations 138w

Disability living allowance
236w
Elderly 270w
Social security recipients 10-1

Disability working allowance
Social security recipients 10-1

Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989
Questions
85-6w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
Questions
3-4, 145, 516w, 519w
Costs 81-2w
Wales 34w

Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee
354w

Disabled workers
Employment training 452w

Disablement Advisory Service
157-9w

Disablement schemes
157-9w

Disaster relief
Africa 299w, 769
Iraq 39-40w, 292-3w
Kuwait 292-3w

Discretionary student grants
Expenditure 314-5w

Disease control
Kuwait 196w

Diseases
Iraq 39-40w

"Disposal of Radioactive Waste"
568w

Divorce
Legal costs 584-5w
Marriage guidance 147w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Animal experiments, Public petitions (24:04:91) 1183
Coal Imports Bill, 2R order read (26:04:91) 1396
Parish Councils (Access to Information) Bill, 2R order read (26:04:91) 1396
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1374
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1357, 1366
Trade Descriptions (Animal Testing) Bill, 2R order read (26:04:91) 1396
Young Persons (Alcohol Abuse) Etc Bill, 2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Dobson, Mr Frank
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Education & Science 505w
Advertising, Dept of Employment 509-10w
Advertising, Dept of Energy 500w
Advertising, Dept of Health 516-7w
Advertising, Dept of Social Security 540-1w
Advertising, Dept of the Environment 492w
Advertising, Dept of Transport 524-6w
Advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 520-1w
Advertising, Home Office 535-6w
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 556w
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 531-2w
Advertising, Scottish Office 619w
Advertising, Treasury 593w
Advertising, Welsh Office 538-40w
Electricity consumption 498w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 498w
Gas accidents, Royston 221-2w
Inland Revenue, Heating 513-4w
Lord Chancellor, Next steps initiative 433-4w
Office of Electricity Regulation 501w
Office of Electricity Regulation, Public appointments 500w
Office of Gas Supply, Costs 499w
Office of Gas Supply, Public appointments 499-500w
Privatisation, Cabinet Office 442w
Privatisation, Central Office of Information 470w
Privatisation, Health Education Authority 474w
Privatisation, Prime Minister 520w
Privatisation, Training Agency 511-2w
Public relations, Cabinet Office 577w
Public relations, Dept of Education & Science 589w
Public relations, Dept of Employment 585w
Public relations, Dept of Energy 620w
Public relations, Dept of Health 575w
Public relations, Dept of Transport 571w
Public relations, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 599w
Public relations, Health Education Authority 576w
Public relations, Home Office 565w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor 583-4w
Public relations, Metropolitan Police 563-5w
Public relations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 603w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 572w
Public relations, Prime Minister 577w
Public relations, Treasury 592w

Dock workers
Industrial accidents 451w

Docklands light railway
349w
Railway accidents 527w

Dog whelk
Nature conservation 434w

Dogs
Animal experiments 273-4w

Domestic violence
533w

Doncaster
600w

Doran, Mr Frank
Questions
Railway accidents, Aberdeen 527w

***Dorrell, Mr Stephen**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health*
Debates etc.
London Ambulance Service (18:04:91) 670-4
NHS trusts, Bradford (24:04:91) 1189-90
Optical charges, Eye tests (22:04:91) 879-82
Orpington Hospital (25:04:91) 1316-20
Questions
Abortion 78w
British Fluoridation Society, Government grants to voluntary organisations 285w
Cholesterol 282-3w
Cholesterol, Blood tests 474w
Community care, Fees & charges 345w
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority, NHS administration 157
Dental charges exemptions 399w
Dental health, Children 472-3w
Dentists, Contracts of employment 575w
Dentists, Greater London 152-8w
Dentists, Patients 398-400w
Dentists, Pay 399-400w, 575w
Dentures 573-5w
Dentures, Cancer hazards 574w
District health authorities, Audit 78w, 150w
Drug abuse, Advisory services 396-7w
Electoral register 515-6w
Female circumcision 395w
Friern Barnet Hospital, Hospital closures 151w
Government buildings, Dept of Health 516w
Health services, Ethnic minorities 148-9w
Hearing aids 344w
Hormone treatments, Surveys 81w
Hospital beds, Harrogate Health Authority 400w
Hospital beds, Trent Regional Health Authority 81w
Hospital safety, Stockport 151w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 397-8w
Joint financing, Expenditure 151-2w
Kidney machines, Wessex Regional Health Authority 283-4w
Kidney patients, Health services 473-4w
Kidney patients, Wessex Regional Health Authority 284w
Kidneys, Transplant surgery 284w
Lung cancer, Liverpool 148w
Mauritius, Immigrants 345w
Medical treatments, Chemicals 398w
Mental health community care 149-50w
Mental health community care, Government grants to local authorities 84w
NHS finance 155
NHS trusts 147
NHS trusts, Bradford 146-7
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, Capital investment 150w
Norwich Health Authority, Expenditure 344-5w
Passive smoking, Death 473w
Passive smoking, Health hazards 283w
Patients, Ethnic groups 395w
Prestwich Hospital, Hospital closures 80w, 233w, 397w
Privatisation, Health Education Authority 474w
Psychiatry, Patient-professional relationship 147w

***Dorrell, Mr Stephen**—continued*
Public relations, Health Education Authority 576w
Resource management initiative, Huddersfield Health Authority 149w
Royal Liverpool Hospital, Multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus 395w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Health 398w
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool, Hospital closures 154-5
Salmonella, Surveys 473w
Sickle cell disease, Screening 233w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority 576w
Speech therapy, Expenditure 343w
Vaccination, Children 343w
Wheelchairs, Access to buildings 401w

Dorset
Civil servants 142w

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 429
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 934-5
Questions
Fife Regional Council Child Care Inquiry 429w

***Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James**, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc.
Legal aid scheme, Scotland (16:04:91) 382-4, 387-92
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1251-6, 1261-2, 1266-7, 1273, 1282-4, 1288-90, 1310-1
Questions
Administration of justice, Scotland 409-10
Alcohol & crime, Scotland 336w
Child abuse, Admissibility of evidence 619w
Child abuse, Criminal proceedings 618-9w
Child abuse, Renfrew 618w
Child abuse, Scotland 337w
Courts, Closed circuit television 545w
Criminal proceedings, Administrative delays 612-4w
Criminal proceedings, Scotland 428w, 606-10w
Criminal statistics, Scotland 337w
Criminal statistics, Strathclyde 604-6w
Drinking & driving, Scotland 336w
Drug crimes, Prosecutions 611w
Drug crimes, Strathclyde 605w
Electorate, Scotland 335-6w
Environment protection, Government grants to voluntary organisations 160-1w
Fire services, Scotland 254w, 408
Firearms, Scotland 339-40w
Housing problems, Scotland 196w
Land ownership & tenure, Scotland 119w
Legal profession, Drug crimes 610w
Legal profession, Manpower 605w, 609-12w
Legal profession, Pay 610-1w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 618w
Motor vehicle theft, Strathclyde 605w
Motorways 340w
Opencast mining, Scotland 341-2w
Planning permission, Port Seton 337w
Plea bargaining, Scotland 605-6w
Police vehicles, Death 341w
Prosecutions, Administrative delays 408-9
Prosecutions, Scotland 409
Public sector housing sales, Borders region 119-22w, 618w
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 120-1w, 197w
Quarrying, Scotland 339w
Scottish courts, Glasgow 543w
Sheriffs 543-4w
Strathclyde Police, Manpower 413-4
Tenants' choice, Scotland 120w
Trials, Scotland 606w
Water pollution, Scotland 118w
Water supply, Scotland 418

Dounreay
(25:04:91) 1223-311

Dover, Mr Den
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 65

Dried milk
Jordan 107w

Drinking & driving
375w
Advertising 350w
Death 475-6w, 523w
Disclosure of information 350-1w
Driving instruction 523-4w
Northern Ireland 475-6w
Scotland 336w

Drinking Water Inspectorate
435w

Drinks
Balance of trade 472w

Driving instruction
355w
Drinking & driving 523-4w

Driving licences
Age 354w
Lorry drivers 175w
Organ donor cards 524w

Driving offences
Northern Ireland 371w

Drug abuse
Advisory services 396-7w
Civil servants 18-20
Prisoners 534w

Drug crimes
Glasgow 611w
Legal profession 610w
Prosecutions 611w
Scotland 610w
Stoke Newington 446w
Strathclyde 605w

Drug seizures
446w, 527-9w

Drugs
Patents 32w
Prices 79w
Waste disposal 233-4w, 407-8w

Drunkenness
Scotland 249-50w, 334-5w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Questions
Capital allowances 560
Sunday trading 1195

Dunn, Mr Bob
Questions
Air safety, Smoke hoods 451w
British Telecom, Government shareholding 471w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 758-9
Civil service, EC nationals 39w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Community charge, Scotland 193w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Questions
Biology, Curriculum 505w
Female circumcision 323w, 395w
South Africa, Refugees 413w
West coast railway line 760-1

Durant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1108, 1127, 1138
Questions
Kurdistan, Refugees 157-8

Duration of unemployment
421w

Durham
150w
Libraries 232w
School libraries 438w

Durham Prison
Sanitation 445w

Duty-free allowances
EC internal trade 594w

Duty free shops
594w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Questions
Interest rates 563
Northwick Park Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 147-8
Water resources, Northern Ireland 371w

Dyslexia
(17:04:91) 545-52
Educational assessment 885

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 933
Questions
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 403
Surgery, Lothian Health Board 193w

Early retirement
Higher education 309-11w

Earnings rules
Haemophilia 11
Invalid care allowances 90w

Easington
175-6w
Clothing industry 157w, 303w
Community charge benefits 326w

East Anglia
Irrigation 430-1w
Water conservation 390-1w

East coast
Motorways 350w

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

East Germany
Common agricultural policy 477w

East Lothian
Hospital beds 429w
Hospital staff 604w

East Midlands
Industrial injuries 511w

East Timor
Arms trade 28w
Human rights 286w
Self-determination of states 205-6w

Eastern Europe
EC external trade 478w
Peaceful coexistence 1074
Pollution control 770-1

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Arts finance, Community charge 8w
British Rail, Procurement 347w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 148

EC action
Customs (22:04:91) 875
Energy research 500w
Equal opportunities (16:04:91) 392
Hydrocarbon oil duties 590-1w
Nature conservation 145w
Road safety 416-7w
Speed governors 571w
Transport of animals (16:04:91) 392

EC action—continued
Whales 552w

EC Agriculture Council
107-8w, 181w, 479w

EC aid
Africa 188w

EC budget
Common agricultural policy 553w
Court of Auditors (15:04:91) 39
Germany 293w

EC budget repayments
302w

EC Cons Doc 4549/91
(15:04:91) 39, (18:04:91) 599-665

EC Cons Doc 9908/90
(16:04:91) 392

EC defence policy
231w, 1077

EC Draft 5032/91
(15:04:91) 39, (18:04:91) 599-665

EC Draft 7214/90
(16:04:91) 392

EC Draft 8353/90
(22:04:91) 875

EC enlargement
Cyprus 229w

EC Environment Council
145w

EC external relations
EC integration 1078
Voting methods 1078

EC external trade
Cattle 478w
Eastern Europe 478w

EC Finance Council
107-8w, 140-1w, 553w

EC Fisheries Council
107-8w, 362w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
107-8w, 110w, 231-2w

EC Industry Council
107-8w

EC integration
EC external relations 1078
Intergovernmental conference 231w

EC internal relations
Antarctic 110w

EC internal trade
Cars 598w
Duty free allowances 594w
Harmonisation of legislation 271-2w

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
420w

EC law
454w
Baby milks 478w
Environmental impact assessment 352w
Nitrogen dioxide 356w
Road safety 449w
Special protection areas 145w
Sulphur dioxide 356w
Water pollution 435w

EC nationals
Civil service 39w

EC Research Council
107-8w

EC Transport Council
448-9w

Ecology
Persian Gulf 65w

Economic & monetary union
Intergovernmental conference 140-1w

Economic & Social Committee
Public appointments 518-9w

Economic growth
24-5w

Economic policy
160, 554-5, 568, 896-7, 1206-7
Trades Union Congress 565

Economic sanctions
Iraq 30-1w, 414w, 766
Jordan 107w
South Africa 1083-5

Economic situation
159, 555-6
Economic regions 554
Scotland 562-3

Education
Child patients 506w
Local government expenditure 43-50w
Wales 224w

Education Provision Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741

Education Reform Act 1988 (Application of Section 122 to Institutions in Wales) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(22:04:91) 875

Education support grants
308-9w

Educational assessment
403-4w, 885-6
Costs 113w
Disclosure of information 893
Dyslexia 885
Paisley 459w
Primary education 124w, 884-5, 893
Scotland 113w, (15:04:91) 117-38, 124w, 407-8
Wales 409w

Educational finance
Further education colleges 889-90
Nursery schools 888-9
Polytechnics 890-1
Scotland 118-9w, 252w, 256w
Standard spending assessments 587-8w
Theatre 381w
Ulster People's College 165-6w

Educational institutions
Ministers' domestic visits 216w
Occupied territories 291w

Educational qualifications
Young people 891

Educational standards
Culloden School 406w
Oxford Polytechnic 320w
Secondary education 587w

Eggar, Mr Tim, Minister of State, Dept of Education & Science
Questions
Active citizenship, Curriculum 403w
Adult education, Expenditure 308-9w
Advertising, Dept of Education & Science 505w
Biology, Curriculum 505w
Cambridge Regional College, Construction 322w
Cambridge Regional College, Debts 322w
Cambridge Regional College, Property transfer 321-2w
Cambridge Regional College, Student accommodation 322w
Culloden School 893
Educational assessment 403-4w, 885-6
Educational assessment, Disclosure of information 893
Educational assessment, Dyslexia 885

Eggar, Mr Tim—continued
Educational assessment, Primary education 884-5, 893
Educational qualifications, Young people 891
Evening Standard 306w
Further education, Pay 217w
Further education colleges, Local government property 440w
Geography education, Teaching methods 50-1w
Government buildings, Dept of Education & Science 505-6w
Grant maintained schools 402w
Grant maintained schools, Leicestershire 216w
Grant maintained schools, Shropshire 402w
Haberdashers' Aske's School, City technology colleges 321w, 440-1w
Haberdashers' Aske's School, Ethnic groups 321w
Handicapped students 891
Headteachers, Recruitment 307w, 586w
Nursery schools 889
Nursery schools, Educational finance 888-9
Public relations, Dept of Education & Science 589w
Reading 402-3w
Religious education, Curriculum 404-5w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Education & Science 404w
Shakespeare, William, Curriculum 506w
Teachers, Sick leave 438w

Elderly
Disability living allowance 270w
Local government expenditure 267w

Elections
Palestine 109w

Electoral register
515-6w
Major, John 159

Electorate
Scotland 335-6w

Electricity consumption
498w

Electricity generation
Natural gas 134w

Electricity supply industry
Environment protection 502w
Immingham 28w, 53w
Privatisation 134w, 498w

Electricity tariffs
217w

Eleven plus
Appeals 87w
Northern Ireland 87w

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741, (26:04:91) 1396

Emergency planning
Nuclear accidents 502-3w, 568w, 620-1w

Emergency Planning College
Expenditure 294w
Management 295w
Management consultants 294-5w
Manpower 295w

Emigration
USSR 111w

Employee share ownership trusts
Private companies 382w

Employment by sector
66-8w

Employment level
Derbyshire 509w
Northern Ireland 169-70w
Scotland 413, 567

Employment level—continued
Tayside 413

Employment opportunities
Lanarkshire 193w
Londonderry 169-70w
Northern Ireland 169-74w
Warrington 9-10

Employment protection
Sunday trading 1194-5

Employment schemes
Expenditure 281w

Employment Service
157-9w
Finance 281w
Performance indicators 511w
Unemployment benefits 281w

Employment Service local offices
South Yorkshire 67w
Yorkshire & Humberside 422w

Employment training
280w, 421-2w, 585w
Age 364w
Career breaks 421w
Disabled workers 452w
Finance 451-2w
Greater London 75w
Mentally handicapped 414-5
Northumberland 189w
Scotland 330-4w, 414-6
Special training needs 421w
Travelling expenses 365w
Vocational training 280w

Energy Action Grants Agency
496w

Energy conservation
Publicity 539w
Wales 539w

Energy consumption
Cars 1-2w

Energy research
EC action 500w

Engineering Industry Training Board
(23:04:91) 1055-61

English language
Languages education 897

Enterprise initiative
Scotland 423-4w

Entry clearances
Mauritius 447w
Pakistan 7-8w

Environment
International conferences 228-9w, 299-300w, 359w

Environment protection
Agricultural production 555w
Common agricultural policy 555w
Electricity supply industry 502w
Extractive industries 568-9w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 160-1w
Group of Seven 508w
Production methods 305w
Scotland 160-1w
Treaties 362w, 493w
West Germany 485w

Environmental audit
568-9w

Environmental education
506w

Environmental health officers
Scotland 340w

Environmental impact assessment
2w, 65w, 106w, 183w, 359w, 371w, 568-9w
EC law 352w
Hill livestock allowances 41w

Environmental impact assessment—continued
Private Bills 61-2w
Transport 420w
Trunk Road Assessment Advisory Committee 353w

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
4w, 493w

Equal opportunities
EC action (16:04:91) 392
Women's employment 18

ERASMUS
49w

Established Church Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Estate Action
Expenditure 357w

Estuaries
Nature conservation 136w
Waste disposal 66w

Ethiopia
Overseas aid 229w

Ethnic groups
Cyprus 411w
Haberdashers' Aske's School 321w
Patients 395w

Ethnic minorities
Health services 148-9w

Ethnic monitoring
City & Hackney Health Authority 395w

EURATOM
Nuclear safeguards 622w

European Commission
338-9w

European Communities (Employment in the Civil Service) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(18:04:91) 598

European Court of Justice
145w

European Development Bank
UK contributions 770

European economic space
231-2w

European Free Trade Association
231-2w

European Investment Bank
Scotland 125w

European Parliament
140-1w, 231w, 1077-8

European Parliament location
Costs 111w
Council of Ministers 111w

European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(22:04:91) 787

European Regional Development Fund
200-1w

European Security Conference
105w, 488w
Baltic republics of USSR 1071-2
Defence expenditure 486w
Non-governmental organisations 1073-4
Northern Ireland 1073-4
Peaceful coexistence 1071-2
UK contributions 105w

European Social Fund
Greater London 157w
Training 157w

European Space Agency
UK contributions 51w

Eurotunnel
209-10w

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Strikes, Local government staff 75-6w

Evans, Mr John
Questions
Community charge, Wandsworth 54w
Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986 326w
Social security appeals 465-6w

Evening Standard
306w, 1205-6

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Greenbelt 437w
Greenbelt, South East region 390w
Nursery schools, Educational finance 888
Property development, Hospitals 437w

Evidence
Local authorities 433w

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 938-9
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1228, 1233-7
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 120-1, 133-4
Questions
Family benefits 12
Further education, Scotland 890
Housing benefits, Government grants to local authorities 376-7w
Interest rates, Company liquidations 562-3
Kurdistan, Iraq 1076
NHS trusts, Grampian 410
Rent rebates, Social security recipients 376w
Self-employed, Scotland 337-8w

Ex gratia payments
7w
Miscarriages of justice 372w

Exchange rate mechanism
555
Sterling 243w

Exchange rates
Statistics 590w

Excise duties
Fuels 562

Exhaust emissions
Carcinogens 570w
Complaints 419w
Motor vehicle testing 522-3w

Explosives
Defence procurement 104w
Quarrying 369-70w

Export & Investment Guarantees Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 40-116

Export Credits Guarantee Department
(15:04:91) 40-116

Export licensing
Arms exports 28w, 595w

Export of live animals
Animal welfare 361-2w
Hedgehogs 389-90w

Export promotion
Arms exports 597w

Export representative service
31w

Exservicemen
Nuclear weapons tests 568-9

Extractive industries
Environment protection 568-9w
Mineral resources 568-9w

Exxon Valdez
Oil pollution control 417-8w

Eye tests
Optical charges 156-7, (22:04:91) 876-82

Facsimile transmission
Members' facilities 482w

Factor VIII
Haemophilia 519w, 538w

Factory Inspectorate
68w

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Garden Supplies (Sunday Trading) Bill, 1R (23:04:91) 944
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 932
Questions
Administration of justice, Scotland 409-10
Scottish Constitutional Convention 404

Fairgrounds
Planning permission 358w

Falkirk
548w

Fallon, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Education & Science
Debates etc.
Dyslexia (17:04:91) 547-52
Questions
Books, Cost per pupil 438w
Child patients, Education 506w
Child workers 886-7
Cost per pupil, South Yorkshire 49-50w
Education, Local government expenditure 43-50w
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 587-8w
Female circumcision 323w
Foundation for Sport & the Arts 217w
Headteachers 263w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Culloden School 406-7w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Tower Hamlets 407w
Hospital Schools in London Bill 1990/91 407w
Primary education, School administration 405w
Pupil-teacher ratios, North Yorkshire 406w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 307-8w
Reading, Teacher training 402w
Reading, Teaching methods 892
St Thomas More School Denton, Curriculum 438w
School administration, Budgeting 137w, 323w
School administration, Leicestershire 215-6w
School buildings, Asbestos 440w
School buildings, Capital investment 438-40w
School choice, Appeals 176w
Schools, Technicians 177w
Secondary education, Expenditure 587w
Secondary education, Newham 895-6
Special education 306-7w
Speech impaired, Special schools 177w
Teacher training, Graduates 405w
Teacher training, Reading 891-2
Teachers, Career structure 263w, 404w
Teachers, Migrant workers 437-8w
Teachers, Science education 177w
Truancy 51w, 405w
Truancy, Prosecutions 437w
Truancy, Vocational education 886
Vocational education 887

Falmouth School of Art & Design
Members' correspondence 321w

False imprisonment
Compensation 6w

Families
Unemployment 367w

Family benefits
12

Family conciliation services
583w
Finance 565-6w, 583w
Government grants 221w, 494w
Probation 373-4w

Family credit
601w
Blackpool 3
Expenditure 1-2
Publicity 1-2
Social security benefits rules 91w
Social security claims 91w, 328-9w, 542-4w
Social security recipients 90w
Tower Hamlets 325-6w

Family doctors
Access to buildings 401w
Barnsley 82w
Budgeting 78w, 148-9, 150w, 248w
Cleveland 343w
Community care 459-60w
Contracts of employment 148, 343w
Haringey 78w
Hospital admissions 149-50
Scotland 248w
Sunderland 150w

Family Policy Studies Centre
12

Famine
Africa 299w

Farm & conservation grants scheme
41w

Farm incomes
1205

Farmers
Water supply 430w

Farms
Radioactive fallout 528w, 540w, 547w, 557w
Waste disposal 360w

Farr, Sir John
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Leicestershire 216w
Pelican crossings, Kibworth Harcourt 176w
School administration, Budgeting 137w
School administration, Leicestershire 215-6w
Whales, Nature conservation 359-60w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 445
Questions
Further education colleges, Educational finance 890
Further education colleges, Local government property 440w
Leeds Development Corporation, Publicity 436w
School buildings, Asbestos 440w
School buildings, Capital investment 438-40w
Universities, Technicians 49w
University finance, Pay 50w
University teachers, Pay settlements 50w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 679-82, 699-700, 706-8, 718
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 778

Favell, Mr Tony
Questions
Business statements 1218
Consumer credit, Debts 28-9w
Illegitimate children, Greater Manchester 12-3
Sports, Schools 404w

Favell, Mr Tony—continued
"Standard Spending Assessment Handbook, 1991/92" 436w
Young offenders, Punishment 1199

Fearn, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Cycling, Greater London 214w
Optical charges, Spectacles 517w
Optical equipment 596w
Opticians, Manpower 517w
Railway network, North West region 753-4
Tourist industry, Southport 510-1w

Female circumcision
323w, 395w

Fenchurch Street Station
Railway travel 345w

Fennell Committee
see King's Cross Fire Inquiry

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Debates etc.
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 526

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 475
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 989-90, 994, 1003-4, 1038, 1051
Questions
Business statements 1218-9
Dog whelk, Nature conservation 434w
Economic sanctions, Iraq 30-1w
Polish Resettlement Act 1947 599w
Prisons, Sanitation 1197
Private roads 415-6w
Unfair trading practices, Marinas 480-1w
VAT, Tax evasion 239w

Field, Mr Frank
Questions
Attendance Allowance Board, Members' correspondence 100w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 2-3
Community charge reduction scheme 184w
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 184-5w
Overseas aid 580-1w
Probation Committees, Merseyside 565w

Fields, Mr Terry
Questions
Employment training 585w
Youth training 585w

Fife
Industrial development 197w

Fife Enterprise
197w

Fife Regional Council Child Care Inquiry
429w

Film industry
31w

Finance Act 1984
Questions
Holiday accommodation 383-4w

Finsbury Park
Dept of Social Security local offices 135w

Fire alarms
Houses (16:04:91) 164, (26:04:91) 1396-7

Fire Service College
Civil service agencies 132-3w

Fire services
Breathing apparatus 209w, 373w
Channel tunnel 209-10w
Greater London 443w
Kent 209-10w
Kuwait 414w
Manpower 210-2w
Privatisation 372w

Fire services—continued
Protective clothing 211w
Scotland 254w, 408
Underground railways 373w

Fire stations
443w

Firearms
Scotland 339-40w

Fires
Bedding 206-8w
Oil pollution control 405w

Fiscal policy
561

Fish
Iceland 557w
Imports 557w

Fish conservation
Scotland 195w

Fish farming
Pest control 122-3w

Fishburn, Mr Dudley
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 471-2
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1322-5, 1357
St Francis' School Notting Hill, Public petitions (26:04:91) 1321

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Criminal proceedings, Homosexuality 535w
Government buildings, Cabinet Office 519w
Government buildings, Dept of Education & Science 505-6w
Government buildings, Dept of Employment 510w
Government buildings, Dept of Energy 499w
Government buildings, Dept of Health 516w
Government buildings, Dept of Social Security 541w
Government buildings, Dept of Transport 525w
Government buildings, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 506w, 521w
Government buildings, Home Office 535w
Government buildings, Lord Chancellor 495-6w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 556w
Government buildings, Ministry of Defence 531w
Government buildings, Office of Arts & Libraries 496w
Government buildings, Treasury 514w
Government buildings, Welsh Office 539w

Fisheries (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(22:04:91) 787

Fishery protection
Scotland 417

Fishing catches
Salmon 602w

Fishing gear
Northumberland 604w
Orders & regulations 604w

Fishing grounds
Submarines 164w

Fishing vessels
237w, 362w
Radio 424w
Scotland 424w
Shipping accidents 755
Shipping safety 755-6

Fixed penalties
Motor vehicle theft 1202

Flags
Armagh 218w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 437-8
Questions
Grant maintained schools 894-5

Floods
River Severn 236-7w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 206-8
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 249, 256-7, 260, 263-5, 269, 272, 284, 291, 329, 350, 352-3
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 925
Questions
Advanced Nuclear Fuels, Transport of radioactive materials 622w
Archaeological sites, Wales 323w
Armed forces deployment, Iraq 531w
Arms trade, Iraq 219-20w
Business statements 1221
Child support, Social security benefits uprating 191-2w
Community charge, Newport Gwent 34-6w
Crime prevention 533-4w
EC internal trade, Cars 598w
Electricity supply industry, Environment protection 502w
Energy conservation, Publicity 539w
Energy research, EC action 500w
Environment, International conferences 299-300w
Environment protection, Treaties 362w
Environmental education 506w
Family credit 601w
Family credit, Social security benefits rules 91w
Family credit, Social security claims 91w, 328-9w, 542-4w
Germany, Arms trade 110w
Global Environmental Research Office 322-3w
Group of Seven, Environment protection 508w
Highway code 355w
Housing benefits, Wales 34w
Housing construction, Wales 324w
International Energy Agency, UK delegations 501-2w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 52w
Iraq, Refugee camps 520-1w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, USSR 103w
Listed buildings, Demolition 411w
Migrant workers, Treaties 40w
Motorways, Lighting 348-9w
Motorways, Road accidents 526w
Non-governmental organisations, Government grants 507w
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 501w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 502-3w, 568w, 620-1w
Nuclear accidents, Technical assistance 568w, 621-2w
Nuclear power, Tonga 501w
Nuclear Suppliers Group 600w
Nursery schools, School population 324w
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, UK contributions 22w
Packaging, International conferences 305w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 327-8w
Production methods, Environment protection 305w
Radioactive fallout, Compensation 519-20w, 540w, 557-8w
Radioactive waste disposal 568w
Railway accidents, Tyne & Wear 763
Shakespeare, William, Curriculum 506w
Sheep dipping 361w
Sheep dipping, Health hazards 361w
Sheep dipping, Pesticide residues 360-1w

***Flynn, Mr Paul**—continued*
Sheffield Forgemasters, Arms exports 272w
Social security appeals 602w
Social Security Commissioners, Cardiff 289w
Social Security Commissioners, Social security appeals 289w
South Africa, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 519w
Treaties, Weapons 292w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Middle East 139w
Unemployment, Valleys initiative 324-5w
Victoria Tower, Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 586w
Victoria Tower, Scaffolding 300w
Witnesses, Mentally disadvantaged 433w
Young people, International conferences 321w

Food
Balance of trade 472w

Food Advisory Committee
Public appointments 32-3w

Food aid from UK
Africa 188w

Food consumption
Milk 42w

Food contamination
Beef 143w
Kuwait 106w

Food imports
Beef 476-8w
Vegetables 41-2w

Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Radioactivity in Sheep) Order 1991
Questions
547w

Fookes, Dame Janet
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 573

Football
Restrictive trade practices 597w

Football (Offences) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (19:04:91) 732-6

Foreign adoptions
233w, 283w

Foreign aid
Iraq 579w
Kurdistan 768

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Advertising 520-1w
Government buildings 506w, 521w
Public relations 599w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 411w

Foreign companies in UK
Iraq 304w

Foreign husbands
Immigration applications 110-1w

Foreign investment
EC countries 141-2w
Italy 596w
Trade barriers 596w

Foreign investment in UK
141-2w, 591w
Northern Ireland 166-8w, 201w

Foreign policy
Kurdistan 160
South Africa 522w, 577w

Foreign relations
Syrian Arab Republic 455w
USA 456w

Foresterhill Hospital
NHS trusts 410

Forestry Commission
161w, (16:04:91) 165-6
Public appointments 549-51w

Forestry Commission Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (16:04:91) 165-6
2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Forestry Commission regional advisory committees
Disclosure of information 161w
Scotland 161w

Forestry grant scheme
161w

Forestry grants
161w

Forests
Access to countryside (16:04:91) 165-6

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 428
Questions
Economic policy 897

***Forsyth, Mr Michael**, Minister of State for Scotland*
Debates etc.
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 119-26
Questions
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, NHS trusts 196w, 548w
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Publicity 338w
Alcohol & crime, Young offenders 427w
Argyll & Clyde Health Board, Contracts for services 544w
Arson, Schools 427w
Arthritis Care 429w
Ayr Hospital, NHS trusts 547w
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, NHS trusts 546w
Blood transfusion services, Blood 247-9w
Blood transfusion services, Scotland 248-9w
Breast cancer, Screening 122w
Cancer, Scotland 267-8w, 548w
Capital, Scottish health boards 160w
Carstairs Hospital, Mental patients 130w
Charities, Alcoholism 428w
Children in care, Child abuse 423-4w
Children in care, Homelessness 159-60w
Children's panels, Orkney 254w
Community care, Carers 250w
Community care, Family doctors 459-60w
Crofters' Commission, Expenditure 115-6w
Crofters' Commission, Manpower 115w
Crofting, Land ownership & tenure 113-4w
Crofting, Property transfer 114-5w
Crofting, Scotland 113w, 116-7w
Departmental leaflets, Transport costs 254w
Educational assessment, Costs 113w
Educational assessment, Paisley 459w
Educational assessment, Primary education 124w
Educational assessment, Scotland 407-8
Educational finance, Scotland 118-9w, 252w, 256w
Elderly, Local government expenditure 267w
Family doctors, Budgeting 248w
Fife Regional Council Child Care Inquiry 429w
Fish-farming, Pest control 122-3w
Fishing vessels, Radio 424w
Forestry Commission, Public appointments 549-51w
Geriatric patients, Scotland 250w, 252w
Health service staff, Scotland 249w, 252-4w
Health services, Scotland 251w
Higher education admission, Scotland 406-7
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Scotland 124-6w
Hospital beds, East Lothian 429w
Hospital beds, Oban 253-6w

***Forsyth, Mr Michael**—continued*
Hospital staff, East Lothian 604w
Housing & elderly, Government grants to local authorities 544w
Kuwait, Anaemia 460w
Kuwait, Disease control 196w
Medical audit, Scotland 250-1w
Mentally handicapped, Scotland 425-6w
NHS 411
NHS trusts, Contracts 547w
NHS trusts, Grampian 410-1
NHS trusts, Public appointments 547w
NHS trusts, Scotland 416, 545-7w
Oban Hospital, Construction 255w
Old people's homes, Scotland 250w, 458w
Playgrounds, Accidents 430w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 407
Radioactive fallout, Farms 547w
Residential care, Greater Glasgow Health Board 196w
Scottish health boards, Contracts for services 249w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 402-4, 429w
Social work, Local government expenditure 425-6w
Special education, Scotland 544-6w
Special schools, Scotland 459w
Speech impaired, Scotland 429w
Student grants, Expenditure 123w
Student grants, Scotland 246-7w
Surgery, Lothian Health Board 193w
Teachers, Sick leave 459w
Youth training, Renfrew 459w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Northern Ireland Electricity, Privatisation 475w

***Forth, Mr Eric**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
European Social Fund, Training 157w
Factory Inspectorate 68w
Industrial injuries, East Midlands 511w
Polish Resettlement Act 1947 599w
Strikes, Local government staff 75-6w
Tourist industry, Southport 510-1w

Forth Valley Health Board
267-8w, 548w

Foster, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 517

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Funerals (22:04:91) 805, 809-11
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 785-6
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 940
Questions
Antarctic, Mineral resources 1078-9
Ayr Hospital, NHS trusts 547w
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, NHS trusts 546w
Health & Safety Executive, Public appointments 189w
Local government finance, Scotland 195w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 303w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 547w
NHS trusts, Scotland 545-7w
Prestwick Airport 347w
South Atlantic, Petroleum exploration 286w, 290w

Foundation for Sport & the Arts
23-4w, 217w, 232w, 243-4w
Finance 301w

Fowl pest
Northern Ireland 201-2w

Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 906

Fox, Sir Marcus
Questions
City technology colleges, Bradford 888

Fox hunting
Arrests 372w
Defence land 105w
Prosecutions 372w
West Lothian 105w

Foxes
Pest control 604w

France
VAT 302w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Questions
Dalton-in-Furness bypass, Road construction 760
Higher education, Cumbria 403w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 592-3
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 907
Questions
Community charge, Lambeth 265w
Housing associations, Lambeth 64w
Housing benefits, Lambeth 193w
Local government finance, Money markets 63w
Rent arrears, Lambeth 356w
Rhododendron, Weed control 265w
Sickle cell disease, Screening 233w

Freeman, Mr Roger, Minister for Public Transport
Questions
British Rail, Channel tunnel 347-8w
British Rail, Privatisation 347w
British Rail, Procurement 347w
Bus services, Greater London 347w
Channel tunnel, Greater Manchester 350w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 2w, 450w, 525w, 753
Channel tunnel, Railway stations 350w
Commuters, Greater London 762
Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee 354w
Docklands light railway, Railway accidents 527w
Fenchurch Street Station, Railway travel 345w
Greater Manchester relief road 754
Jubilee line, Government grants 353w
Liverpool Street-Chelmsford railway line, Railway travel 762
London assessment studies, Public transport 346w
London Regional Transport, Finance 349w
London Regional Transport, Passengers 349w
London Underground, Crimes of violence 349w
Railway network, North West region 753-4
Railway property, Children 266-7w
Railway safety, North West region 754
Railway transport, Investment 348w
Railway transport, South East region 349w
Stansted Airport, Railway network 449-50w
Terrorism, Railway stations 212-3w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Defence equipment, Air force bases 164w
Nurses' training 515w

Friern Barnet Hospital
Hospital closures 151w

Fry, Mr Peter
Questions
Council tax 1206

Fuels
Excise duties 562

Full Sutton Prison
559-60w

Fund raising
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 294w, 354w, 365w, 381w, 398w, 404w, 411w, 435w, 466w, 478w, 497w, 512w, 537-8w, 571w, 618w

Funerals
Private Members' motions (22:04:91) 788-818

Further education
Pay 217w
Scotland 890

Further education colleges
889-90
Educational finance 889-90
Local government property 440w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 934
Questions
Community charge, Scotland 197w
Jordan, Economic sanctions 107w
Kurdistan, Overseas aid 1085-6
Palestine, Elections 109w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 9

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Debates etc.
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1260-7, 1273, 1279-82, 1290-1, 1300, 1310
Questions
Blood transfusion services, Blood 247-9w
Blood transfusion services, Scotland 248-9w
Capital, Scottish health boards 160w
Community care, Carers 250w
Community care, Family doctors 459-60w
Educational assessment, Costs 113w
Elderly, Local government expenditure 267w
Geriatric patients, Scotland 250w, 252w
Health service staff, Scotland 249w, 252-4w
Health services, Scotland 251w
Land ownership & tenure, Scotland 119w
Medical audit, Scotland 250-1w
Old people's homes, Scotland 250w, 458w
Scottish health boards, Contracts for services 249w
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 403, 429w
Social security benefits, Carers 235w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1156-61
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 378
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 25
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1398
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1388-9
Questions
Bird scarers, Codes of practice 436w

Galloway, Mr George
Debates etc.
Kuwait, Point of order (19:04:91) 694-5

Garden Supplies (Sunday Trading) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (23:04:91) 942-4

Garel-Jones, Mr Tristan, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Antarctic, Mineral resources 411w
Brazil, Human rights 288w
China, Religious freedom 412w
Commonwealth, Visas 291w
Council of Ministers 107-8w
Cyprus, Arms trade 285-6w
Cyprus, Ethnic groups 411w
Cyprus, Land ownership & tenure 286w
Cyprus, Turkey 285w
East Timor, Human rights 286w
EC law 454w
Germany, EC budget 293w

Garel-Jones, Mr Tristan—continued
Honduras, Human rights 139-40w
Honduras, Trade unions 140w
Hong Kong, Sharks 288w
Human rights 455-6w
Mauritius, Immigration applications 286w
Nicaragua, Ministers' visits abroad 456w
Nigeria, Debts 1075
Nigeria, Democracy 1074-5
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 411w
Schengen Agreement 413w
South Africa 1084
South Africa, Apartheid 453-4w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 1083-5
South Africa, Political prisoners 1084
South Atlantic, Petroleum exploration 286w, 290w
Subsidiarity 456w
Thailand, Democracy 412w
Turkey, Human rights 291w
United Nations 291w
USA, Foreign relations 456w
Vietnam 455w

Garrett, Mr John
Questions
Civil service agencies 39w
Local government expenditure, Norwich City Council 393w
Miscarriages of justice 1192
Norwich Health Authority, Expenditure 344-5w
Social security claims, Norwich 99-100w
Supply Estimates 22w

Gas accidents
Royston 221-2w

Gases
Tipping of waste 145-6w

Gateshead
Community charge benefits 543w

GATT
40w
Multifibre arrangement 597w

General elections
568

Geneva Conventions
Iraq 412-3w

Genocide
Hussein, Saddam 158, 161-2

Geography education
Teaching methods 50-1w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
Birmingham Polytechnic, Pay 587w
Degrees 587w
Polytechnics, Pay 587w
West Midlands Police, Standard spending assessments 567w

Geriatric patients
Scotland 250w, 252w

Germany
Armed forces deployment 379w
Arms trade 110w
EC budget 293w
Kurdistan 768
VAT 302w

Ghana
Overseas aid 297-9w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Agriculture & Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill, Money res (22:04:91) 873-4
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 618, 645-7
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1360
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Shropshire 402w

Gill, Mr Christopher—continued
Subsidiarity 456w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Questions
Child benefit 326w
Retirement pensions 327w
Unemployment, Families 367w

Glamorgan
323w

Glasgow
415-6
Drug crimes 611w
Scottish courts 543w

Glass
Motor vehicle safety 213w
Safety standards 144w

Global Environmental Research Office
322-3w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 713-4, 722-3
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 602
Criminal Procedure (Insanity & Unfitness to Plead) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 727-30
Funerals (22:04:91) 788
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 784
Legal aid scheme, Scotland (16:04:91) 388
Shipping accidents, Points of order (22:04:91) 787
Questions
Birmingham Six 289w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 525w
Child abuse, Admissibility of evidence 619w
Child abuse, Criminal proceedings 618-9w
Civil servants, Drug abuse 19-20
Courts, Closed circuit television 545w
Employment training, Mentally handicapped 414-5
European Investment Bank, Scotland 125w
Fishing vessels, Shipping accidents 755
Government assistance, Inverclyde 547-8w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 618w
Ministers' domestic visits, Scotland 8w
Prosecutions, Scotland 409
Social security claims, Single parents 12
Social security recipients, Scotland 97-9w
Vibration white finger, Social security appeals 601w

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 589
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 581
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 27

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 425
Questions
Active citizenship, Curriculum 403w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 587
Questions
A13, Road works 351-2w, 525-6w
Culloden School 893
Docklands light railway, Railway accidents 527w
Family credit, Tower Hamlets 325-6w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 593
Questions
Civil service agencies, Privatisation 39w
Maintenance, Children 11
Orbital roads, Greater London 347w
Vocational education 887

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 903-5
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 523-33

Government buildings
Archway Road 214w
Building repairs 226w
Cabinet Office 519w
Combined heat & power 218w
Dept of Education & Science 505-6w
Dept of Employment 510w
Dept of Energy 499w
Dept of Health 516w
Dept of Social Security 541w
Dept of Transport 525w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 506w, 521w
Home Office 535w
Lord Chancellor 495-6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 556w
Ministry of Defence 531w
Office of Arts & Libraries 496w
Treasury 514w
Welsh Office 539w

Government departments
Vacant land 58w

Government grants to local authorities
56w
Community charge 163w, 276w
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 183-4w
Greater London 390w
Housing & elderly 544w
Housing benefits 376-7w
Local government expenditure 240w
Mental health community care 84w
Wales 276w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
British Fluoridation Society 285w
Environment protection 160-1w

Government shareholding
British Telecom 471w

Graduates
Teacher training 405w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 430
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 135
Questions
Firearms, Scotland 339-40w
Motorways 340w
Playgrounds, Accidents 430w
Quarrying, Explosives 369-70w
Quarrying, Inspections 367-9w, 422w
Quarrying, Prosecutions 367w
Quarrying, Scotland 339w
Redundancy, Scotland 339w
ROF Bishopton, Industrial health & safety 368w

Grammar schools
401w

Grampian
NHS trusts 410-1

Grampian Health Board
338w, 410, 548w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 587

Grant, Mr Bernie
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 428
Questions
Arms trade, Armed forces 529w
Family doctors, Budgeting 78w
Government grants to local authorities 56w

Grant, Mr Bernie—continued
Hospital waiting lists, Haringey 78-9w
Immigration controls 374w
Life imprisonment, Police deaths on duty 1200-1
Local government finance, Legislation 54-5w
Schengen Agreement 413w
Uniform business rate, Appeals 62w

Grant maintained schools
402w, 894-5
Leicestershire 216w
Shropshire 402w
Taunton 893-4
Waltham Toll Bar School 893-4

Grants for education support & training
224w

Great Harwood
(25:04:91) 1312

Greater Glasgow Health Board
Residential care 196w

Greater London
565-6
Ambulance services (18:04:91) 666-74
Arts 16
Bus services 347w
Child patients 506w
Civil service manpower 21w
Commuters 762
Company liquidations 504w
Cycling 214w
Dentists 152-8w
Dept of Social Security local offices 13
Employment training 75w
European Social Fund 157w
Fire services 443w
Government grants to local authorities 390w
Greenbelt 569w
New businesses 504w
Office workers 364w
Orbital roads 347w
School crossing patrols 534w
Unemployment 364w

Greater Manchester
Channel tunnel 350w
Illegitimate children 12-3
Police custody 559-60w

Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No 5) Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
2R* (24:04:91) 1071

Greater Manchester relief road
754

Green rates
554w

Greenbelt
437w
Greater London 569w
Property development 437w
South East region 390w
Vacant land 55-6w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 33-4
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 916
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1356
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 443
Questions
Africa, Famine 299w
Business statements 1216-7
Government grants to local authorities, Local government expenditure 240w
Grant maintained schools 402w
Invalid care allowances, Earnings rules 90w
Local government services, Contracts for services 493-4w
London Regional Transport, Passengers 349w

Greenway, Mr Harry—continued
Official engagements 205w, 378w, 520w
Poland, Overseas aid 454-5w
School crossing patrols, Greater London 534w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1151, 1165-7
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 719
Criminal Procedure (Insanity & Unfitness to Plead) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 724-8, 730-1
Football (Offences) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 734-6
Questions
Consumer credit, Debts 30w
Crime prevention, Young people 160, 1198
NHS trusts 152
Political refugees, Immigration applications 566w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc.
Smoke Detectors Bill, 1R (16:04:91) 164
Questions
Aids for handicapped, Technological change 89w
British Rail, Share option scheme 756-7
Drugs, Patents 32w
Drugs, Prices 79w
Family conciliation services 583w
Motor vehicle theft, Fixed penalties 1202
Museums & galleries 9w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 79-80w
Prison education services, Arts 534w
Railway transport, Investment 348w
Uniform business rate, Appeals 62-3w

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Germany 379w
European Security Conference 105w
NATO 107w
Western European Union, UK contributions 105w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Funerals (22:04:91) 802-3, 811-4
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1307-8
Questions
Criminal proceedings, Administrative delays 612-4w
Prosecutions, Administrative delays 408-9

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 265-6, 275, 278-9, 283, 293, 295, 300, 304-6, 309, 318, 320-1, 325, 347-59, 377
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 924
Questions
Grant maintained schools 402w
River Severn, River pollution 236-7w

Grimsby
279w

Grist, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 244, 359-63, 374
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 922

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Questions
Business statements 1209-11
General elections 568
Miscarriages of justice 1192-3
Social security benefits, Civil service agencies 7-8

Ground, Mr Patrick
Questions
NHS trusts, Coventry 150-1

Groundwork Associates
568-9w

Group of Seven
Environment protection 508w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 59-61

Gulf states
Arms trade 597w
Civil servants' visits abroad 18

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 599-610, 612, 615-6, 624, 628, 647, 659-65
Questions
Agriculture Select Committee, Microwave ovens 143-4w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Slaughterhouses 41-2w
EC Agriculture Council 479w
Milk, Prices 359w
Montgomeryshire, Ministers' domestic visits 604w
Radioactive fallout, Farms 557w
Radioactive fallout, Land pollution 557w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate 143w
Whales, Nature conservation 432w, 551w

Haberdashers' Aske's School
City technology colleges 321w, 440-1w
Ethnic groups 321w

Haemophilia
Earnings rules 11
Factor VIII 519w, 538w
Wales 538w

Hague, Mr William
Debates etc.
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1389-92
Questions
Local government reform 896

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 925
Maiden speeches, Hain, Peter (17:04:91) 468-71
Members' oath & affirmation, Hain, Peter (16:04:91) 162
Questions
Business statements 1212
South Africa, Overseas aid 770

Halons
493w

Hamilton, Mr Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 531-2w
Air force, Job evaluation 483w
Air force, Kurdistan 529w
Armed forces, Mental health services 484w
Armed forces, Photographs 102w
Armed forces, USSR 485w
Armed forces deployment, Germany 379w
Armed forces deployment, Iraq 531w
Armed forces deployment, US bases 486w
Armed forces discharges, Housing 485w
Armed forces discharges, Training 485w
Armed forces pay, Middle East 483w
Armed forces training, Honduras 164w
Army bases, Documents 530w
Colin Wallace Dismissal from Civil Service Inquiry 256w
Defence equipment, Air force bases 164w
Defence equipment, Recycling 104w

Hamilton, Mr Archie—continued
Defence expenditure, European Security Conference 486w
Defence land 379w
Defence review, Defence expenditure 486w
Fox hunting, Defence land 105w
Government buildings, Ministry of Defence 531w
HMS Daedalus, Rights of way 104w
HMS Endurance, Decommissioning 102w
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 484w
Iraq, Transport of radioactive materials 484w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Air force bases 530w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Armed forces casualties 530w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Bombs 103w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence equipment 483w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Defence expenditure 483w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Nuclear reactors 164w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Religious buildings 113w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Tornado aircraft 529-30w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, USSR 103w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 197-8w
Kuwait, Air pollution 104w, 256w
Kuwait, Bomb disposal 102-3w, 257-8w
"Medical Manual of Defence Against Chemical Agents" 530w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 303w
Ministry of Defence, Security guards 572-3w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 572w
RAF Edzell 103w
RAF Edzell, Building alterations 103w
RAF Finningley, Air force strength 571-2w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 529w
Royal Military Academy, Mascots 105w
Service Children's Education Authority, Civil service agencies 380-1w
Submarines, Fishing grounds 164w
West Germany, Environment protection 485w

Hamilton, Mr Neil, An Assistant whip
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 319

Hampshire Constabulary
Computer applications 1203-4

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 172, 176-9, 182, 184-5, 190, 193-4
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 63-5
Funerals (22:04:91) 801-4

Handicap benefits
269-70w
Expenditure 3, 89-90w
Social security benefits rates 4

Handicapped
Arts centres 14-5

Handicapped students
891

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Under-Secretary of State Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 289
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Northern Ireland 371w
Census of population, Northern Ireland 173w
Clenbuterol, Northern Ireland 527-9w
Cold weather payments, Social security claims 174w
Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 85-6w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy—*continued*
Fowl pest, Northern Ireland 201-2w
Infectious bovine rhino tracheitis pneumonia, Northern Ireland 200w
Milk, Northern Ireland 199w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards, Public appointments 84-5w
Northern Ireland health & social services councils, Public appointments 528w
Obstetrics, Belfast 198-9w
Radioactive fallout, Farms 528w
Supplementary benefits, Northern Ireland 325w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee 354w
Handicapped students 891

Hard core unemployed
Peterlee 364w
Seaham 364w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Questions
Community charge, Administrative costs 184w
Hazardous wastes, Wath upon Dearne 567w
Kuwait, Fire services 414w
Local income tax 25w
NHS 150
NHS administration, Administrative costs 147w

Hare Coursing Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741
2R* (26:04:91) 1396

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 916

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Road traffic control, Public petitions (25:04:91) 1312
Questions
Community charge reduction scheme 898
Foundation for Sport & the Arts, Finance 301w
Government buildings, Building repairs 226w

Haringey
Family doctors 78w
Hospital waiting lists 78-9w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Debates etc.
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1341, 1392-4, 1397
Questions
Child patients, Education 506w
Family doctors, Hospital admissions 149-50
Hospital Schools in London Bill 1990/91 407w
New businesses, Greater London 504w
NHS internal market, Hospital admissions 399-400w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority 576w
Sterilisation, Costs 81w
Sterilisation, District health authorities 80w
Sterilisation, Research 80-1w

Harmonisation of legislation
EC internal trade 271-2w
Speed limits 570w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 781
Questions
EC Fisheries Council 362w
Parliamentary precincts, Lighting 265w

Harrogate
406w
Council house sales 437w

Harrogate Health Authority
Hospital beds 400w

Hartlepool
150w, 266w, 357w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 437

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Motor vehicle theft 1199

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 453, 481-3, 507-8, 514
Questions
District health authorities, Audit 78w
NHS trusts 151-2

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1105-6, 1129-31
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 847-9, 864, 871-2

Hayward, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 838-40, 843, 870-1
Questions
Council house sales 227w
Electoral register 515-6w
Water conservation 227w
Widowers' benefits 600-1w

Hazardous wastes
Imports 66w, 144-5w
US bases 144-5w
USA 66w
Wath upon Dearne 567w

Headteachers
263w
Recruitment 307w, 586w

Health Advisory Service
149-50w

Health & Safety at Work (Tobacco Smoking) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (24:04:91) 1088

Health & Safety Executive
68w, 361w, 367-70w, 422w
Public appointments 189w

Health authorities
Conflict of interests 83-4w
Public appointments 344w

Health education
AIDS 82-3w
Heart diseases 153-4

Health Education Authority
283w
Privatisation 474w
Public relations 576w

Health Education Council
474w

Health hazards
Passive smoking 283w
Sheep dipping 361w
Smoking (23:04:91) 1062-70

Health service staff
Scotland 249w, 252-4w

Health services
474w
Ethnic minorities 148-9w
Kidney patients 473-4w
Scotland 251w

Hearing aids
344w

Hearing therapists
344w

Heart diseases
Health education 153-4

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Energy*
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 819-20, 827-34, 849-56, 860-6
Questions
Advanced Nuclear Fuels, Transport of radioactive materials 622w
Alternative energy, Contracts 498-9w
Combined heat & power, Government buildings 218w
Electricity supply industry, Environment protection 502w
Electricity supply industry, Immingham 53w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 134w
Energy research, EC action 500w
Home energy efficiency scheme 496w
International Energy Agency, UK delegations 501-2w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Pricing 498w
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 501w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 502-3w, 620-1w
Nuclear accidents, Technical assistance 621-2w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Transport of radioactive materials 497w
Nuclear power, Tonga 501w
Power stations, Licensing 134w
Trawsfynydd power station, Nuclear safety 497w

Heating
Inland Revenue 513-4w

Heckler & Koch
Royal Ordnance 379-80w

Hedgehogs
Export of live animals 389-90w

Helicopters
Iraq 188w, 457w

Heliports
City of London 63w
Customs & Excise 24w
Planning permission 63w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 46

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, *Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Local government reform, Ministerial statements (23:04:91) 901-17
Questions
Advertising, Dept of the Environment 492w
House prices 388-9w
Local Government Boundary Commission for England, Local government reform 392w
Local government finance 227-8w
Parking offences, Dept of the Environment 64w
Revenue support grant, Local government expenditure 144w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of the Environment 435w

Heyhoe Committee
see Colin Wallace Dismissal from Civil Service Inquiry

Hicks, Mrs Maureen
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 914
Questions
Domestic violence 533w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
A38, Road works 527-8w
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority, NHS administration 157

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Questions
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 385-7w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 568-9

Higher civil servants
Scientific qualifications 442w
Women 17-8

Higher education
Cost per student 441w
Cumbria 403w
Early retirement 309-11w
Expenditure 316w
Libraries 315w
Manpower 313-4w
Pay 311-4w
Redundancy 309-11w
Staff-student ratios 310w
Student numbers 313-4w

Higher education admission
Scotland 406-7

Higher education corporations
Wales (22:04:91) 875

Highgate
Dept of Social Security local offices 135w

Highlands & Islands Enterprise
195w, 429w
Costs 543w

Highway code
355w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 581-2
Questions
Business statements 1211
VAT, Tax rates & bands 238-9w

Hill farming
567-8

Hill livestock allowances
Environmental impact assessment 41w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 488-91, 504
Questions
Local government revenue 55w
M1, Road signs 214w
Motor vehicle testing 526-7w
Motorways, East coast 350w
Optical charges, Spectacles 517w
Recreation spaces, Land acquisition 56-7w
Sterilisation 517w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 230-1w
Vacant land 57-8w
Vacant land, Government departments 58w
Vacant land, Greenbelt 55-6w
Vacant land, Land acquisition 57-62w
Vacant land, Private sector 58w
Vacant land, Urban areas 55w
VAT, Knitting yarns 273w
VAT, Medical treatments 594w
Water supply industry, Billing 359w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 442
Questions
Fiscal policy 561
Lebanon, Hostages 1079
Rights of accused, Police interrogation 532w
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Arts finance 8w

HM Coastguard
Costs 418w

HM Factory Inspectorate
see Factory Inspectorate

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
Tipping of waste 145-6w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
Culloden School 406-7w
Scotland 124-6w
Tower Hamlets 407w

HMS Daedalus
Rights of way 104w

HMS Endurance
Decommissioning 102w
South Atlantic 135w

Hodgson Committee
see Civil Justice Review

Hoey, Ms Kate
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 32-3
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1352
Questions
Business statements 1217
Corporation tax, Sports administration 561
Restrictive trade practices, Football 597w

Hogg, Mr Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 786
Questions
Advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 520-1w
Antarctic 109w
Antarctic, EC internal relations 110w
Antarctic Treaty, Mining 109w
Arms control negotiations 293w
CFE Treaty 456w
CFE Treaty, Arms trade 488w
Eastern Europe, Peaceful coexistence 1074
European Security Conference 105w, 488w
European Security Conference, Northern Ireland 1073-4
European Security Conference, Peaceful coexistence 1071-2
Germany, Arms trade 110w
Government buildings, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 521w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 290w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear weapons 290w
Iraq, Armed conflict 413w
Iraq, Disaster relief 292-3w
Iraq, Geneva Conventions 412-3w
Iraq, Helicopters 188w, 457w
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 290w
Iraq, Oppression 288w
Iraq, Refugee camps 521w
Iraq, Refugees 599w
Iraq, Transport of radioactive materials 290w
Iraq, Uranium 291w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 292w, 455w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, United Nations Disaster Relief Office 292w
Israel, Occupied territories 186-7w
Jordan, Economic sanctions 107w
Kurdistan, Overseas aid 187w, 1085-6
Kurdistan, Peace negotiations 286w
Kurdistan, Political parties 110w
Kurdistan, Refugees 109w, 599-600w
Kuwait, Air pollution 230w
Kuwait, Human rights 106-7w, 285w, 293w
Kuwait, Refugees 106w
Lebanon, Hostages 453w, 1079-81
Lithuania 454w
Middle East, Hostages 285w
Middle East, International conferences 452-3w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 452-3w
NATO 107w
Nuclear Suppliers Group 600w
Occupied territories, Educational institutions 291w

Hogg, Mr Douglas—continued
Palestine, Elections 109w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 457-8w
Poland, Overseas aid 454-5w
Public relations, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 599w
Romania, Adoption 1087-8
Sudan, Christianity 413w
Sudan, Human rights 456-7w
Syrian Arab Republic, Foreign relations 455w
Treaties, Weapons 292w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 598w
USSR 1072
USSR, Arms control 1074
USSR, CFE Treaty 487w
USSR, Emigration 111w
Western European Union, UK contributions 105w
Yugoslavia, Ministers' visits abroad 455w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 934
Questions
Capital value rating, Scotland 405-6
Social Fund, Scotland 328w
Unemployment 567

Holiday accommodation
Finance Act 1984 383-4w
VAT 26w

Holmes, Paul
206w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991 (23:04:91) 1059-60
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 917
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 950, 955-6, 958, 960, 1049-50
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1333, 1337, 1340, 1344-69
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 440-1
Questions
Business statements 1215-6
Truancy, Vocational education 886

Home Affairs Select Committee
1192

Home annuities
23w
Tax allowances 23w

Home energy efficiency scheme
496w

Home Office
566w
Advertising 535-6w
Government buildings 535w
Public relations 565w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 294w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1128-9, 1131, 1144
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1231-3, 1242, 1245, 1252
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 120
Questions
Community charge, Scotland 412
Hospital beds, East Lothian 429w
Hospital staff, East Lothian 604w
Local government finance, Scotland 193w
Planning permission, Port Seton 337w
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 458w
Scottish Office, Surveys 458w
Speech impaired, Scotland 429w
Speech impaired, Special schools 177w

Homelessness
186w
Children in care 36w, 80w, 159-60w

Homicide
Criminal investigation 374w
Life imprisonment 1200

Homosexuality
Criminal proceedings 535w
Isle of Man 560w

Honduras
Armed forces training 164w
Human rights 139-40w
Overseas aid 139w
Trade unions 140w

Honey
Pesticide residues 360w

Hong Kong
Annual reports 600w
Ivory 112-3w, 232w
Sharks 112w, 288w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 218-23, 230-1
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 936
Questions
Alcohol & crime, Scotland 336w
Alcohol & crime, Young offenders 427w
Alcoholic drinks, Young people 1198-9
Arson, Schools 427w
Charities, Alcoholism 428w
Child abuse, Scotland 337w
Children in care, Child abuse 423-4w
Criminal proceedings, Scotland 428w
Criminal statistics, Scotland 337w
Social work, Local government expenditure 425-6w

Hook Island (Poole Bay) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553
2R* (23:04:91) 883

Hordern, Sir Peter
Questions
Prime Minister 566

Hormone treatments
Beef 476-8w
EC countries 430w
Surveys 81w

Hornsey
Uniform business rate 62w

Horses
VAT 21w

Horticulture
Sunday trading (23:04:91) 942-4
Water supply 390-1w

Hospital admissions
514-5w
Family doctors 149-50
NHS internal market 399-400w

Hospital beds
East Lothian 429w
Harrogate Health Authority 400w
Oban 253-6w
Trent Regional Health Authority 81w

Hospital closures
Friern Barnet Hospital 151w
Prestwich Hospital 80w, 233w, 397w
Prince of Wales' Hospital Cardiff 276w
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool 154-5

Hospital education
506w

Hospital safety
Stockport 151w

Hospital Schools in London Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 742, (26:04:91) 1396

Hospital Schools in London Bill 1990/91—continued
Questions
407w

Hospital staff
East Lothian 604w

Hospital waiting lists
146-7w, 204w
Bradford 156
Haringey 78-9w
Northwick Park Hospital 147-8
Transplant surgery 1207

Hospitals
Property development 437w

Hostages
Lebanon 453w, 1079-81
Middle East 285w

House of Commons accommodation
Table Office 586w

House of Commons divisions
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 244, 288

House of Commons questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:04:91) 917

House of Commons Whips
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 217-8

House prices
388-9w

Households
Scotland 161-2w

Houses
Fire alarms (16:04:91) 164, (26:04:91) 1396-7

Housing
Armed forces discharges 485w
Liverpool 61-2w
Scotland 163-4w
Urban planning 489w

Housing Act 1988
Questions
182w, 223-4w

Housing & elderly
Government grants to local authorities 544w
Scotland 544w

Housing association grant
491-2w

Housing associations
Lambeth 64w

Housing benefits
Government grants to local authorities 376-7w
Lambeth 193w
Scotland 376-7w
Social security recipients 98w
Wales 34w

Housing construction
489-90w
Crime prevention 1194
Wales 324w

Housing Corporation
489-90w
Expenditure 266w
Stockton on Tees 266w

Housing estates
City action teams 167w
Crime prevention 1193-4

Housing problems
Scotland 196w

***Howard, Rt Hon Michael**, Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Disablement schemes 157-9w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 420w

Howard, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Vocational guidance 190w

***Howarth, Mr Alan**, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Birmingham Polytechnic, Pay 587w
City action teams, Birmingham 217w
Degrees 587w
Discretionary student grants, Expenditure 314-5w
Environmental education 506w
ERASMUS 49w
European Space Agency, UK contributions 51w
Falmouth School of Art & Design, Members' correspondence 321w
Global Environmental Research Office 322-3w
Higher education, Cost per student 441w
Higher education, Cumbria 403w
Higher education, Early retirement 309-11w
Higher education, Expenditure 316w
Higher education, Libraries 315w
Higher education, Pay 311-4w
Higher education, Staff-student ratios 310w
Higher education, Student numbers 313-4w
Inner cities initiative, Birmingham 589w
Kuwait, Oil pollution 216w
Mandatory student grants, Expenditure 319-20w
Nuclear physics, Daresbury 263w
Oil pollution control, Research 405w
Open University, Government grants 318-20w
Oxford Polytechnic, Educational standards 320w
Polytechnics, Pay 587w
Polytechnics & Colleges' Funding Council, Government grants 320w
Postgraduate education, Student grants 317-8w
Research facilities 263w
Science & Engineering Research Council 404w
Science & technology research 884
Science & technology research, Research finance 883-4
Student grants, Costs 316-7w
Student grants, Departmental correspondence 588w
Student grants, Parental contributions 264w, 317w
Universities, Technicians 49w
University finance, Pay 50w
University teachers, Pay settlements 50w, 588w

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1130
Questions
Playing fields, Schools 402w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 822-4, 830, 864, 868-9
Funerals (22:04:91) 813, 815
Questions
Nuclear weapons policy 570
Objects in lieu of tax 594w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 23

Howell, Mr Ralph
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 600, 634-5
Questions
Balance of trade 387-8w
Employment by sector 66-8w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 98w
Industrial production 19-20w
Iraq, War crimes 378w

Howell, Mr Ralph*—*continued
Local government staff, Manpower 394-6w
Low incomes 91w
One parent benefit, Social security recipients 93-4w
One parent families, Personal income 92w
Personal income 190-1w
Rent rebates, Expenditure 96-8w
Sickness benefits, Social security recipients 98w
Social security benefits, Dependants 95w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 92w
Social security recipients 94-6w
Take-home pay, Married men 12-3w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 603, 621-5
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 924
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Wales 410w
Rent officers, Wales 182w, 223-4w
Welsh Agricultural College, Finance 136w

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 243, 249-51, 253-70, 327-9
Questions
Eastern Europe, Peaceful coexistence 1074
Eastern Europe, Pollution control 770-1

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
South Africa, Apartheid 454w

Huddersfield Health Authority
Resource management initiative 149w

Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
149w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 31
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 932-3
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1011-4
Questions
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, NHS trusts 196w, 548w
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Publicity 338w
NHS trusts, Contracts 547w
NHS trusts, Grampian 410-1
South Africa, Apartheid 454w
South Africa, Foreign policy 577w
South Africa, Human rights 577w
South Africa, Official visits 518w
South Africa, Political prisoners 577-8w, 1084
South Africa, Political refugees 578w

Hughes, Mr Robert G
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 430
Questions
Council tax 897-8
Petroleum exploration licences 217-8w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
MVA Consultancy, Road traffic 4w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 172-6, 179, 193-4, 196, 199
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 217-8
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 782
London Boroughs Grants Committee, Point of order (15:04:91) 39-40
National Health Service (17:04:91) 456-7
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1341-2, 1394, 1398
Oral question time point of order (15:04:91) 20

Hughes, Mr Simon*—*continued
Questions
Alternative energy, Contracts 498-9w
Antarctic 109w
Antarctic, Argentina 230w
Antarctic, EC internal relations 110w
Antarctic, Mineral resources 411w
Antarctic, Norway 230w
Antarctic Treaty, Mining 109w
Channel tunnel, Railway stations 350w
Civil service manpower, Greater London 21w
Criminal appeals, Administrative delays 767-8
Customs & Excise, Heliports 24w
Government grants to local authorities, Local government expenditure 240w
London City Ballet, Arts finance 16
MV Marchioness, Shipping accidents 219w
Nitrogen oxides, Air pollution monitoring 356-7w
Non-fossil fuel obligation, Pricing 498w
Planning permission, Heliports 63w
Property development, Preston 65w
Rose Theatre, Upper Waiting Hall 266w
Sulphur dioxide, Air pollution monitoring 357w
Sulphur dioxide, EC law 356w

Hull
279w

Hull Prison
6w

Human rights
455-6w
Brazil 288w
China 187w
East Timor 286w
Honduras 139-40w
International conferences 453w
Kuwait 106-7w, 285w, 293w, 453w, 1075-6
Myanmar 771-2
South Africa 52w, 577w
Sudan 456-7w
Turkey 291w

Humberside
Sea rescue 418w

Hunger strikes
Clarke, Gerald 475w

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**, Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Ministerial statements (23:04:91) 918-26
Questions
Advertising, Welsh Office 538-40w
Animal cruelty, St Tudwal's Island East 558w
Animal welfare, Wales 407w
Archaeological sites, Wales 323w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Wales 410w
Community care, Wales 479w
Community charge, Newport Gwent 34-6w
Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill 1990/91, Standard community charge 35w
Drugs, Waste disposal 408w
Energy conservation, Publicity 539w
Government buildings, Welsh Office 539w
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 276w
Housing benefits, Wales 34w
Listed buildings, Demolition 411w
Local government revenue, Wales 410-2w
Radioactive fallout, Compensation 540w
Radioactive fallout, Farms 540w
Research, Expenditure 36-7w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Welsh Office 538w
Unemployment, Valleys initiative 324-5w
Welsh Agricultural College, Finance 136w
Welsh Office, Press releases 35w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1101-2

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas**, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc.
Iraq, Ministerial statements (15:04:91) 21-39, (17:04:91) 419-32
Questions
Antarctic, Mineral resources 1078-9
Arms control 1072-3
China, Ministers' visits abroad 111-2w
EC defence policy 1077
EC external relations, EC integration 1078
EC external relations, Voting methods 1078
EC Foreign Affairs Council 231-2w
EC integration, Intergovernmental conference 231w
European Parliament 1077-8
Human rights, International conferences 453w
Iraq, Armed forces deployment 1082
Iraq, Democracy 1077
Iraq, War crimes 1082
Jordan, Overseas aid 1086
Jordan, Palestine 1086-7
Kurdistan, Iraq 1076, 1082
Kuwait, Human rights 453w, 1075-6
Middle East, Arms control 452w
Nuclear test ban 1073
South Africa 453w

Hussein, Saddam
(17:04:91) 419-32
Crimes against humanity 271w
Genocide 158, 161-2

Hydrocarbon oil duties
EC action 590-1w
Petrol 272-3w

Iceland
Fish 557w

Illegitimate children
Greater Manchester 12-3

Illsley, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 825, 839, 843-6
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 915-6
Questions
Educational assessment 404w

Immersion suits
755

Immigrants
Mauritius 345w, 447w

Immigration adjudicators
278w

Immigration appeals
278w, 290w
Administrative delays 278w, 496w
Leeds 277-9w
Manpower 278w
Scotland 496w

Immigration applications
Foreign husbands 110-1w
Mauritius 286w
Pakistan 110-1w
Political refugees 372w, 447w, 566w

Immigration controls
374w

Immigration rules
Iraq 374w

Immingham
Electricity supply industry 28w, 53w

Import controls
Bees 64w
Wild animals 358w

Import penetration
Statistics 589-90w

"Improving Passenger Survivability in Aircraft Fires"
451w

Income support
Blyth Valley 88-9w
One parent families 92w
Pensioners 88w
Rent increases 465w
Scotland 89w, 329w
Social security claims 236w
Social security recipients 89w
Widows' benefits 465w
Young people 602w

Income tax
Tax burden 13-4w
Tax collection 593w
Tax yields 472w, 593w

Income tax assessment
Administrative delays 593w

Independent Broadcasting Authority
131-2w

Independent Television Commission
131-2w

India
Arms trade 487w

Indonesia
Arms trade 206w
Self-determination of states 206w

Industrial accidents
Dock workers 451w
Ports 279w

Industrial development
Fife 197w

Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland
88w, 170-4w
Expenditure 199w
Per capita costs 200w

Industrial disablement benefits
Social security benefits rules 465w

Industrial health & safety
ROF Bishopton 368w
Smoking (24:04:91) 1088

Industrial injuries
East Midlands 511w

Industrial investment
590w
Scotland 127-30w, 329w

Industrial noise
437w

Industrial production
19-20w, 243w, 470w, 512-3w
EC countries 304-5w

Industrial strategy
898

Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(23:04:91) 1055-61

Industry & Trade Select Committee
see Trade & Industry Select Committee

Infectious bovine rhino tracheitis pneumonia
Northern Ireland 200w

Inflation
238w, 591-2w
VAT 557-8

Information services
Business 31w

Infrastructure
Tameside 64w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Questions
Local tax, Scotland 405

Inland Revenue
471-2w
Heating 513-4w

Inland Revenue—continued
Judicial review 301w

Inner cities initiative
Birmingham 589w

Institute of Zoology
387w

Interception of Communications Commissioner
Annual reports 271w

Interception of Communications Tribunal
Public appointments 133w

Interest charges
Public sector debt 302w

Interest rates
243w, 563
Company liquidations 562-3
Local government borrowing 387w

Intergovernmental conference
107-8w, 456w
EC integration 231w
Economic & monetary union 140-1w

Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay
(17:04:91) 433-46

International Atomic Energy Agency
290w, 568w, 1072
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 290w
Nuclear weapons 290w
UK delegations 501-2w

International conferences
Environment 228-9w, 299-300w, 359w
Human rights 453w
Middle East 452-3w
National parks 358w
Packaging 305w
Young people 321w

International cooperation
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 292w, 385-7w, 455w
Military intelligence 103w

International Energy Agency
UK delegations 501-2w

International Fund for Agricultural Development
52w

International law
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 766

International Maritime Organisation
1w

International Military Services
Arms exports 104w
Saudi Arabia 104w

International Red Cross
412w, 520-1w

International Whaling Commission
551-2w

Intervention prices
Beef 476w

Invalid care allowances
Earnings rules 90w

Invalidity benefits
Social security recipients 98w

Inverclyde
Government assistance 547-8w

Invisible trade balance
12w
Statistics 11-2w

IRA
Political parties 85w

Iran
Air pollution 183w

Iraq
Armed conflict 413w
Armed forces deployment 135w, 531w, 1082

Iraq—continued
Arms trade 219-20w, 223w, 272w, 597-8w
Chemical weapons 136w
Democracy 1077
Disaster relief 39-40w, 292-3w
Diseases 39-40w
Economic sanctions 30-1w, 414w, 766
Exports 414w
Foreign aid 579w
Foreign companies in UK 304w
Geneva Conventions 412-3w
Helicopters 188w, 457w
Immigration rules 374w
Kurdistan 1076, 1082
Liverpool Polytechnic 223w
Ministerial statements (15:04:91) 21-39, (17:04:91) 419-32, (18:04:91) 571-83, (22:04:91) 773-86
Nuclear weapons 290w, 484w
Oppression 135w, 288w
Overseas aid 268-9w, 579w
Refugee camps 520-1w
Refugees (15:04:91) 21-39, 268-9w, 292w, 578-9w, 599w
Sollatek UK 414w
Transport of radioactive materials 290w, 484w
UK companies abroad 595w
Uranium 291w
War crimes 378w, 1082

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
102w, 106-8w, 378w, 457-8w, 1077
Air force bases 530w
Armed forces casualties 530w
Bombs 103w
Costs 558-9
Defence equipment 483w
Defence expenditure 483w
Defence procurement 379w
International cooperation 292w, 385-7w, 455w
International law 766
Nuclear reactors 164w
Per capita costs 384w
Recycling 104w
Religious buildings 113w
Tornado aircraft 529-30w
United Nations Disaster Relief Office 292w
USSR 103w
War casualties 197-8w, 397-8w

Irish Prisoners' Support Group
206w

Iron & steel industry
Scotland 196w, 338-9w
Subsidies 305w

Irrigation
East Anglia 430-1w
Water conservation 603w

Irvine, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 952-4

Isle of Man
Homosexuality 560w

Isle of Wight
Prisons 1197

Israel
Occupied territories 186-7w

Italy
Foreign investment 596w

Ivory
Hong Kong 112-3w, 232w

Jack, Mr Michael, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Child benefit 326-7w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 2-3
Child care, EC countries 269w
Child support, Social security benefits uprating 191-2w

***Jack, Mr Michael**—continued*
Child Support Agency, Manpower 9-10
Family credit 601w
Family credit, Blackpool 3
Family credit, Expenditure 1-2
Family credit, Social security benefits rules 91w
Family credit, Social security claims 91w, 328-9w, 542-4w
Family credit, Social security recipients 90w
Family credit, Tower Hamlets 325-6w
Government buildings, Dept of Social Security 541w
Income support, Social security claims 236w
Income support, Young people 602w
Low incomes 91w, 467-8w
Maintenance, Disclosure of information 10
One parent benefit, Social security recipients 93-4w
One parent families, Personal income 92w
Personal income 190-1w
Social security benefits, Dependants 95w
Social security benefits, Marginal tax rates 92w
Social security claims, Norwich 99-100w
Social security recipients 94-6w
Standard of living 244-6w
Unemployment benefits, Part-time employment 541-2w
Unemployment benefits, Social security claims 235-6w

***Jackson, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc.
Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991 (23:04:91) 1055-6, 1060-1
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Employment 509-10w
Clothing industry, Redundancy 157w
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, Mining 279w
Dock workers, Industrial accidents 451w
Duration of unemployment 421w
Employment by sector 66-8w
Employment level, Derbyshire 509w
Employment schemes, Expenditure 281w
Employment Service, Finance 281w
Employment Service, Performance indicators 511w
Employment Service, Unemployment benefits 281w
Employment Service local offices, South Yorkshire 67w
Employment Service local offices, Yorkshire & Humberside 422w
Employment training 280w, 421w, 585w
Employment training, Age 364w
Employment training, Career breaks 421w
Employment training, Disabled workers 452w
Employment training, Greater London 75w
Employment training, Northumberland 189w
Employment training, Special training needs 421w
Employment training, Travelling expenses 365w
Employment training, Vocational training 280w
Gas accidents, Royston 221-2w
Government buildings, Dept of Employment 510w
Hard core unemployed, Peterlee 364w
Health & Safety Executive, Public appointments 189w
Labour costs 280w
Low pay, Northern region 366-8w
Low pay, Scotland 70w, 74-6w
Motor components industry, Manpower 366w
National Council for Vocational Qualifications, Public appointments 68-70w
New businesses, Yorkshire & Humberside 511w

***Jackson, Mr Robert**—continued*
Office workers, Greater London 364w
Open College, Government grants 365-6w
Part-time employment, Men 71-2w
Part-time employment, Women 71-4w
Pay, Northumberland 585-6w
Ports, Industrial accidents 279w
Privatisation, Training Agency 511-2w
Public relations, Dept of Employment 585w
Quarrying, Explosives 369-70w
Quarrying, Inspections 367-9w, 422w
Quarrying, Prosecutions 367w
Rehabilitation of offenders, Special training needs 363-4w
ROF Bishopton, Industrial health & safety 368w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Employment 365w
Small businesses, Billing 282w
Strikes, Lost working days 422-3w
Tourist industry, Northumberland 415w
Training 422w
Training & enterprise councils 280-1w
Training & enterprise councils, Bradford 509w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 451-2w
Training & enterprise councils, Manpower 281w
Unemployment, EC countries 67w
Unemployment, Families 367w
Unemployment, Greater London 364w
Wages councils, Manpower 366w
Wheal Jane Mine, Government grants 367-8w
Youth employment, Pay 366w
Youth training 585w
Youth training, Blyth Valley 365w
Youth training, Finance 190w
Youth training, Newham 281w

Janman, Mr Tim
Questions
UK companies abroad, Government grants 138-9w

Janner, Mr Greville
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 29
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 911
Questions
Business statements 1219
Social Fund, Leicestershire 466w

Japan
Prisoners of war 110w
Whales 551-2w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 421-2
Questions
Arts, Greater London 16

Job evaluation
Air force 483w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 576

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
Mental Health (Detention) (Scotland) Bill, 1R (17:04:91) 446
Questions
Community care, Scotland 401
Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Costs 543w
Scottish Enterprise 337w

Joint financing
Expenditure 151-2w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 919
Questions
A494, Road safety barriers 225w

***Jones, Mr Barry**—continued*
A55, Road construction 409-10w
Education, Wales 224w
Educational assessment, Wales 409w
Haemophilia, Factor VIII 519w, 538w
Research, Expenditure 36-7w
Science & technology research, Wales 136-7w
Secondary education, Technicians 223w
Teachers, Languages education 224w
Teachers, Scientific qualifications 407-8w
Teachers, Wales 408w
Truancy, Wales 223w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 212, 358, 360, 362, 364-72, 375-6
Questions
Community care, Wales 479w
Government grants to local authorities, Community charge 276w
Police, Contracts for services 442w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 604, 632-4
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 579

Jones, Mr Martyn
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 635-7
Questions
Hill farming 567-8
Owen, David 898
Radio frequency radiation, Defence research 104-5w
Welsh Office, Press releases 35w
Wheel clamps, Private sector 524w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 779
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 910
Questions
A65, Road accidents 570w
A65, Road works 569w
A66, Road works 351-2w
Breast cancer, Screening 342w
Dental health, Children 472-3w
M6, Road works 522w
Railway network, Barrow in Furness 761
Vaccination, Children 343w

Jordan
Dried milk 107w
Economic sanctions 107w
Overseas aid 1086
Palestine 1086-7

Jubilee line
Government grants 353w

Judges
Women 220w

Judicial review
433w
Inland Revenue 301w

Judicial Studies Board
220-1w

Judiciary
Professional qualifications 220-1w
Training 220-1w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 22-3
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 419-21
Questions
Jordan, Palestine 1086-7
Lebanon, Hostages 1081

Kearney Inquiry
see Fife Regional Council Child Care Inquiry

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 912-3
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 525
Questions
Developing countries, Debts 769
Public holidays 378w

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 463, 473-7
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1245-8, 1255, 1301-2
Questions
Family credit, Blackpool 3
Fishery protection, Scotland 417

Kent
Community care 145
Fire services 209-10w

***Key, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 540-1
Questions
Community charge, Administrative costs 184w
Community charge, Civil proceedings 358w
Community charge, Costs 54w
Community charge, Lambeth 265w
Community charge, Wandsworth 54w
Community charge benefits 53w
Community charge reduction scheme 146w, 184w
Community charge reduction scheme, Leicestershire 56w
Community charge reduction scheme, Rates & rating 146w
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991 184-5w
Evidence, Local authorities 433w
Government grants to local authorities 56w
Government grants to local authorities, Greater London 390w
Infrastructure, Tameside 64w
Leeds Development Corporation, Publicity 436w
Local government expenditure, Norwich City Council 393w
Local government finance, Legislation 54-5w
Local government finance, Money markets 63w
Local government revenue 55w
Local government services, Contracts for services 493-4w
Local government staff, Manpower 394-6w
Rent arrears, Lambeth 356w
"Standard Spending Assessment Handbook, 1991/92" 436w
Uniform business rate, Appeals 62-3w
West Midlands Police, Standard spending assessments 567w

Kibworth Harcourt
Pelican crossings 176w

Kidney machines
Wessex Regional Health Authority 283-4w

Kidney patients
Health services 473-4w
Wessex Regional Health Authority 284w

Kidneys
Transplant surgery 284w
Wessex Regional Health Authority 284w

Kilbarchan
Quarrying 422w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 424

Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
3R order read (17:04:91) 401, (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

King, Mr Roger
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 347w
Grammar schools 401w
NHS trusts, Coventry 148w
Religious education, Curriculum 404-5w
Yugoslavia, Ministers' visits abroad 455w

***King, Rt Hon Tom**, Secretary of State for Defence*
Debates etc.
Iraq, Ministerial statements (18.04:91) 571-83

King's College Hospital
Abortion 396w

King's Cross Fire Inquiry
373w

King's Lynn
Crime prevention 1193-4

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Questions
Economic policy 896-7, 1206-7
Hussein, Saddam, Genocide 158
Unemployment 566

***Kirkhope, Mr Timothy**, An Assistant Whip*
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1106

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Questions
Middle East, Arms control 452w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 91-2w
Public sector housing sales, Borders region 119-22w, 618w
Public sector housing sales, Scotland 120-1w, 197w
Science & technology research, Research finance 883-4
Sub post offices 137-8w
Tenants' choice, Scotland 120w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 380
Funerals (22:04:91) 790, 802-7, 814
Questions
VAT exempted goods, Tax yields 239w

***Knight, Mr Greg**, Lord Commissioner to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1112

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 476
Questions
Nurses, Pay 396w

Knitting yarns
VAT 273w

Knowles, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 682-4, 711-3

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Child benefit, Social security benefits uprating 12
Primary education, Cost per pupil 407

Kurdistan
(15:04:91) 21-39, 107-8w, 161-2, 268-9w, 412-3w, (17:04:91) 419-32, (18:04:91) 571-83, (22:04:91) 773-86, 1082

***Kurdistan**—continued*
Air force 529w
Foreign aid 768
Foreign policy 160
Germany 768
Iraq 1076, 1082
Oppression 158-9
Overseas aid 187w, 507-8w, 529w, 768-9, 1085-6
Peace negotiations 286w
Political parties 110w
Political refugees 297-8w
Refugee camps 567
Refugees 109w, 157-8, 599-600w

Kuwait
Air pollution 65-6w, 102-4w, 106w, 183w, 225-6w, 230w, 256w, 1208
Anaemia 460w
Bomb disposal 102-3w, 257-8w
Contracts 138w, 253w
Disaster relief 292-3w
Disease control 196w
Fire services 414w
Food contamination 106w
Human rights 106-7w, 285w, 293w, 453w, 1075-6
Oil pollution 106w, 216w, 359w
Refugees 106w
Water pollution 106w

Labour costs
280w

Lambeth
Community charge 265w
Housing associations 64w
Housing benefits 193w
Rate arrears 356w
Rent arrears 356w

Lambie, Mr David
Questions
Scottish health boards, Public appointments 403-4

***Lamont, Rt Hon Norman**, Chancellor of the Exchequer*
Questions
Balance of payments 470-1w
Balance of payments, Oil revenues 180w
Balance of trade, Food 472w
Corporation tax 238w, 561-2
Corporation tax, Tax yields 472w
EC budget repayments 302w
EC Finance Council 140-1w
Economic growth 24-5w
Economic situation, Scotland 562-3
Excise duties, Fuels 562
Fiscal policy 561
Foreign investment in UK 141-2w
Inflation 238w
Interest rates 563
Interest rates, Company liquidations 562-3
Invisible trade balance 12w
Local government revenue 558
National income 382-3w
Public sector debt, Interest charges 302w
Retail price index 384-6w
Service industries, Pay 302w
Unemployment 562
VAT, Charities 557
VAT, France 302w
VAT, Inflation 557-8
VAT, Tax evasion 239w
VAT, Tax yields 384w
VAT zero rated goods 557

Lanarkshire
Employment opportunities 193w

Land acquisition
Recreation spaces 56-7w
Road construction 416w
Vacant land 57-62w

Land ownership & tenure
Crofting 113-4w
Cyprus 286w
Scotland 119w

Land pollution
Radioactive fallout 557w
Wales 275-6w

***Lang, Rt Hon Ian**, Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Ministerial statements (23:04:91) 927-41
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1292-3
Questions
Advertising, Scottish Office 619w
Agricultural Scientific Services, Civil service agencies 160w
Capital value rating, Scotland 405-6
Children in care, Orkney 268w
Community care, Scotland 401-2
Community charge, Government grants to local authorities 163w
Community charge, Scotland 162-3w, 195w
Community charge, Transitional relief 163w
Community charge grant, Scotland 255-6w
Community charge register, Scotland 163w
Drunkenness, Scotland 249-50w, 334-5w
Employment training, Scotland 415-6
Fish conservation, Scotland 195w
Fishery protection, Scotland 417
Forestry Commission regional advisory committees, Disclosure of information 161w
Households, Scotland 161-2w
Housing, Scotland 163-4w
Local government, Scotland 402
Local government finance, Scotland 195w, 245-6w
Local tax, Scotland 402, 405-6
Population, Scotland 329-30w
Rate Fund revenue accounts, Scotland 460-3w
Rate support grants, Scotland 194w
Roads, Scotland 460w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Scottish Office 618w
Scottish Assembly 404
Scottish Assembly, Referenda 404-5
Scottish Constitutional Convention 404-5
Scottish Office, Expenditure 457w
Scottish Office, Surveys 458w
Sheriffs, Pay 123w
Sheriffs, Scotland 123-4w
Tenants, Scotland 163w
Training, Scotland 416

Languages education
English language 897
Teachers 224w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 590
Oral question time intervention (24:04:91) 1080
Questions
Community charge reduction scheme, Leicestershire 56w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 457-8w
Sunday trading 1196
VAT, Charities 556

Law reform
Archaeological sites 226w
Leasehold housing (16:04:91) 393-400
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry 5w

Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990
Questions
545w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 778
Questions
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 10-1
Homicide, Life imprisonment 1200
Human rights, International conferences 453w
Miscarriages of justice 1193
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 598w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 908
Questions
Balance of payments 470-1w
Balance of payments, Oil revenues 180w
Economic growth 24-5w
Foreign investment in UK 141-2w
House prices 388-9w
Local government finance 227-8w
National income 382-3w
Retail price index 384-6w

Lead
Water supply 275w

Lead pipes
Wales 275w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 957-60, 970-2, 975, 980

Leasehold housing
Law reform (16:04:91) 393-400

Leasehold Reform Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Lebanon
Hostages 453w, 1079-81

Lee on Solent
104w

Leeds
Immigration appeals 277-9w

Leeds Development Corporation
Publicity 436w

Leeds Prison
Prisoners' transfers 6w
Suicide 566w

Legal aid scheme
Scotland (16:04:91) 382-92

Legal costs
Divorce 584-5w

Legal profession
Drug crimes 610w
Manpower 605w, 609-12w
Pay 610-1w
Scotland 605w, 609-12w

Legislation
Local authority powers 54-5w
Local government finance 54-5w

Leicestershire
Community charge reduction scheme 56w
Grant maintained schools 216w
Safer cities scheme 1194
School administration 215-6w
Social Fund 466w

***Leigh, Mr Edward** Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs*
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 191-9, 208, 381
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 100-1
Funerals (22:04:91) 814-8
Questions
Air pollution, Coke 306w
Clothing industry, Easington 303w
Consumer councils, Public appointments 29-30w
Consumer credit, Debts 28-30w
Consumer protection, Package holidays 27w
Drugs, Patents 32w
EC internal trade, Cars 598w
Film industry 31w
Optical equipment 596w
Packaging, International conferences 305w
Production methods, Environment protection 305w

***Leigh, Mr Edward**—continued*
Refrigerators, Chlorofluorocarbons 304w
Sub post offices 137-8w
Timesharing, Misleading advertising 303-4w
Tin, Mining 305-6w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 420w
Employment schemes, Expenditure 281w
Employment Service, Finance 281w
Employment Service, Unemployment benefits 281w
Employment training 280w, 421w
Employment training, Age 364w
Employment training, Vocational training 280w
Greater London 565-6
Labour costs 280w
Office workers, Greater London 364w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 372w, 447w
Training & enterprise councils 280-1w
Training & enterprise councils, Manpower 281w
Unemployment 554
Unemployment, Greater London 364w
Youth training, Newham 281w

Leitch Committee
see Trunk Road Assessment Advisory Committee

***Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark**, Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office*
Debates etc.
Antarctic (26:04:91) 1402-6
Malta, Monuments (15:04:91) 141-4
Questions
Antarctic, Argentina 230w
Antarctic, Norway 230w
Bramble, Nigel, Special education 287w
British dependent territories, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 287w
China, Human rights 187w
China, Ministers' visits abroad 188w
China, Religious freedom 187-8w
Council of Ministers, European Parliament location 111w
Cyprus, Arms trade 229-30w
Cyprus, EC enlargement 229w
Cyprus, Partition 229w
European Parliament location, Costs 111w
Hong Kong, Annual reports 600w
Hong Kong, Ivory 112-3w, 232w
Hong Kong, Sharks 112w
Japan, Prisoners of war 110w
Kuwait, Air pollution 106w
Kuwait, Oil pollution 106w
Kuwait, Water pollution 106w
Pakistan, Immigration applications 110-1w
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 230-1w

Leopard 2 tanks
572w

Lester, Mr Jim
Questions
Social security benefits, Civil service agencies 7

Lestor, Miss Joan
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 683, 690-2, 700-1, 720
Criminal Procedure (Insanity & Unfitness to Plead) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 731
Questions
Child workers 886-7
Children in care, Homelessness 36w, 80w, 159-60w
Prestwich Hospital, Hospital closures 80w
Prestwich Hospital, Planning appeals 63w
Truancy 405w
Young offenders 1203

Lewes Prison
Security 298w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (16:04:91) 393-5, 397-8
National Health Service (17:04:91) 450
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1354
Questions
Unemployment 898

Leyton
Burglary 446w

Libraries
Durham 232w
Higher education 315w

Libyan Arab Republic
Arms trade 598w
Chemical weapons 110w
Pest control 432w

Life imprisonment
Homicide 1200
Police deaths on duty 1200-1

Lighting
A19 176w
Motorways 213w, 348-9w
Parliamentary precincts 265w

***Lilley, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Questions
Company liquidations, Directors 138w
Economic sanctions, Iraq 30-1w
Kuwait, Fire services 414w
Security interests, Property law 482w

Limavady
169-70w

Listed buildings
Demolition 411w
Wales 411w

Listed events
178w

Lithuania
454w

Litter
Chelmsford bypass 450w

Liverpool
Housing 61-2w
Lung cancer 148w

Liverpool Polytechnic
Iraq 223w

Liverpool Street - Chelmsford railway line
Railway travel 762

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 577
Questions
Business statements 1214-5
School choice, Appeals 176w

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 611
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 921

Lloyd, Sir Ian
Questions
South Africa 1084

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office*
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1149-53, 1157, 1161-2, 1168, 1176-80
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 676-9, 685, 692-3, 697-9, 702-6, 710-1, 715-9

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**—continued*
Criminal Procedure (Insanity & Unfitness to Plead) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 728-9, 731
Football (Offences) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 732-3
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Public order offences 296w
Coroners, Disclosure of information 560w
Crime prevention 533-4w
Crime prevention, Housing estates 1193-4
Crime prevention, Norwich 1203
Criminal proceedings, Homosexuality 535w
Deportation, Departmental forms 445w
Deportation, Middle East 445-6w, 534-5w
Domestic violence 533w
Drinking & driving, Disclosure of information 350-1w
Drug crimes, Stoke Newington 446w
Entry clearances, Pakistan 7-8w
Fox hunting, Arrests 372w
Fox hunting, Prosecutions 372w
Hampshire Constabulary, Computer applications 1203-4
Homosexuality, Isle of Man 560w
Housing construction, Crime prevention 1194
Immigration controls 374w
Immigration rules, Iraq 374w
Mauritius, Deportation 296w
Mauritius, Entry clearances 447w
Mauritius, Immigrants 447w
Metropolitan Police 560w
Miscarriages of justice, Ex gratia payments 372w
North Yorkshire Police, Manpower 374w
Police, Contracts for services 442w
Police vehicles, Death 275w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 372w, 447w
Political refugees, Kurdistan 297-8w
Public Order Act 1986, Trespass 5w, 442-3w
Public order policing, Community charge 5w
Public order policing, Sports 296w
Public relations, Metropolitan Police 563-5w
Safer cities scheme, Leicestershire 1194
School crossing patrols, Greater London 534w
Terrorism, Pre-trial procedures 1197-8
Water sports, Local authority powers 5w
West Midlands Police, Police misconduct 1196-7, 1201
West Midlands Police, Watson, Alan 533w
Working holidays, Visas 209w, 536-7w
Young offenders 1203

Local authorities
Evidence 433w

Local Authorities Etc (Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(15:04:91) 39

Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(15:04:91) 39

Local Authorities (Street Lighting) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (24:04:91) 1089-91

Local authority powers
Legislation 54-5w
Water sports 5w

Local education authority training grant scheme
308-9w

Local enterprise companies
337w, 414-6, 422w
Property development 123w

Local Enterprise Development Unit
170-4w

Local government
900
Scotland 402

Local Government & Housing Act 1989
Questions
265w, 357w

Local government borrowing
Interest rates 387w

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Local government reform 392w

Local government expenditure
240-2w
Education 43-50w
Elderly 267w
Government grants to local authorities 240w
Local government services 127-8w
Norwich City Council 393w
Revenue support grant 144w
Scotland 130w, 159w, 428w
Social work 425-6w

Local government finance
227-8w, 259-62w, 391-2w
Legislation 54-5w
Ministerial statements (23:04:91) 918-26, 927-41
Money markets 63w
Scotland 19-20w, 126-8w, 193w, 195w, 245-6w, (23:04:91) 927-41
Wales (23:04:91) 918-26

Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Amendment) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (16:04:91) 164

Local government functions
Air pollution control 493w
Street lighting (24:04:91) 1089-91

Local government property
Further education colleges 440w

Local government reform
896
Community councils 37w
Local Government Boundary Commission for England 392w
Ministerial statements (23:04:91) 901-17

Local government revenue
55w, 514-5w, 558, 1208
Community charge 53w
Rates & rating 460-3w
Scotland 125-6w
Wales 410-2w

Local government services
Advisory services 265w, 357w
Contracts for services 493-4w
Local government expenditure 127-8w
Scotland 127-8w

Local government social services
Scotland 267w

Local government staff
Animal welfare 447-8w
Manpower 394-6w
Northern Ireland District Councils 167w
Strikes 75-6w

Local income tax
25w, 569-70

Local tax
Scotland 402, 405-6

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 825-6, 829, 840-1, 869
National Health Service (17:04:91) 462, 493-4
Questions
Child benefit 564
Further education colleges, Educational finance 889

London Ambulance Service
(18:04:91) 666-74

London & Home Counties Green Belt Act 1938
Questions
569w

London assessment studies
Costs 346-7w
Public transport 346w

London boroughs grants scheme
Arts finance 13-7

London City Airport
61w

London City Ballet
Arts finance 16

London Docklands Railway (Lewisham etc) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

London Fire & Civil Defence Authority
373w, 443w

London Fire Brigade
373w

London Green Belt Council
569w

London Regional Transport
353w
Finance 349w
Passengers 349w

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

London Underground
Crimes of violence 349w

London Underground Bill 1989/90
Debates etc.
Instruction to Com (17:04:91) 401

London Underground (King's Cross) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

London Underground (No 2) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Instruction to Com (17:04:91) 401

London Underground (Safety Measures) Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:04:91) 401, (18:04:91) 553, (23:04:91) 883, (25:04:91) 1191

London Zoo
Government grants 387-8w

Londonderry
Employment opportunities 169-70w

Long stay patients
250w, 252w, 345w
Social security benefits 328w

Lord, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 601, 613, 622, 637-8

Lord Chancellor
Government buildings 495-6w
Next steps initiative 433-4w
Public relations 583-4w

Lord Chief Justice
Pay 289w

Lord President of the Council
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 537-8w

Lorries
Speed governors 175w, 571w

Lorry drivers
Driving licences 175w

Lost working days
Strikes 422-3w
Yorkshire & Humberside 422-3w

Lothian Health Board
Surgery 193w

Low incomes
91w, 467-8w
Pensioners 5
VAT 565

Low pay
Northern region 366-8w
Scotland 70w, 74-6w, 616-8w
Wages councils 366w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 593-4
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 916
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 959, 966, 1011, 1014, 1047
Questions
Business statements 1218
St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool, Hospital closures 154

Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 29

Lung cancer
Liverpool 148w

***Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas**, Solicitor-General*
Questions
Criminal appeals, Administrative delays 767-8
Crown Prosecution Service 765
Crown Prosecution Service, Recruitment 765
Prisoners on remand, Administrative delays 765

M1
Road signs 214w

M3
754-5

M4
Speed limits 539-40w

M6
Road works 522w

M11
Road construction 416w

M12
Road construction 450w

M20
Road construction 355-6w

M62
Road safety barriers 522w

M65
Road construction 524w

M66
Road construction 354w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 56-9
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 935
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 128
Questions
Local government finance, Scotland 126-8w, 193w

***McAllion, Mr John**—continued*
Local government revenue, Scotland 125-6w
Local government services, Local government expenditure 127-8w
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry, Law reform 5w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Questions
Residential care, Greater Glasgow Health Board 196w

McCrindle, Sir Robert
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 51-2, 60
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 759-60
Child benefit 564

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Questions
Community charge review, Scotland 194w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1255, 1298-301, 1307
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 124
Questions
Food Advisory Committee, Public appointments 32-3w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 290w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear weapons 290w
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 290w, 484w
Iraq, Transport of radioactive materials 290w, 484w
Iraq, Uranium 291w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Air force bases 530w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Tornado aircraft 529-30w
Overseas aid, Middle East 299w
West Midlands Police, Police misconduct 766-7

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 501-3

***MacGregor, Rt Hon John**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 584-98
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 375-80
School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Bill, Points of order (16:04:91) 164
Questions
Business statements 1209-22
Members' facilities, Facsimile transmission 482w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Lord President of the Council 537-8w
Table Office, House of Commons accommodation 586w
Times, Parliamentary Press Gallery 537w
Victoria Tower, Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 586w
Victoria Tower, Scaffolding 300w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 913
National Health Service (17:04:91) 465
Questions
Nursery schools, Educational finance 888
Sudan, Human rights 456-7w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 588
Questions
Community charge reduction scheme, Rates & rating 146w

MacKay, Mr Andrew—continued
Dept of Transport, Civil service agencies 1w
Sunday trading 1194-5

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 937
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1250-1
Questions
NHS trusts, Scotland 416
Tax burden 237-8w

Maclean, Mr David, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Debates etc.
Agriculture & Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill, Money res (22:04:91) 874
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1381-3, 1387
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1350
Questions
Alphachloralose, Rodents 271w
Animal welfare, Treaty of Rome 430w
Beef, Food contamination 143w
Beef, Hormone treatments 476-8w
Blue ear pig disease 554w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 478w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Veterinary services 477w
Brucellosis 181w
Clenbuterol, Cattle 558w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 361-2w
Food Advisory Committee, Public appointments 32-3w
Foxes, Pest control 604w
Honey, Pesticide residues 360w
Hormone treatments, EC countries 430w
National Cattle Breeders' Association, Codes of practice 476-7w
Radioactive fallout, Compensation 557-8w
Rendering industry, Company liquidations 554w
Sheep dipping 361w
Sheep dipping, Health hazards 361w
Slaughterhouses, Company liquidations 476w
Wild animals, Poisoning 479w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991 (23:04:91) 1056-8

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1150, 1161-5
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 684-5, 696-7, 720-1
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1276-8, 1285, 1289, 1297-8, 1304
Questions
Cars, Burglar alarms 1202
Crime prevention 533w
Economic situation, Economic regions 554
Human rights 455-6w
Local income tax 569-70
Prisoners on remand, Administrative delays 765

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick, Under-Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 945-8, 951, 956-62, 964-70, 972, 976-7, 980-1, 990-3, 996, 1000, 1004-5, 1007-8, 1013-5, 1024-8, 1032, 1037-41, 1043, 1053
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Transport 524-6w
Airlines 350w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick—continued
Dalton-in-Furness bypass, Road construction 760
Dept of Transport, Civil service agencies 1w
Exxon Valdez, Oil pollution control 417-8w
Fishing vessels, Shipping accidents 755
Fishing vessels, Shipping safety 755-6
Government buildings, Dept of Transport 525w
HM Coastguard, Costs 418w
Marine Accident Investigation Branch, Manpower 415w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 756
MV Pescado, Shipping accidents 415w
MV Polly Anna, Safety standards 449w
Navigation, River Humber 419w
Persian Gulf, Oil pollution 1w
Prestwick Airport 347w
Public relations, Dept of Transport 571w
Public transport, Privatisation 393-4w
Railway accidents, Aberdeen 527w
Railway accidents, Tyne & Wear 763
Railway network, Barrow in Furness 761
Railway network, Tyne & Wear 763
Roads, Cleaning services 4w
Roads, Public expenditure 133-4w
Sea rescue, Equipment 418w
Sea rescue, Humberside 418w
Shipping accidents, Bridges 419-20w
Shipping safety 3-4w
Transport, Environmental impact assessment 420w
West coast railway line 760-1

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 937
Questions
Argyll & Clyde Health Board, Contracts for services 544w
Child abuse, Renfrew 618w
Consumer councils, Public appointments 29-30w
Criminal statistics, Strathclyde 604-6w
Drug crimes, Strathclyde 605w
Educational assessment, Paisley 459w
Housing & elderly, Government grants to local authorities 544w
Motor vehicle theft, Strathclyde 605w
Retirement pensions 469w
Special education, Scotland 544-6w
Special schools, Scotland 459w
Youth training, Renfrew 459w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1101, 1107, 1122, 1141-2
Questions
Driving licences, Organ donor cards 524w
Transplant surgery, Hospital waiting lists 1207

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Questions
Community charge, Members' correspondence 182w
Student grants, Departmental correspondence 588w
VAT, Northern Ireland 86-7w
VAT, Rates & rating 87w

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1098-100, 1102, 1104, 1108, 1110-1, 1117, 1123-4, 1129-30, 1137, 1144-5

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 596
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 577
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 914-5
NHS trusts, Bradford (24:04:91) 1184-8
Questions
Entry clearances, Pakistan 7-8w

Madden, Mr Max—continued
Immigration appeals 278w, 290w
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 278w
Immigration appeals, Leeds 277-9w
Immigration appeals, Manpower 278w
Lebanon, Hostages 1080
NHS trusts, Bradford 147
Pakistan, Immigration applications 110-1w
VAT zero rated goods 557
West Midlands Police, Police misconduct 1201

Madel, Mr David
Questions
Syrian Arab Republic, Foreign relations 455w

Magherafelt
169-70w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 589-90
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 779
Optical charges, Eye tests (22:04:91) 876-9
Oral question time point of order (26:04:91) 152
Questions
Arms trade, Indonesia 206w
East Timor, Self-determination of states 205-6w
Family doctors, Budgeting 149
Fire services, Breathing apparatus 209w
Fire services, Channel tunnel 209-10w
Fire services, Manpower 210-2w
Fire services, Protective clothing 211w
Fire services, Scotland 254w
Headteachers 263w
Indonesia, Self-determination of states 206w
Northern Ireland Fire Authority, Manpower 219w
Teachers, Career structure 263w

Maiden speeches
Hain, Peter (17:04:91) 468-71

Maintenance
Children 11
Disclosure of information 10

Major, John
Electoral register 159

Major, Rt Hon John, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Middle East 378w
Arms trade, Indonesia 206w
British Petroleum 899
Chile, Overseas trade 40w
Common agricultural policy 1204-5
Community charge 899-900
Community charge, Members' correspondence 182w
Community charge capping 900
Community charge reduction scheme 898
Computers in government departments, Computer software 270w
Council tax 896-8, 1206
Council tax, Members' secretaries 1205-6
Crime prevention, Young people 160
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 519w
East Timor, Self-determination of states 205-6w
Economic & Social Committee, Public appointments 518-9w
Economic policy 160, 568, 896-7, 1206-7
Economic situation 159
Employment level, Scotland 567
English language, Languages education 897
Farm incomes 1205
General elections 568
Government buildings, Cabinet Office 519w
Greater London 565-6
Haemophilia, Factor VIII 519w
Higher civil servants, Scientific qualifications 442w

Major, Rt Hon John—continued
Hill farming 567-8
HMS Endurance, South Atlantic 135w
Hussein, Saddam, Crimes against humanity 271w
Hussein, Saddam, Genocide 158, 161-2
Indonesia, Self-determination of states 206w
Industrial strategy 898
Interception of Communications Commissioner, Annual reports 271w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 136w
Iraq, Diseases 39-40w
Iraq, Oppression 135w
Iraq, Refugee camps 520w
Iraq, War crimes 378w
Kurdistan, Foreign policy 160
Kurdistan, Oppression 158-9
Kurdistan, Refugee camps 567
Kurdistan, Refugees 157-8
Kuwait, Air pollution 1208
Local government 900
Local government reform 896
Local government revenue 1208
Local income tax 569-70
Major, John, Electoral register 159
Migrant workers, Treaties 40w
Minimum wage 899
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 40-1w
North of England Building Society, Trade union recognition 1207-8
Nuclear weapons policy 40w, 570
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 568-9
Official engagements 205w, 378w, 520w
Overseas aid 205w, 576w
Owen, David 898
Parliamentary questions 293-4w
Pensioners, Social security benefits 159-60
Prime Minister 566
Privatisation, Cabinet Office 442w
Privatisation, Prime Minister 520w
Public holidays 378w
Public relations, Cabinet Office 577w
Public relations, Prime Minister 577w
Radioactive fallout, Compensation 519-20w
Schools, Ministers' domestic visits 900
South Africa, Foreign policy 577w
South Africa, Human rights 577w
South Africa, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 519w
South Africa, Official visits 518w
South Africa, Political prisoners 577-8w
South Africa, Political refugees 578w
Transplant surgery, Hospital waiting lists 1207
Turkey, Cyprus 160-1
Unemployment 566-7, 898

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Questions
Border security in Ireland, Road traffic control 88w
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland 202-4w
Cold weather payments, Social security claims 174w
Customs & Excise, Civil service redundancies 88w
Customs & Excise, Northern Ireland 24w
Eleven plus, Appeals 87w
Eleven plus, Northern Ireland 87w
School admission, Northern Ireland 83-4w
School choice, Northern Ireland 87w

Malta
Monuments (15:04:91) 140-4

Management consultants
Emergency Planning College 294-5w

Manchester
Rehabilitation centres 6

Manchester Prison
Prison accommodation 559-60w

Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry
Law reform 5w

Mandatory student grants
Expenditure 319-20w

Manpower Services Commission
511-2w, 585w

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 574
National Health Service (17:04:91) 458
Questions
Disablement schemes 157-9w
Electricity tariffs 217w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 133w
VAT, Charities 557

Manufactured exports
481w
Prices 513w
Profitability 512w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 468-9w, 503w

***Maples, Mr John**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
2 coins 559-60
Balance of trade 387-8w
Coinage, Vending machines 559
Crown lands & estates, Rates & rating 471-2w
Economic policy 555
Economic situation 555-6
Exchange rate mechanism, Sterling 243w
Exchange rates, Statistics 590w
Inflation 591-2w
Interest rates 243w
Invisible trade balance, Statistics 11-2w
National income 555
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, UK contributions 22w
Privatisation, Central Office of Information 470w
Statistics, Import penetration 589-90w
Tax burden 237-8w
VAT, Low incomes 565

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 234, 237-8, 245, 247-8, 268-71, 278, 289-90, 297, 303, 310, 324-47, 369, 378
Questions
Higher civil servants, Women 17-8

Marginal tax rates
Social security benefits 92w

Marinas
Unfair trading practices 480-1w

Marine Accident Investigation Branch
Manpower 415w

Marine Directorate
3-4w

Marine Pollution Control Unit
Oil pollution control 1w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 425

Marriage guidance
Divorce 147w

Married men
Take-home pay 12-3w

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Electorate, Scotland 335-6w
Speed governors, EC action 571w
Speed governors, Lorries 571w
Speed limits, Harmonisation of legislation 570w
Strathclyde Police, Manpower 414
VAT, Tax burden 239w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 784
National Health Service (17:04:91) 484, 503-4

Marshall, Mr John—continued
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 444
Questions
Civil service, Performance related pay 20-1w
Corporation tax 238w
Council of Ministers, European Parliament location 111w
Crown Prosecution Service, Recruitment 765
ERASMUS 49w
European Parliament location, Costs 111w
Foreign investment, Trade barriers 596w
Higher education admission, Scotland 406-7
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Tipping of waste 145-6w
Kurdistan, Peace negotiations 286w
Milk, Agricultural production 42w
NHS finance 155
Polytechnics, Educational finance 890-1
Silcott, Winston 1201
Sugar, EC countries 42-3w
Sunday trading 533w
Transfer & automated registration of uncertificated stock, Upper Waiting Hall 27w
USSR, Emigration 111w
Water authorities 183w

Marshall, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 28
Questions
Income support, Pensioners 88w

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 363
Questions
Fishing vessels, Shipping safety 755-6
Inflation 238w
NHS trusts 148w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (17:04:91) 409
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 534-5
Questions
Strathclyde Police, Manpower 413-4

Martlew, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 483
Questions
A69, Road works 761
Community charge 899
South Africa, Economic sanctions 1083

Mascots
Royal Military Academy 105w

Mater Hospital
198-9w

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 573-4
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Security guards 572-3w

***Maude, Mr Francis**, Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
British Telecom, Government shareholding 471w
Building societies, Taxation 9-11w, 300-1w
Capital allowances 560
Charities 242-3w
Company accounts 25w
Corporation tax 560-1
Corporation tax, EC countries 238w, 560
Corporation tax, Small businesses 238w
Corporation tax, Sports administration 561
Employee share ownership trusts, Private companies 382w

Maude, Mr Francis*—*continued
Finance Act 1984, Holiday accommodation 383-4w
Government buildings, Treasury 514w
Home annuities 23w
Income tax, Tax burden 13-4w
Income tax, Tax collection 593w
Income tax, Tax yields 593w
Income tax assessment, Administrative delays 593w
Inland Revenue, Heating 513-4w
Inland Revenue, Judicial review 301w
Mortgage interest rates, Mortgage relief 11w
PAYE, Building industry 384w
Personal taxation 14-20w
Profit sharing, Private companies 381-2w
Separate taxation of wife's earnings, Tax administration 301w, 591w
Small businesses, Government assistance 301w
Take-home pay, Married men 12-3w
Tax allowances, Charitable donations 556-7
Tax allowances, Home annuities 23w
Tax allowances, Offshore suppliers 24w
Tax avoidance, Trusts 592w
Tax thresholds, Northern region 302w
Taxation, Departmental correspondence 140w
Unpaid taxes 467-8w
VAT 238w
VAT, Charities 241-2w, 556
VAT, Tax burden 239w

Mauritius
Deportation 296w
Entry clearances 447w
Immigrants 345w, 447w
Immigration applications 286w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian*, *Minister of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Border security in Ireland, Road traffic control 88w
Capital investment, Northern Ireland 170w
Castle Court Belfast, Civil service dispersal 167-9w
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland 202-4w
Eleven plus, Appeals 87w
Eleven plus, Northern Ireland 87w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 170-4w
Flags, Armagh 218w
Hunger strikes, Clarke, Gerald 475w
IRA, Political parties 85w
Local government staff, Northern Ireland District Councils 167w
Northern Ireland education & library boards, Finance 83-4w
Physical & social environment programme, Northern Ireland 200-1w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland 582-4w
School admission, Northern Ireland 83-4w
School choice, Northern Ireland 87w
Ulster People's College, Educational finance 165-6w
VAT, Northern Ireland 86-7w
VAT, Rates & rating 87w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Legal aid scheme, Scotland (16:04:91) 384-5, 390
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 940-1
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 921
Questions
Educational finance, Scotland 118-9w
Industrial investment, Scotland 127-30w
Local government expenditure, Scotland 159w, 428w
Local tax, Scotland 406

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 630-2
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 26-7

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin*—*continued
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 908
Points of order (16:04:91) 164
Questions
Kurdistan, Foreign policy 160

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick*, *Attorney-General
Questions
Arms trade, Iraq 219-20w
Birmingham Six 289w, 767
Crown Prosecution Service, Vacancies 584w
Divorce, Legal costs 584-5w
Drinking & driving, Death 475-6w
Family conciliation services 583w
Family conciliation services, Finance 583w
Family conciliation services, Government grants 221w, 494w
Government buildings, Lord Chancellor 495-6w
Immigration appeals 278w, 290w
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 278w, 496w
Immigration appeals, Leeds 277-9w
Immigration appeals, Manpower 278w
Iraq, Economic sanctions 766
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International law 766
Judges, Women 220w
Judicial review 433w
Judiciary, Professional qualifications 220-1w
Lord Chancellor, Next steps initiative 433-4w
Lord Chief Justice, Pay 289w
MV Marchioness, Shipping accidents 219w
Prosecutions, Director of Public Prosecutions 495w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor 583-4w
Rape, Trials 219w
Small claims 494w
Social Security Commissioners, Cardiff 289w
Social Security Commissioners, Social security appeals 289w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 767
Wallace, Colin 219w
West Midlands Police, Police misconduct 766-7
Witnesses, Mentally disadvantaged 433w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Questions
Child benefit 326-7w
Low incomes 467-8w
Maintenance, Disclosure of information 10
Poverty 8-9
Social security, Expenditure 192w

Meale, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 821, 823, 832, 841-3, 846, 851, 854, 860-1, 864, 870-1
Local Authorities (Street Lighting) Bill, 1R (24:04:91) 1089
Questions
Animal experiments, Dogs 273-4w
Animal experiments, Inspections 274-5w
Fox hunting, Defence land 105w
Royal Military Academy, Mascots 105w
West Midlands Police, Police misconduct 1196-7

Medical audit
Scotland 250-1w

"Medical Manual of Defence Against Chemical Agents"
530w

Medical research
474-5w

Medical students
Patients 234w

Medical treatment abroad
Medway Health Authority 155

Medical treatments
Chemicals 398w
VAT 594w

Medway Health Authority
Medical treatment abroad 155

Mellor, Rt Hon David*, *Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 468-9w
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 468-9w
Child benefit 564-5
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 238w
Consumer expenditure 469-70w
Economic policy 554-5
Economic situation, Economic regions 554
Exchange rate mechanism 555
Foreign investment in UK 591w
Foundation for Sport & the Arts 23-4w, 243-4w
Government grants to local authorities, Local government expenditure 240w
Imports, Consumer goods 503-4w
Industrial investment 590w
Industrial production 19-20w, 469w, 470w, 512-3w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Costs 558-9
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International cooperation 385-7w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Per capita costs 384w
Local government borrowing, Interest rates 387w
Local government expenditure 240-2w
Local government expenditure, Scotland 130w
Local government finance 259-62w
Local government finance, Scotland 19-20w
Local government revenue 514-5w
Local income tax 25w
Manufactured exports, Prices 513w
Manufactured exports, Profitability 512w
National income 243w
Public expenditure 10w
Retirement pensions 469w
Supply Estimates 22w
Trades Union Congress, Economic policy 565
Unemployment 554

Members' conduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 378, (18:04:91) 562, (24:04:91) 1077, (25:04:91) 1302

Members' correspondence
Attendance Allowance Board 100w
Community charge 182w
Falmouth School of Art & Design 321w

Members' deaths
Stradling Thomas, John (15:04:91) 1

Members' facilities
Facsimile transmission 482w

Members' interests
Speaker's rulings & statements (26:04:91) 1379

Members' interventions
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 298, 361, (18:04:91) 558, (22:04:91) 804, 861, 864, (25:04:91) 1283-4, (26:04:91) 1364, 1373, 1375-6

Members' oath & affirmation
Hain, Peter (16:04:91) 162

Members' secretaries
Council tax 1205-6

Members' speeches
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:04:91) 126, 132, 135, (16:04:91) 288, (17:04:91) 509, (18:04:91) 604, (23:04:91) 966, (25:04:91) 1229, (26:04:91) 1383

Men
Part-time employment 71-2w

Mental health community care
149-50w
Government grants to local authorities 84w

Mental Health (Detention) (Scotland) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (17:04:91) 446
2R* (26:04:91) 1395

Mental health services
Armed forces 484w

Mental patients
Carstairs Hospital 130w

Mentally disadvantaged
Crimes of violence 433w
Witnesses 433w

Mentally handicapped
Employment training 414-5
Scotland 425-6w

Mentally ill
Criminal proceedings (19:04:91) 724-31

Merseyside
Probation Committees 565w

Meteorological Office
Air pollution monitoring 65w

Meteorological satellites
Air pollution monitoring 66w

Metropolitan Police
5w, 445-6w, 560w
Public relations 563-5w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 579
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 921
Questions
EC external relations, EC integration 1078
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 3

MFV Antares
Inquiries 303w, 618w, 756

Michael, Mr Alun
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 215, 219-20, 230-4, 254-5, 257, 261-2, 280-1, 299-301, 307-8, 330-6, 338-46, 350-1, 363-6, 376
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 51, 65-70, 72, 79-81, 85, 92-3, 97-9, 101-2, 108-10
Questions
Surgery, Wales 35w

Michie, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (23:04:91) 891
Questions
Educational assessment, Disclosure of information 893

Michie, Mrs Ray
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 938
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1229-31
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 122w
Hospital beds, Oban 253-6w
MFV Antares, Inquiries 756
Oban Hospital, Construction 255w
Unemployment, Scotland 195w

Microwave ovens
Agriculture Select Committee 143-4w

Middle East
Armed forces 102w
Armed forces deployment 378w
Armed forces pay 483w
Arms control 452w
Arms trade 597-8w
Deportation 445-6w, 534-5w
Hostages 285w
International conferences 452-3w

Middle East—continued
Overseas aid 299w
Peace negotiations 452-3w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees 139w

Middlesbrough
266w, 357w

Migrant workers
Teachers 437-8w
Treaties 40w

Military intelligence
International cooperation 103w

Milk
Agricultural production 42w
Co-responsibility levy 359w
Food consumption 42w
Northern Ireland 199w
Prices 359w

Mills, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 643-5
Questions
Compulsory purchase, Agricultural land 489w
Exhaust emissions, Motor vehicle testing 522-3w
Housing construction 489-90w
Urban planning, Housing 489w

Mineral resources
Antarctic 411w, 1078-9
Extractive industries 568-9w

Mines
103w, 257-8w

Minimum wage
899

Mining
Antarctic Treaty 109w
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 279w
Cornwall 305-6w
Tin 305-6w

Minister for the Civil Service
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 381w

Ministerial statements
Iraq (15:04:91) 21-39, (17:04:91) 419-32, (18:04:91) 571-83, (22:04:91) 773-86
Local government finance (23:04:91) 918-26, 927-41
Local government reform (23:04:91) 901-17
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 272, 282, 375, 377, (17:04:91) 438-9, 443, 446, (18:04:91) 582, (19:04:91) 695, (22:04:91) 778, (23:04:91) 905, 911-4, 921-2, 931, (26:04:91) 1341-3, 1392-4, 1397-8
Teachers (17:04:91) 433-46

Ministers' domestic visits
Arts centres 13-4
Educational institutions 216w
Montgomeryshire 604w
Schools 900
Scotland 8w

Ministers' visits abroad
China 111-2w, 188w
Nicaragua 456w
Yugoslavia 455w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Advertising 556w
Government buildings 556w
Public relations 603w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 478w

Ministry of Defence
Advertising 531-2w
Civil Service Appeal Board 595w
Computers in government departments 484w
Government buildings 531w

Ministry of Defence—continued
Public relations 572w
Security guards 572-3w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 571w

Minting
UK companies abroad 595w

Miscarriages of justice
534w, 1192-3
Compensation 7w
Ex gratia payments 372w

Misleading advertising
Timesharing 303-4w

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 871
National Health Service (17:04:91) 464
Oral question time intervention (16:04:91) 152
Questions
Agriculture Select Committee, Microwave ovens 143-4w
Conifers, Pennines 391w
Family doctors, Budgeting 149
Middle East, International conferences 452-3w
Minimum wage 899
Myanmar, Overseas aid 771-2
Tax allowances, Charitable donations 556-7

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1151, 1154, 1157, 1168-72, 1176, 1180
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 468-9w, 503w
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 468-9w
Commonwealth, Visas 291w
Community charge benefits 53w
Consumer expenditure 469-70w
Dock workers, Industrial accidents 451w
Exchange rates, Statistics 590w
Fishing vessels 237w
Fishing vessels, Radio 424w
Imports, Consumer goods 503-4w
Industrial investment 590w
Industrial production 470w, 512-3w
Inflation 591-2w
Manufactured exports 481w
Manufactured exports, Prices 513w
Manufactured exports, Profitability 512w
Ports, Industrial accidents 279w
Statistics, Import penetration 589-90w
Trade competitiveness 481w
Unpaid taxes 467-8w
Working holidays, Visas 209w, 536-7w

Mitchell, Sir David
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1096-7, 1104-5, 1110, 1112, 1120-1, 1124, 1128
Questions
A303, Speed limits 754-5

MMR vaccine
343w

Mobility allowance
Take-up 4

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 424

Money markets
Local government finance 63w

Monmouth
By election writs (23:04:91) 883

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
597-8w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 579
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 931
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1235, 1241-3, 1270-2, 1281, 1287, 1296
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 132-3
Questions
Forestry Commission regional advisory committees, Disclosure of information 161w
Local government, Scotland 402
Local government finance, Scotland 195w
Local tax, Scotland 402
Roads, Scotland 460w
Television reception, Scotland 375-6w
Training, Scotland 416

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
Prisons, Race relations 177-8w

Montgomeryshire
Ministers' domestic visits 604w

Monuments
Malta (15:04:91) 140-4

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 167, 176-7, 206, 208-11, 381
Business statements (18:04:91) 593
Questions
Occupational Pensions Board, Public appointments 100-1w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1104, 1145-6
Business statements (18:04:91) 594
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 212, 215, 222-32, 236-7, 239, 242-3, 247, 262, 273-5, 278-9, 282-4, 288-9, 293-324, 335-6, 346, 348, 374-5, 378
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 57, 61-3, 81-2, 84, 95-6, 99-100
Questions
Dept of Social Security local offices, Cardiff 100w
Environmental impact assessment, Private Bills 61-2w
Nature conservation, EC action 145w
Nature conservation, Estuaries 136w
Power stations, Licensing 134w
Prince of Wales' Hospital Cardiff, Hospital closures 276w
Severn Estuary, Special protection areas 490w
Special protection areas, EC law 145w
Teachers, Sick leave 438w, 459w, 578w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 216, 289, 320, 361-2, 379
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1007
Questions
VAT, Charities 241-2w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 588
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 908
Questions
Bramble, Nigel, Special education 287w
British dependent territories, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 287w
Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 85-6w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Costs 81-2w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred—continued
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Wales 34w
Employment training, Disabled workers 452w
Handicap benefits, Social security benefits rates 4
Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee, Public appointments 203w
Training & enterprise councils, Finance 451-2w
VAT, Charities 556

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 148-9

Morrison, Sir Charles
Questions
Tootal Group, Takeovers 27-8w

Mortgage interest rates
Mortgage relief 11w

Mortgage relief
Mortgage interest rates 11w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 651-3
Questions
Potatoes, Plant diseases 552w
Television 131-2w

Motor components industry
Manpower 366w

Motor vehicle safety
Glass 213w

Motor vehicle testing
526-7w
Exhaust emissions 522-3w

Motor vehicle theft
1199
Blyth Valley 445w
Crime prevention 40-1w, 211-2w, 1201-3
Fixed penalties 1202
Strathclyde 605w

Motorways
340w, 345w
East coast 350w
Lighting 213w, 348-9w
Road accidents 526w
Road traffic 528w
Road works 526w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Questions
Company liquidations, Directors 138w
Haemophilia, Earnings rules 11
Invisible trade balance, Statistics 11-2w
Subsidiary companies, Company liquidations 28w

***Moynihan, Mr Colin**, Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
British Gas, Upper Waiting Hall 53w

Mudd, Mr David
Questions
Falmouth School of Art & Design, Members' correspondence 321w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 594
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 423
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1373, 1377
Questions
North of England Building Society, Trade union recognition 1207-8
Prosecutions, Director of Public Prosecutions 495w
Vietnam 455w
West Midlands Police, Watson, Alan 533w

Multifibre arrangement
GATT 597w

Multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus
Royal Liverpool Hospital 395w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 926

Museums & galleries
9w

MV Marchioness
Shipping accidents 219w

MV Pescado
Shipping accidents 415w

MV Polly Anna
Safety standards 449w

MVA Consultancy
Road traffic 4w

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Myanmar
Human rights 771-2
Overseas aid 771-2

National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education
Government grants 320w

National Cattle Breeders' Association
Codes of practice 476-7w

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Consumer Council
29-30w

National Council for Vocational Qualifications
Public appointments 68-70w
Women 68-70w

National Curriculum Council
404-5w

National Farmers' Union
603w

National Health Service & Community Care Act 1990
Questions
Administrative costs 147w

National Health Service Training Authority (Abolition) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(15:04:91) 39

National Health Service Trusts (Consultation before Establishment) (Scotland) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(15:04:91) 39

National income
243w, 382-3w, 555

National insurance contributions
Company cars (25:04:91) 1222

National parks
International conferences 358w

National Power
28w, 53w, 498w

National Rivers Authority
363w, 390-1w
Surveys 434w
Wales 275w

National Transcommunications
131-2w

Nationalised industries borrowing
British Rail 133w

NATO
40w, 107w, 488w

Natural Environment Research Council
405w

Natural gas
Electricity generation 134w

Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (25:04:91) 1223-311

Nature Conservancy Council
490w

Nature conservation
Countryside stewardship scheme 490w
Dog whelk 434w
EC action 145w
Estuaries 136w
Persian Gulf 65w
Wales 136w
Whales 237w, 359-60w, 431-2w, 551-2w

Navigation
River Humber 419w
River Ouse 419w

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Airports, Property development 581w
City action teams, Housing estates 167w
Coastal protection, Strangford Lough 167w
Customs & Excise, Civil service redundancies 88w
Driving offences, Northern Ireland 371w
Employment level, Northern Ireland 169-70w
Employment opportunities, Londonderry 169-70w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 169w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 166-8w, 201w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, Expenditure 199w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, Per capita costs 200w
Northern Ireland Electricity, Consultants 581-2w
Northern Ireland Electricity, Privatisation 475w, 582w
Northern Ireland Fire Authority, Manpower 219w
Traffic lights, Newtownards 167w
Water resources, Northern Ireland 371w

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 35
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 909
Questions
Arms exports, Export promotion 597w
Arms trade, East Timor 28w
Arms trade, Iraq 597-8w
Arms trade, Middle East 597-8w
Business statements 1217
Community charge, Prison sentences 7w
Confessions, Convictions 532w
Custodial treatment, Remission 131w
Employment training, Greater London 75w
Family conciliation services, Finance 565-6w
Income support, Social security claims 236w
Iraq, Oppression 288w
Iraq, Refugees 599w
Kuwait, Human rights 1075-6
NHS trusts, Coventry 151
Public order policing, Community charge 5w
Road tolls, Road traffic 528w
Supplementary benefits, Northern Ireland 325w
Unemployment benefits, Social security claims 235-6w
Wages councils, Manpower 366w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 30
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 781

Neubert, Sir Michael
Questions
Railway transport, South East region 349w

New businesses
Greater London 504w
Yorkshire & Humberside 511w

New clauses
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 167

New towns
Scotland 197w

Newham
Secondary education 895-6
Youth training 281w

Newport Gwent
Community charge 34-6w

Newspaper press
Restrictive trade practices 596-7w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Secretary of State for Social Security*
Debates etc.
Social Security (Contributions) Bill, 1R (25:04:91) 1222
Questions
Child benefit, Social security benefits uprating 12
Family benefits 12
Illegitimate children, Greater Manchester 12-3
Maintenance, Children 11
Poverty 8-9
Social security benefits, Civil service agencies 7-8
Social security claims, Administrative delays 6-7
Social security claims, Single parents 12

Newtownards
Traffic lights 167w

Next steps initiative
1w, 37-9w, 143w, 160w, 204w
Lord Chancellor 433-4w

NHS
150, 411
Northern region 146w
Opposition days (17:04:91) 450-522

NHS administration
Administrative costs 147w
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority 157

NHS finance
155

NHS Health Advisory Service
see Health Advisory Service

NHS internal market
Hospital admissions 399-400w

NHS Management Executive
474w

NHS Policy Board
474w

NHS reform
396w

NHS review
(17:04:91) 450-522

NHS trusts
147, 148w, 151-3
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary 196w, 548w
Ayr Hospital 547w
Ayrshire & Arran Health Board 546w
Bradford 146-7, (24:04:91) 1184-90
Contracts 547w

NHS trusts—continued
Coventry 148w, 150-1
Forresterhill Hospital 410
Grampian 410-1
Public appointments 547w
Scotland 416, 545-7w
Scottish health boards 547w

Nicaragua
Ministers' visits abroad 456w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 282
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 35-6
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1021, 1047-8
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 440
Questions
Council of Ministers 107-8w
Public Order Act 1986, Trespass 442-3w
Reading, Teacher training 402w

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 439
Questions
EC Agriculture Council 479w
EC Transport Council 448-9w
Grant maintained schools, Taunton 893-4
NHS trusts 148w
Public houses, Brewing industry 480w
Public houses, Property transfer 480w
Public houses, Tenancy agreements 479-80w
Small businesses, Government assistance 301w
VAT 273w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 907
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 533, 536-8
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1375-6
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1359
Questions
Agricultural production 555-6w
Agricultural production, Environment protection 555w
Agricultural subsidies 553w
Agricultural subsidies, Common agricultural policy 553w
Agriculture 476w
Agriculture, Diversification 554w
Arts centres, Handicapped 14-5
Beef, Hormone treatments 476-8w
Beef, Intervention prices 476w
Blue ear pig disease 554w
Business statements 1213-4
Cattle, EC external trade 478w
Common agricultural policy, East Germany 477w
Common agricultural policy, Environment protection 555w
Drinking & driving, Driving instruction 523-4w
Farmers, Water supply 430w
Green rates 554w
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 89w
Hormone treatments, EC countries 430w
Mental health community care 149-50w
Milk, Co-responsibility levy 359w
Rendering industry, Company liquidations 554w
Set-aside schemes 555w
Slaughterhouses, Company liquidations 476w

Nicotine
Chewing gum 150w

Nigeria
Debts 1075
Democracy 1074-5

Nigeria—continued
Overseas aid 297-9w, 1074-5

Nitrates
(16:04:91) 212-380

Nitrogen dioxide
EC law 356w

Nitrogen oxides
102w
Air pollution monitoring 356-7w

Noise control
Water sports 54w

Non-fossil fuel obligation
Pricing 498w

Non-Fossil Fuel Purchasing Agency
498-9w

Non-governmental organisations
229w, 299-300w
European Security Conference 1073-4
Government grants 507w

Norfolk
Coastal protection 363w

North Atlantic Assembly
Defence equipment 486w

North Devon
Road construction 346w

North Devon link road
Road signs 523w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
151w
Capital investment 150w

North of England Building Society
Trade union recognition 1207-8

North West region
Arts finance 8w
Railway network 753-4
Railway safety 754

North Yorkshire
Pupil-teacher ratios 406w
Valuation & community charge tribunals 62-3w

North Yorkshire Police
Manpower 374w

Northern Ireland
Airports 581w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 371w
Capital investment 170w
Census of population 173w
Civil service manpower 202-4w
Clenbuterol 527-9w
Cold weather payments 174w
Community relations 200-1w
Customs & Excise 24w, 88w
Drinking & driving 475-6w
Driving offences 371w
Eleven plus 87w
Employment level 169-70w
Employment opportunities 169-74w
European Security Conference 1073-4
Foreign investment in UK 166-8w, 201w
Fowl pest 201-2w
Infectious bovine rhino tracheitis pneumonia 200w
Milk 199w
Physical & social environment programme 200-1w
Prisoners' transfers 206w
Rates & rating 582-4w
School admission 83-4w
School choice 87w
Shipping safety (22:04:91) 874-5
Supplementary benefits 325w
Terrorism 767
VAT 86-7w
Water resources 371w

Northern Ireland District Councils
Local government staff 167w

Northern Ireland education & library boards
167w
Finance 83-4w

Northern Ireland Electricity
Consultants 581-2w
Privatisation 475w, 581-2w

Northern Ireland Fire Authority
Manpower 219w

Northern Ireland health & social services boards
85-6w, 167w
Public appointments 84-5w

Northern Ireland health & social services councils
Public appointments 528w

Northern region
Dental health 472-3w
Low pay 366-8w
NHS 146w
Tax thresholds 302w

Northumberland
Child abuse 443-4w
Employment training 189w
Fishing gear 604w
Pay 585-6w
Tourist industry 415w

Northwick Park Hospital
Hospital waiting lists 147-8

Norway
Antarctic 230w

Norwich
Crime prevention 1203
Social security claims 99-100w

Norwich City Council
Local government expenditure 393w

Norwich Health Authority
Expenditure 344-5w

Nuclear accidents
Chernobyl 519-20w, 528w, 540w, 547w, 557-8w, 568w, 621-2w
Disclosure of information 501w
Emergency planning 502-3w, 568w, 620-1w
Technical assistance 568w, 621-2w

Nuclear Electric
497w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Sellafield 497w
Transport of radioactive materials 497w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
497w, 621-2w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
International Atomic Energy Agency 290w
South Africa 519w

Nuclear physics
Daresbury 263w

Nuclear power
Tonga 501w

Nuclear reactors
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 164w

Nuclear safeguards
EURATOM 622w

Nuclear safety
Trawsfynydd power station 497w

Nuclear Suppliers Group
600w

Nuclear test ban
1073

Nuclear weapons
International Atomic Energy Agency 290w
Iraq 290w, 484w

Nuclear weapons policy
40w, 570

Nuclear weapons tests
Compensation 568-9
Exservicemen 568-9

Nursery schools
889
Educational finance 888-9
School population 324w
Wales 324w

Nurses
Career structure 79w
Pay 396w
Prescriptions 576w

Nurses' training
515w

Oban
Hospital beds 253-6w

Oban Hospital
253-6w
Construction 255w

Objects in lieu of tax
594w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Business statements 1221-2
Community charge 899

Obstetrics
Belfast 198-9w

Occupational deafness
377-8w

Occupational health
18-9
Civil servants' visits abroad 18

Occupational pensions
91w
Sex discrimination 466-7w

Occupational Pensions Board
Public appointments 100-1w

Occupied territories
109w
Educational institutions 291w
Israel 186-7w

Offences against children
Closed circuit television 545w

Office of Arts & Libraries
Government buildings 496w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 381w

Office of Electricity Regulation
501w
Public appointments 500w

Office of Fair Trading
28w, 222w, 303-4w, 596-7w

Office of Gas Supply
Costs 499w
Public appointments 499-500w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
269-70w

Office workers
Greater London 364w

Official cars
Parking offences 64w

Official engagements
205w, 378w, 520w, 579-80w

Official visits
Chile 40w
South Africa 518w

Offshore funds
592w

Offshore suppliers
Tax allowances 24w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Questions
Industrial disablement benefits, Social security benefits rules 465w
Psychiatry, Patient-professional relationship 147w

Oil pollution
Kuwait 106w, 216w, 359w
Persian Gulf 1w, 65w, 183w, 185-6w

Oil pollution control
Exxon Valdez 417-8w
Fires 405w
Marine Pollution Control Unit 1w
Research 405w

Oil revenues
12w
Balance of payments 180w

Old people's homes
Scotland 250w, 458w

1p coins
559

One parent benefit
Social security recipients 93-4w

One parent families
Income support 92w
Personal income 92w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 572
Questions
Armed forces, USSR 485w
Armed forces civilians, Manpower 379w
Armed forces deployment, US bases 486w
Armed forces discharges, Housing 485w
Armed forces discharges, Training 485w
Armed forces pay, Middle East 483w
CFE Treaty, Arms trade 488w
Defence equipment, North Atlantic Assembly 486w
Defence expenditure, European Security Conference 486w
Defence land 379w
Defence procurement, Defence review 486w
Defence review, Defence expenditure 486w
Direct fire weapons effect system, Defence procurement 485-6w
European Security Conference 488w
Royal Ordnance, Heckler & Koch 379-80w
USSR, CFE Treaty 487w
West Germany, Environment protection 485w

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 906-7
Questions
Fishing gear, Orders & regulations 604w
Irrigation, Water conservation 603w
Salmon, Fishing catches 602w
Water resources, Sports facilities 567w

Open College
Government grants 365-6w

Open University
Government grants 318-20w

Opencast mining
Planning permission 266w
Scotland 341-2w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 845
National Health Service (17:04:91) 452
Questions
Business statements 1215
Industrial strategy 898
Local Government Boundary Commission for England, Local government reform 392w

Opposition days
NHS (17:04:91) 450-522

Oppression
Iraq 135w, 288w
Kurdistan 158-9

Optical charges
Eye tests 156-7, (22:04:91) 876-82
Pensioners 156

Optical charges—continued
Spectacles 517w

Optical equipment
596w

Opticians
Manpower 517w

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:04:91) 39-40, (18:04:91) 558, (22:04:91) 787

Orbital roads
Greater London 347w

Orders & regulations
Fishing gear 604w

Organ donor cards
Driving licences 524w

Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
568w
UK contributions 22w

Orkney
Children in care 268w
Children's panels 254w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
Community charge 569
Economic policy 555

Orpington Hospital
(25:04:91) 1313-20

Outdoor recreation
Safety 225w
Wales 225w

Overseas aid
205w, 576w, 580-1w,
Developing countries 299-300w
Ethiopia 229w
Ghana 297-9w
Honduras 139w
Iraq 268-9w, 579w
Jordan 1086
Kurdistan 187w, 507-8w, 529w, 768-9, 1085-6
Middle East 299w
Myanmar 771-2
Nigeria 297-9w, 1074-5
Poland 454-5w
South Africa 769-70
Sudan 53w
Turkey 187w

Overseas Development
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
268-9w, 578-9w

Overseas trade
Chile 40w
Somalia 272w

Over-the-horizon radar
573w

Owen, David
898

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 26

Oxford Polytechnic
Educational standards 320w

Package holidays
Consumer protection 27w

Packaging
International conferences 305w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 683, 685-7, 689

Page, Mr Richard—continued
Questions
Higher civil servants, Scientific qualifications 442w

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 617
Questions
Corporation tax, EC countries 560
Pensioners, Low incomes 5

Paint
Exports 481w

Paisley
Educational assessment 459w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 587
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 720
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 640-2

Pakistan
Entry clearances 7-8w
Immigration applications 110-1w

Palestine
Elections 109w
Jordan 1086-7

Palestine Liberation Organisation
457-8w

Panorama
159

Parental contributions
Student grants 264w, 317w

Parish Councils (Access to Information) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741, (26:04:91) 1396

Parkhurst Prison
1197

Parking offences
Dept of the Environment 64w
Official cars 64w

Parliamentary building maintenance & repair
Victoria Tower 586w

Parliamentary precincts
Lighting 265w

Parliamentary Press Gallery
Times 537w

Parliamentary questions
293-4w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Africa, EC aid 188w
Africa, Food aid from UK 188w
Arms trade, Iraq 223w
China, Human rights 187w
China, Ministers' visits abroad 188w
China, Religious freedom 187-8w
Duty free allowances, EC internal trade 594w
PAYE, Building industry 384w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 206w

Partition
Cyprus 229w

Part-time employment
Men 71-2w
Scotland 71-4w
Unemployment benefits 541-2w
Women 71-4w

Passenger ships
Shipping safety (17:04:91) 447-9

Passengers
London Regional Transport 349w

Passive smoking
(23:04:91) 1062-70
Death 473w
Health hazards 283w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Questions
Cost per pupil, South Yorkshire 49-50w
Economic policy 160
Educational qualifications, Young people 891
Employment Service local offices, South Yorkshire 67w
Family doctors, Barnsley 82w
Hormone treatments, Surveys 81w
Hospital beds, Trent Regional Health Authority 81w
VAT, Theatre 21w

Patents
Drugs 32w

Patient-professional relationship
Psychiatry 147w

Patients
Dentists 398-400w
Ethnic groups 395w
Medical students 234w

***Patten, Rt Hon Chris**, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster*
Questions
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 537w

***Patten, Rt Hon John**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Questions
Charity Commission, Public appointments 5w
Community charge, Non-payment 4w
Community charge, Prison sentences 7w
Crime, Wandsworth 295-6w
Crime victims, Departmental publications 210w
Emergency Planning College, Expenditure 294w
Emergency Planning College, Management 295w
Emergency Planning College, Management consultants 294-5w
Emergency Planning College, Manpower 295w
False imprisonment, Compensation 6w
Fire Service College, Civil service agencies 132-3w
Fire services, Breathing apparatus 209w
Fire services, Channel tunnel 209-10w
Fire services, Manpower 210-2w
Fire services, Protective clothing 211w
Fires, Bedding 206-8w
Miscarriages of justice, Compensation 7w
Prerogative of mercy 6-7w, 298w
Rape, Sentencing 209w
Theft, Wandsworth 295w

Pawsey, Mr James
Questions
Truancy 51w

Pay review bodies
Teachers (17:04:91) 433-46

Pay settlements
British Rail 757
University teachers 50w, 588w

PAYE
Building industry 384w

Peace negotiations
Kurdistan 286w
Middle East 452-3w

Peaceful coexistence
Eastern Europe 1074
European Security Conference 1071-2

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
GATT, Multifibre arrangement 597w

Pelican crossings
Kibworth Harcourt 176w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Foundation for Sport & the Arts 23-4w, 217w, 232w, 243-4w
Infrastructure, Tameside 64w

Pennines
Conifers 391w
Roads 451w

Pensioners
Community charge 184-5w
Income support 88w
Low incomes 5
Optical charges 156
Personal income 90w
Personal savings 4-5
Social security benefits 91-2w, 159-60, 327-8w

Performance related pay
Civil service 20-1w

Perinatal mortality
401w

Persian Gulf
Ecology 65w
Nature conservation 65w
Oil pollution 1w, 65w, 183w, 185-6w

Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(17:04:91) 523-44

Personal income
190-1w
One parent families 92w
Pensioners 90w

Personal savings
Pensioners 4-5

Personal taxation
14-20w

Pest control
Fish farming 122-3w
Foxes 604w
Libyan Arab Republic 432w

Pesticide residues
Honey 360w
Sheep dipping 360-1w

Peterlee
Dept of Social Security local offices 192w
Hard core unemployed 364w

Petrol
Benzene 390w
Hydrocarbon oil duties 272-3w
Prices 590-1w

Petroleum exploration
South Atlantic 286w, 290w

Petroleum exploration licences
217-8w

Petroleum (Production) (Landward Areas) Regulations 1991
Questions
217-8w

Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme
79-80w

Phosphates
(16:04:91) 212-380

Photographs
Armed forces 102w

Photovoltaics
614-6w

Physical & social environment programme
Northern Ireland 200-1w

Physical education
Cricket 401w

Pig Husbandry Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1370-92

Pigs
Animal welfare (26:04:91) 1370-92

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Agriculture & Forestry (Financial Provisions) Bill, Money res (22:04:91) 873-4
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 223, 233, 281
Questions
Pensioners, Social security benefits 159-60
Roads, Pennines 451w
Sunday trading 533w

Plankton
Climate 492w

Planning appeals
Prestwich Hospital 63w

Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991
Debates etc.
(15:04:91) 39

Planning permission
Concrete batching plants 185w
Fairgrounds 358w
Heliports 63w
Opencast mining 266w
Port Seton 337w
Prestwich Hospital 144w

Plant diseases
Potatoes 552w

Playgrounds
Accidents 430w
Scotland 430w

Playing fields
Schools 402w

Plea bargaining
Scotland 605-6w

Plumbing
(19:04:91) 743-52

Plymouth Health Authority
157

Plymouth Marine Laboratory
Pollution monitoring 65w

Points of order
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:04:91) 20, (16:04:91) 164, 213-7, 265, (17:04:91) 517, (22:04:91) 787, (26:04:91) 1341-3, 1392-4, 1397-8

Poisoning
Wild animals 479w

Poland
Overseas aid 454-5w

Police
Contracts for services 442w

Police Complaints Authority
Public appointments 133w

Police custody
Greater Manchester 559-60w

Police deaths on duty
Life imprisonment 1200-1

Police interrogation
Rights of accused 532w

Police misconduct
West Midlands Police 766-7, 1196-7, 1201

Police vehicles
Death 275w, 341w
Scotland 341w

Polish Resettlement Act 1947
Questions
599w

Political parties
IRA 85w
Kurdistan 110w

Political prisoners
South Africa 51w, 577-8w, 1084

Political refugees
Civil service manpower 566w
Immigration applications 372w, 447w, 566w
Kurdistan 297-8w
South Africa 52w, 578w

Political risk reinsurance
(15:04:91) 40-116

Pollution control
Eastern Europe 770-1
Scotland 125w

Pollution Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Pollution

Pollution monitoring
Plymouth Marine Laboratory 65w
UN Environment Programme 183w

Polytechnics
Educational finance 890-1
Pay 587w

Polytechnics & Colleges' Funding Council
Government grants 320w

Poole Harbour
(23:04:91) 945-1054

Population
Scotland 329-30w

Port of London Authority
(23:04:91) 945-1054

Port Seton
Planning permission 337w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 51, 112
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 993

Porter, Mr David
Questions
Coastal protection 363w
Coastal protection, Finance 362-3w
Coastal protection, Norfolk 363w
Prison education services, Finance 296-7w
Tax allowances, Offshore suppliers 24w
Transport, Environmental impact assessment 420w

Portillo, Mr Michael, Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities
Debates etc.
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 526-34
Questions
Community charge, Local government revenue 53w
Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991, Government grants to local authorities 183-4w
Local government finance 391-2w
Local government services, Advisory services 265w, 357w
Urban programme 62w

Ports
Industrial accidents 279w

Ports Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep & 3R (23:04:91) 945-1054

Postgraduate education
Student grants 317-8w

Potatoes
Plant diseases 552w
Scotland 552w

Poverty
8-9

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 588-9
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 213
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 923

Powell, Mr William
Questions
A14, Contracts 214w
EC internal trade, Harmonisation of legislation 271-2w
Employee share ownership trusts, Private companies 382w
Profit sharing, Private companies 381-2w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate 143w

Power stations
Licensing 134w

PowerGen
28w, 53w, 498w

Prerogative of mercy
6-7w, 298w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 953-4, 962, 972-8, 981, 991-6, 1026-30
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 760
HM Coastguard, Costs 418w
Sea rescue, Equipment 418w
Sea rescue, Humberside 418w

Prescription charges
149w

Prescription charges exemptions
149w

Prescriptions
Nurses 576w

Press releases
Welsh Office 35w

Preston
Property development 65w

Prestwich Hospital
Hospital closures 80w, 233w, 397w
Planning appeals 63w
Planning permission 144w

Prestwick Airport
347w

Pre-trial procedures
Terrorism 1197-8

Price, Sir David
Questions
Community charge, Local government revenue 53w
Wheelchairs, Access to buildings 401w

Pricing
Non-fossil fuel obligation 498w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 34
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 912
Questions
Family conciliation services, Government grants 494w
South Africa, Apartheid 454w
Widows' benefits, Rent increases 465w

Primary education
Cost per pupil 407
Educational assessment 124w, 884-5, 893
Pupil-teacher ratios 307-8w
School administration 405w
Scotland 407

Primary health care
150

"Primary Testing"
254w

Prime Minister
566
Privatisation 520w
Public relations 577w

Prime Minister's questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (25:04:91) 1205

Prince of Wales Hospital Cardiff
Hospital closures 276w

Prison accommodation
Manchester Prison 559-60w

Prison education services
Arts 534w
Expenditure 207-9w
Finance 296-7w

Prison governors
177-8w

Prison leave
7w

Prison Officers' Association
559-60w

Prison sentences
Community charge 7w

Prison Service
372w, 559-60w

Prisoners
Death 561-4w
Drug abuse 534w

Prisoners of war
Japan 110w

Prisoners on remand
Administrative delays 765

Prisoners' transfers
Complaints 6w
Leeds Prison 6w
Northern Ireland 206w

Prisons
Construction 1199-200
Isle of Wight 1197
Race relations 177-8w
Sanitation 1197

Private Bills
Environmental impact assessment 61-2w

Private companies
Employee share ownership trusts 382w
Profit sharing 381-2w
Share option scheme 381-2w

Private Members' Bills
Speaker's rulings & statements (19:04:91) 742

Private Members' motions
Funerals (22:04:91) 788-818

Private roads
415-6w

Private sector
Vacant land 58w
Wheel clamps 524w

Privatisation
British Rail 347w, 756-7, 763-5
British Technology Group (16:04:91) 167-211, 381
Cabinet Office 442w
Central Office of Information 470w
Civil service agencies 39w
Electricity supply industry 134w, 498w
Fire services 372w
Health Education Authority 474w
Northern Ireland Electricity 475w, 581-2w
Prime Minister 520w
PSA Services 434w
Public transport 393-4w
Training Agency 511-2w

Probation
Family conciliation services 373-4w
Performance indicators 373w

Probation & aftercare
Costs 444-5w

Probation Committees
Merseyside 565w

Procurators fiscal
605w, 609-12w

Procurement
British Rail 347w

Production methods
Environment protection 305w

Productivity
19-20w

Professional qualifications
Judiciary 220-1w

Profit sharing
Private companies 381-2w

Profitability
Manufactured exports 512w

Project 2000
515w

Property development
Airports 581w
Greenbelt 437w
Hospitals 437w
Local enterprise companies 123w
Preston 65w
Scottish Enterprise 123w
Water supply (19:04:91) 737-40

Property insurance
Council tenants 536w

Property law
Security interests 482w

Property transfer
Cambridge Regional College 321-2w
Council housing 491-2w
Crofting 114-5w
Public houses 480w

Prosecutions
Administrative delays 408-9
British Aerospace 368w
Director of Public Prosecutions 495w
Drug crimes 611w
Fox hunting 372w
Quarrying 367w
Scotland 408-9
Shipping accidents 219w
Truancy 437w

Protective clothing
Fire services 211w

PSA Services
Privatisation 434w

Psychiatry
Patient-professional relationship 147w

Public Accounts Committee
(17:04:91) 544

Public appointments
Charity Commission 5w
Consumer councils 29-30w
Economic & Social Committee 518-9w
Food Advisory Committee 32-3w
Forestry Commission 549-51w
Health & Safety Executive 189w
Health authorities 344w
Interception of Communications Tribunal 133w
National Council for Vocational Qualifications 68-70w
NHS trusts 547w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards 84-5w
Northern Ireland health & social services councils 528w
Occupational Pensions Board 100-1w
Office of Electricity Regulation 500w
Office of Gas Supply 499-500w

Public appointments—continued
Police Complaints Authority 133w
Scottish health boards 402-4, 429w
Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee 203w

Public buildings
Terrorism 63w

Public expenditure
10w
Railway transport 133-4w
Roads 133-4w

Public Health Laboratory Service
473w

Public holidays
378w

Public houses
Brewing industry 480w
Property transfer 480w
Tenancy agreements 479-80w

Public inquiries
Road construction 3w

Public Order Act 1986
Questions
Trespass 5w, 442-3w

Public order offences
Alcoholic drinks 296w

Public order policing
Community charge 5w
Sports 296w

Public petitions
Animal experiments (24:04:91) 1183
Road traffic control (25:04:91) 1312
St Francis' School Notting Hill (26:04:91) 1321

Public relations
Cabinet Office 577w
Civil service manpower 565w, 571-2w, 575-7w, 583-4w, 589w, 592w, 599w, 603w, 620w
Dept of Education & Science 589w
Dept of Employment 585w
Dept of Energy 620w
Dept of Health 575w
Dept of Transport 571w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 599w
Health Education Authority 576w
Home Office 565w
Lord Chancellor 583-4w
Metropolitan Police 563-5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 603w
Ministry of Defence 572w
Prime Minister 577w
Training Agency 585w
Treasury 592w

Public sector debt
Interest charges 302w

Public sector housing
Building repairs 491w

Public sector housing sales
Borders region 119-22w, 618w
Scotland 120-1w, 197w

Public service pensions
22w

Public transport
London assessment studies 346w
Privatisation 393-4w

Publicity
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary 338w
Energy conservation 539w
Family credit 1-2
Leeds Development Corporation 436w

Punishment
Young offenders 1199

Pupil-teacher ratios
North Yorkshire 406w
Primary education 307-8w

Pupil-teacher ratios—continued
Secondary education 307-8w

Quarrying
Explosives 369-70w
Inspections 367-9w, 422w
Kilbarchan 422w
Prosecutions 367w
Scotland 339w, 367-70w

Queensferry
225w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 40-2, 44-8, 55, 76, 78, 87-8, 90-1, 93-4, 96, 102-5, 107, 111-3
Questions
Community charge, Costs 54w
Community charge benefits, Social security benefits rules 543w
Export representative service 31w
Industrial production 243w
National Health Service & Community Care Act 1990, Administrative costs 147w
Tin, Mining 305-6w

Race relations
Prisons 177-8w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 29-30

Radio
Fishing vessels 424w

Radio frequency radiation
Defence research 104-5w

Radioactive fallout
Compensation 519-20w, 540w, 557-8w
Farms 528w, 540w, 547w, 557w
Land pollution 557w

Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network
568w, 620-1w

Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R (26:04:91) 1322-40, 1344-69

Radioactive materials
290w

Radioactive waste disposal
568w
Scotland 458w

RAF Edzell
103w
Building alterations 103w

RAF Finningley
Air force strength 571-2w

RAF Lakenheath
Armed forces deployment 379w

Railway accidents
Aberdeen 527w
Docklands light railway 527w
Railway signals 527w
Tyne & Wear 763

Railway network
Barrow in Furness 761
Channel tunnel 2w, 450w, 525w, 753, 757-60
North West region 753-4
Stansted Airport 449-50w
Tyne & Wear 763

Railway property
Children 266-7w
Death 266-7w

Railway safety
North West region 754

Railway signals
Channel tunnel 759
Railway accidents 527w

Railway stations
Channel tunnel 350w
Terrorism 212-3w

Railway transport
Investment 348w
Public expenditure 133-4w
South East region 349w

Railway travel
Fenchurch Street Station 345w
Liverpool Street - Chelmsford railway line 762

Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Questions
Business statements 1212-3

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 1003-4
Questions
Sunday trading 1196

Rape
Sentencing 209w
Trials 219w

Rate arrears
Lambeth 356w

Rate Fund revenue accounts
Scotland 460-3w

Rate support grants
Scotland 194w

Rates & rating
Community charge reduction scheme 146w
Crown lands & estates 471-2w
Local government revenue 460-3w
Northern Ireland 582-4w
VAT 87w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Civil servants, Drug abuse 18-9

Ravenscraig steelworks
338-9w

Reading
402-3w
Teacher training 402w, 891-2
Teaching methods 892

Recreation spaces
Land acquisition 56-7w

Recruitment
Crown Prosecution Service 765
Headteachers 307w, 586w

Recycling
Defence equipment 104w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 104w

Red Crescent
579w

Redbridge London Borough Council Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 248
Forestry Commission Bill, 1R (16:04:91) 165-6
Questions
Animal cruelty, St Tudwal's Island East 558w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 443w
Army bases, Documents 530w
Computers in government departments, Ministry of Defence 484w
Employment Service local offices, Yorkshire & Humberside 422w
Fishing vessels 362w
Hunger strikes, Clarke, Gerald 475w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Per capita costs 384w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, War casualties 397-8w
Lewes Prison, Security 298w
Libyan Arab Republic, Pest control 432w
"Medical Manual of Defence Against Chemical Agents" 530w
Medical treatments, Chemicals 398w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Transport of radioactive materials 497w
RAF Finningley, Air force strength 571-2w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 537w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Education & Science 404w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Employment 365w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Energy 497w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Health 398w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Social Security 466w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of the Environment 435w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Transport 354w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 411w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Home Office 294w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Lord President of the Council 537-8w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Minister for the Civil Service 381w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 478w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Ministry of Defence 571w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Office of Arts & Libraries 381w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Scottish Office 618w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Treasury 512w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Welsh Office 538w
Social security benefits, Computers in government departments 600w
Teacher training, Graduates 405w
Teachers, Migrant workers 437-8w
Trawsfynydd power station, Nuclear safety 497w
UK companies abroad, Minting 595w

Reduced earnings allowance
601w

Redundancy
Clothing industry 157w
Higher education 309-11w
Scotland 339w

***Redwood, Mr John**, Minister of State for Industry*
Questions
Audit, Licensing 222w
Electricity supply industry, Immingham 28w
Foreign investment, Trade barriers 596w
New businesses, Greater London 504w
Public houses, Brewing industry 480w
Public houses, Property transfer 480w
Public houses, Tenancy agreements 479-80w
Restrictive trade practices, Football 597w
Restrictive trade practices, Newspaper press 596-7w
Subsidiary companies, Company liquidations 28w
Tootal Group, Company finance 28w
Tootal Group, Takeovers 27-8w, 304w
Transfer & automated registration of uncertificated stock, Upper Waiting Hall 27w
Unfair trading practices, Marinas 480-1w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 167-70, 196
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 27
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway signals 759
Educational assessment, Dyslexia 885

Referenda
Scottish Assembly 404-5

Refrigerators
Chlorofluorocarbons 304w

Refugee camps
(15:04:91) 21-39, 412w, (17:04:91) 419-32, (18:04:91) 571-83, 578-9w, (22:04:91) 773-86
Iraq 520-1w
Kurdistan 567

Refugees
Iraq (15:04:91) 21-39, 268-9w, 292w, 578-9w, 599w
Kurdistan 109w, 157-8, 599-600w
Kuwait 106w
South Africa 413w

Refuse derived fuel
614-6w

Regional arts boards
Arts finance 463-5w
Yorkshire & Humberside 8w

Registered Homes (Amendment) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
Rep* & 3R* (26:04:91) 1395

Rehabilitation centres
Manchester 6

Rehabilitation of offenders
Special training needs 363-4w

Reid, Dr John
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 938
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1226
Questions
Educational assessment, Scotland 407-8

Relate
Government grants 442w

Religious buildings
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 113w

Religious education
Curriculum 404-5w

Religious freedom
China 187-8w, 412w

Remission
Custodial treatment 131w

Rendering industry
Company liquidations 554w

Renfrew
Child abuse 618w
Youth training 459w

Rent Act 1977
Questions
182w

Rent arrears
Lambeth 356w

Rent increases
Income support 465w
Widows' benefits 465w

Rent officers
Wales 182w, 223-4w

Rent rebates
Expenditure 96-8w
Scotland 101w, 376w
Social security recipients 101w, 376w

***Renton, Rt Hon Tim**, Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Minister of State for the Arts)*
Questions
Arts, Greater London 16
Arts centres, Handicapped 14-5
Arts finance 9w
Arts finance, Community charge 8w
Arts finance, London boroughs grants scheme 13-7
Arts finance, North West region 8w
Arts finance, Regional arts boards 463-5w
Civil servants, Drug abuse 18-20
Civil servants' visits abroad, Occupational health 18
Civil service, EC nationals 39w
Civil service, Pay 39w
Civil service agencies 37-9w
Civil service agencies, Privatisation 39w
Civil Service Appeal Board, Ministry of Defence 595w
Foundation for Sport & the Arts 232w
Government buildings, Office of Arts & Libraries 496w
Higher civil servants, Women 17-8
Libraries, Durham 232w
London City Ballet, Arts finance 16
Ministers' domestic visits, Scotland 8w
Museums & galleries 9w
Objects in lieu of tax 594w
Regional arts boards, Yorkshire & Humberside 8w
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Arts finance 8w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Minister for the Civil Service 381w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Office of Arts & Libraries 381w
Theatre, Educational finance 381w
Women's employment, Equal opportunities 18

"Report of the Review Body on Civil Justice" 494w

Representation of the People (Amendment) Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(22:04:91) 787

Representation of the People (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1991
Debates etc.
(23:04:91) 941

Republic of Ireland
Beef 143w

Research
Expenditure 36-7w
Oil pollution control 405w
Sterilisation 80-1w
Wales 36-7w

Research facilities
263w

Research finance
Science & technology research 883-4

Reserve Free Travel Scheme (London) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741, (26:04:91) 1396

Residential care
Greater Glasgow Health Board 196w

Resource management initiative
344-5w
Huddersfield Health Authority 149w

Restrictive trade practices
Football 597w
Newspaper press 596-7w

Retail price index
384-6w

Retirement pensions
327w, 469w
Social security benefits rates 5-6

Revenue support grant
Local government expenditure 144w

Review bodies
Teachers (19:04:91) 675

"Review of Security Interests in Property" 482w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Questions
Science & technology research 884

Rhododendron
Weed control 265w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Questions
Geography education, Teaching methods 50-1w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1156, 1172-4
Questions
Audit, Licensing 222w
Business statements 1217
Community charge reduction scheme 146w
Resource management initiative, Huddersfield Health Authority 149w
Security interests, Property law 482w
Teacher training, Reading 891-2

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas,
Questions
Revenue support grant, Local government expenditure 144w

***Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air safety, Smoke hoods 451w
British Rail, Nationalised industries borrowing 133w
British Rail, Pay settlements 757
British Rail, Privatisation 763-5
British Rail, Share option scheme 756-7
Channel tunnel, Railway network 757-60
Channel tunnel, Railway signals 759
EC Transport Council 448-9w

Right of repair
491w

Rights of accused
Police interrogation 532w

Rights of way
HMS Daedalus 104w

River Humber
Navigation 419w

River Ouse
Navigation 419w
Shipping accidents 419-20w

River pollution
River Severn 236-7w

River Safety Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (17:04:91) 447-9

River Severn
Bridges 214-5w
Floods 236-7w
River pollution 236-7w

RNSD Eaglescliffe
529w

Road accidents
A19 175w
A65 570w
Motorways 526w

Road closures
522w

Road construction
A55 409-10w
Clifton bypass 525w

***Road construction**—continued*
Dalton-in-Furness bypass 760
Land acquisition 416w
M11 416w
M12 450w
M20 355-6w
M65 524w
M66 354w
North Devon 346w
Public inquiries 3w
Sites of special scientific interest 3w
Welshpool bypass 578w

Road freight transport
Transport of radioactive materials (26:04:91) 1322-40, 1344-69

Road safety
EC action 416-7w
EC law 449w

Road safety barriers
A494 225w
M62 522w

Road signs
M1 214w
North Devon link road 523w

Road tolls
352-4w
Road traffic 528w
Severn bridge 2w, 214-5w, 355w

Road traffic
Motorways 528w
MVA Consultancy 4w
Road tolls 528w

Road traffic control
Border security in Ireland 88w
Public petitions (25:04:91) 1312

Road works
A1 450w
A2 349-50w
A13 351-2w, 525-6w
A38 527-8w
A65 569w
A66 351-2w
A69 761-2
Chelmsford bypass 450w
M6 522w
Motorways 526w

Roads
Cleaning services 4w
Pennines 451w
Public expenditure 133-4w
Scotland 460w
Wales 578w

***Roberts, Sir Wyn**, Minister of State for Wales*
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 345
Questions
A494, Road safety barriers 225w
A55, Road construction 409-10w
Broadcasting, Departmental responsibilities 408-9w
Education, Wales 224w
Educational assessment, Wales 409w
M4, Speed limits 539-40w
Nature conservation, Estuaries 136w
Nursery schools, School population 324w
Roads, Wales 578w
Science & technology research, Wales 136-7w
Secondary education, Technicians 223w
Teachers, Languages education 224w
Teachers, Scientific qualifications 407-8w
Teachers, Sick leave 578w
Teachers, Wales 408w
Truancy, Wales 223w
Welshpool bypass, Road construction 578w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Nuclear test ban 1073

Rodents
Alphachloralose 271w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Debates etc.
Garden Supplies (Sunday Trading) Bill, 1R (23:04:91) 942-4
Questions
Irrigation, East Anglia 430-1w
Water supply, Horticulture 390-1w

ROF Bishopton
Industrial health & safety 368w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, Rem stages (24:04:91) 1092-7, 1102-3, 1105, 1107-8, 1110-3, 1116-20, 1125-6, 1132, *1134-6, 1139-41*
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 213-4, 216-7, 219-22, 224-6, 228, 230, 234-7, 240-3, 249-50, 253-4, 256, 262-4, 267, 270, 280-1, 288, 291-2, 305, 331-3, 353, 356, 358-61, 372-4, 377
Questions
Armed forces housing, Building repairs 302-3w
Explosives, Defence procurement 104w
International Military Services, Arms exports 104w
RAF Edzell 103w
RAF Edzell, Building alterations 103w

Romania
Adoption 233w, 1087-8

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 492, 504-11
Questions
Community care, Voluntary organisations 146
Joint financing, Expenditure 151-2w
Mental health community care, Government grants to local authorities 84w

Rooney, Mr Terry
Questions
Training & enterprise councils, Bradford 509w

Rose Theatre
Upper Waiting Hall 266w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Questions
Tayside Health Board, Contracts for services 413

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 908
Questions
Capital investment, Northern Ireland 170w
Castle Court Belfast, Civil service dispersal 167-9w
Employment level, Northern Ireland 169-70w
Employment opportunities, Londonderry 169-70w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 169-74w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 166-8w
Local government staff, Northern Ireland District Councils 167w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland 582-4w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Questions
Civil service agencies 37-9w
Day surgery 155-6
Health services, Ethnic minorities 148-9w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 214-5, 233-41, 259, 275, 277, 359-60, 367, 378
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 820-2, 828, 830, 856, 861-2

Rowlands, Mr Ted—continued
Funerals (22:04:91) 789
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 922
Questions
Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill 1990/91, Standard community charge 35w

Royal Army Ordnance Corps
103w

Royal Engineers
102w

Royal Liverpool Hospital
Multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus 395w

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
Arts finance 8w

Royal Maternity Hospital Belfast
198-9w

Royal Military Academy
Mascots 105w

Royal Ordnance
104w
Heckler & Koch 379-80w

Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
233-4w, 407-8w

Royal Postgraduate Medical School
Animal experiments 274w

Royston
Gas accidents 221-2w

Ruddock, Mrs Joan
Debates etc.
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1342
Questions
Abortion 78w
British Rail, Privatisation 764-5
Haberdashers' Aske's School, City technology colleges 321w, 440-1w
Haberdashers' Aske's School, Ethnic groups 321w
Lorry drivers, Driving licences 175w
Road construction, Public inquiries 3w
Road construction, Sites of special scientific interest 3w
Roads, Public expenditure 133-4w

Rumbold, Rt Hon Angela, Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
Animal experiments, Codes of practice 4w
Animal experiments, Cosmetics 443w
Animal experiments, Dogs 273-4w
Animal experiments, Inspections 274-5
Animal welfare, Local government staff 447-8w
Community service orders 532w
Custodial treatment, Remission 131w
Durham Prison, Sanitation 445w
Leeds Prison, Suicide 566w
Lewes Prison, Security 298w
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry, Law reform 5w
Police custody, Greater Manchester 559-60w
Prison education services, Arts 534w
Prison education services, Expenditure 207-9w
Prison education services, Finance 296-7w
Prison leave 7w
Prisoners, Death 561-4w
Prisoners, Drug abuse 534w
Prisoners' transfers, Complaints 6w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 206w
Prisons, Construction 1199-200
Prisons, Race relations 177-8w
Prisons, Sanitation 1197
Sunday trading 533w, 1194-6
Sunday trading, Employment protection 1194-5

Safer cities scheme
1193-4, 1203
Leicestershire 1194

Safety standards
Glass 144w
MV Polly Anna 449w

Sainsbury, Mr Tim, Minister of State for Trade
Debates etc.
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 42-3, 49-56, 58, 67-8, 70-2, 75-9, 82-4, 87-9, 91-7, 103-7, 109-11
Questions
Arms exports, Export licensing 595w
Arms exports, Export promotion 597w
Arms trade, East Timor 28w
Arms trade, Iraq 223w, 597-8w
Arms trade, Middle East 597-8w
Balance of trade, Cars 596w
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 503w
Defence procurement, Arms control 138w
EC internal trade, Harmonisation of legislation 271-2w
Export representative service 31w
Exports, Iraq 414w
Foreign companies in UK, Iraq 304w
GATT, Multifibre arrangement 597w
Industrial production, EC countries 304-5w
Iron & steel industry, Subsidies 305w
Kuwait, Contracts 138w
Manufactured exports 481w
Overseas trade, Somalia 272w
Paint, Exports 481w
Sheffield Forgemasters, Arms exports 272w
Sollatek UK, Iraq 414w
Trade competitiveness 481w
UK companies abroad, Government grants 138-9w
UK companies abroad, Minting 595w

St Francis' School Notting Hill
Public petitions (26:04:91) 1321

St John Ambulance Association & Brigade
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 537w
Dept of Education & Science 404w
Dept of Employment 365w
Dept of Energy 497w
Dept of Health 398w
Dept of Social Security 466w
Dept of the Environment 435w
Dept of Transport 354w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 411w
Fund raising 294w, 354w, 365w, 381w, 398w, 404w, 411w, 435w, 466w, 478w, 497w, 512w, 537-8w, 571w, 618w
Home Office 294w
Lord President of the Council 537-8w
Minister for the Civil Service 381w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 478w
Ministry of Defence 571w
Office of Arts & Libraries 381w
Scottish Office 618w
Treasury 512w
Welsh Office 538w

St Paul's Eye Hospital Liverpool
Hospital closures 154-5

St Thomas More School Denton
Curriculum 438w

St Tudwal's Island East
Animal cruelty 558w

Salford Health Authority
63w, 144w

Salmon
Fishing catches 602w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 595
Questions
Economic situation, Scotland 562-3
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 196w, 338-9w
Scottish Assembly, Referenda 404-5
Trade & Industry Select Committee, British Steel Corporation 338w

Salmonella
Surveys 473w

Sanitation
Durham Prison 445w
Prisons 1197

Saudi Arabia
International Military Services 104w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Local government 900

Scaffolding
Victoria Tower 300w

Schengen Agreement
413w

School administration
Budgeting 137w, 323w
Leicestershire 215-6w
Primary education 405w

School admission
Northern Ireland 83-4w

School boards
459w

School buildings
Asbestos 440w
Capital investment 438-40w

School choice
Appeals 176w
Northern Ireland 87w

School crossing patrols
Greater London 534w

School libraries
Durham 438w

School population
Nursery schools 324w

School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
(17:04:91) 433-46

School Teachers' Pay & Conditions (No 2) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (19:04:91) 675

Schools
Arson 427w
Ministers' domestic visits 900
Playing fields 402w
Sports 404w
Technicians 177w

Science & Engineering Research Council
263w, 404-5w, 883-4

Science & technology research
884
Research finance 883-4
Wales 136-7w

Science education
Teachers 177w
Wales 407-8w

Scientific Procedures Inspectorate
274-5w

Scientific qualifications
Higher civil servants 442w
Teachers 407-8w

Scope of debate
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 219-21, 225, 227-8, 239-43, 251, 254, 303, 305-6, 333, 339, 351-2, 356, 380, (18:04:91) 604, 618, (19:04:91) 712, 714, 719, (22:04:91) 873, (23:04:91) 993, (24:04:91) 1126, (25:04:91) 1294, (26:04:91) 1333, 1339, 1348-52, 1354-7, 1361-3, 1365-6, 1372

Scotland
Administration of justice 409-10
Alcohol & crime 336w, 427w

Scotland*—*continued
Alternative energy 459w, 614-6w
Arson 427w
Average earnings 615-8w
Blood transfusion services 248-9w
Breast cancer 122w
Cancer 267-8w, 548w
Capital value rating 405-6
Charities 428w
Child abuse 337w, 618-9w
Children in care 159-60w, 423-4w
Community care 250w, 401-2, 459-60w
Community charge 162-3w, 193-5w, 197w, 411-2
Community charge grant 255-6w
Community charge register 163w
Community charge review 194w
Compulsorily detained mental patients (17:04:91) 446, (26:04:91) 1395
Criminal proceedings 428w, 606-10w, 612-4w
Criminal statistics 337w
Crofting 113-7w
Drinking & driving 336w
Drug crimes 610w
Drunkenness 249-50w, 334-5w
Economic situation 562-3
Educational assessment 113w, (15:04:91) 117-38, 124w, 407-8
Educational finance 118-9w, 252w, 256w
Electorate 335-6w
Employment level 413, 567
Employment training 330-4w, 414-6
Enterprise initiative 423-4w
Environment protection 160-1w
Environmental health officers 340w
European Investment Bank 125w
Family doctors 248w
Fire services 254w, 408
Firearms 339-40w
Fish conservation 195w
Fishery protection 417
Fishing vessels 424w
Forestry Commission regional advisory committees 161w
Further education 890
Geriatric patients 250w, 252w
Health service staff 249w, 252-4w
Health services 251w
Higher education admission 406-7
HM Inspectorate of Schools 124-6w
Households 161-2w
Housing 163-4w
Housing & elderly 544w
Housing benefits 376-7w
Housing problems 196w
Immigration appeals 496w
Income support 89w, 329w
Industrial investment 127-30w, 329w
Iron & steel industry 196w, 338-9w
Land ownership & tenure 119w
Legal aid scheme (16:04:91) 382-92
Legal profession 605w, 609-12w
Local government 402
Local government expenditure 130w, 159w, 428w
Local government finance 19-20w, 126-8w, 193w, 195w, 245-6w, (23:04:91) 927-41
Local government revenue 125-6w
Local government services 127-8w
Local government social services 267w
Local tax 402, 405-6
Low pay 70w, 74-6w, 616-8w
Medical audit 250-1w
Mentally handicapped 425-6w
Ministers' domestic visits 8w
New towns 197w
NHS trusts 416, 545-7w
Old people's homes 250w, 458w
Opencast mining 341-2w
Part-time employment 71-4w
Playgrounds 430w
Plea bargaining 605-6w
Police vehicles 341w
Pollution control 125w
Population 329-30w
Potatoes 552w
Primary education 407
Prosecutions 408-9

Scotland*—*continued
Public sector housing sales 120-1w, 197w
Quarrying 339w, 367-70w
Radioactive waste disposal 458w
Rate Fund revenue accounts 460-3w
Rate support grants 194w
Redundancy 339w
Rent rebates 101w, 376w
Roads 460w
Self-employed 337-8w
Sheriffs 123-4w
Social Fund 328w
Social security recipients 97-9w
Social work 425-6w
Special education 544-6w
Special schools 459w
Speech impaired 177w, 429w
Student grants 123w, 246-7w
Teachers 459w
Technical & vocational education initiative 334w
Television reception 375-6w
Tenants 163w
Tenants' choice 120w
Training 195w, 416
Trials 606w
Unemployment 123w, 195w
Water pollution 118w
Water supply 418
Working hours 615-6w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Established Church Bill, 2R order read (26:04:91) 1395
Questions
Aids for handicapped, Technological change 6, 89w
Attendance allowance, Social security recipients 236w
Attendance Allowance Board, Members' correspondence 100w
Crisis loans 236w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Peterlee 192w
Disability living allowance, Elderly 270w
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 10-1
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 3-4
Haemophilia, Earnings rules 11
Handicap benefits 269-70w
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 3, 89-90w
Handicap benefits, Social security benefits rates 4
Industrial disablement benefits, Social security benefits rules 465w
Invalid care allowances, Earnings rules 90w
Mobility allowance, Take-up 4
Occupational deafness 377-8w
Rehabilitation centres, Manchester 6
Sickness benefits, Social security recipients 98w
Social Fund, Debt collection 542w
Social Fund, Expenditure 270w
Social Fund, Leicestershire 466w
Social Fund, Scotland 328w
Social security benefits, Carers 235w
Social security benefits reductions, Criminal injuries compensation 466w
Vibration white finger, Social security appeals 601w

Scottish Assembly
404
Referenda 404-5

Scottish Constitutional Convention
404-5

Scottish Consumer Council
29-30w

Scottish courts
Glasgow 543w

Scottish Development Agency
547-8w

Scottish Enterprise
195w, 337w
Property development 123w

Scottish Fishermens Federation
195w

Scottish health boards
Capital 160w
Contracts for services 249w
NHS trusts 547w
Public appointments 402-4, 429w

Scottish Homes
119-22w, 197w, 618w

Scottish Natural Heritage
(25:04:91) 1223-311

Scottish Office
Advertising 619w
Expenditure 457w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 618w
Surveys 458w

Screening
Breast cancer 122w, 342w
Sickle cell disease 233w

Sea rescue
Equipment 418w
Humberside 418w

Seaham
Dept of Social Security local offices 192w
Hard core unemployed 364w

Seahouses
237w

Secondary education
Educational standards 587w
Expenditure 587w
Newham 895-6
Pupil-teacher ratios 307-8w
Technicians 223w

Secondhand goods
VAT 273w

Security
Lewes Prison 298w

Security guards
Ministry of Defence 572-3w

Security interests
Property law 482w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 251, 284-5
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1371
Questions
Prerogative of mercy 298w

Self-catering accommodation
383-4w

Self-determination of states
East Timor 205-6w
Indonesia 206w

Self-employed
Scotland 337-8w

Sellafield
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 497w

Sentencing
Rape 209w

Separate taxation of wife's earnings
Tax administration 301w, 591w

Service Children's Education Authority
Civil service agencies 380-1w

Service industries
Pay 302w

Set-aside schemes
555w

Severn bridge
Operating costs 2-3w
Road tolls 2w, 214-5w, 355w

Severn Estuary
Special protection areas 490w

Sex discrimination
Occupational pensions 466-7w

Shakespeare, William
Curriculum 506w

Shard Bridge Bill 1989/90
Debates etc.
Lords amendts* (24:04:91) 1071

Share option scheme
British Rail 756-7
Private companies 381-2w

Sharks
Hong Kong 112w, 288w

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 978-9
Questions
USA, Foreign relations 456w

Shaw, Sir Giles
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 580
Questions
Interest rates 563

Sheep dipping
361w
Health hazards 361w
Pesticide residues 360-1w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
Emergency Planning College, Expenditure 294w
Emergency Planning College, Management 295w
Emergency Planning College, Management consultants 294-5w
Emergency Planning College, Manpower 295w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 1202-3
National Council for Vocational Qualifications, Public appointments 68-70w
Prisoners, Death 561-4w
Relate, Government grants 442w

Sheffield Forgemasters
Arms exports 272w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Questions
Corporation tax 561

***Shephard, Mrs Gillian**, Minister of State, Treasury*
Questions
Advertising, Treasury 593w
Car tax 589w
Civil servants, Dorset 142w
Civil service, Performance related pay 20-1w
Civil service manpower, Greater London 21w
Customs & Excise, Heliports 24w
Customs & Excise, Northern Ireland 24w
Duty free allowances, EC internal trade 594w
Foundation for Sport & the Arts, Finance 301w
Hydrocarbon oil duties, EC action 590-1w
Hydrocarbon oil duties, Petrol 272-3w
Public relations, Treasury 592w
Public service pensions 22w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Treasury 512w
VAT 26w, 273w
VAT, Holiday accommodation 26w
VAT, Horses 21w
VAT, Knitting yarns 273w
VAT, Medical treatments 594w
VAT, Secondhand goods 273w
VAT, Tax rates & bands 238-9w
VAT, Theatre 21w

***Shephard, Mrs Gillian**—continued*
VAT exempted goods, Tax yields 239w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 368-9, 371
Questions
Farm incomes 1205

Sheriffs
543-4w
Pay 123w
Scotland 123-4w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Questions
Bail 446w
Greenbelt, Greater London 569w
HMS Endurance, South Atlantic 135w
Paint, Exports 481w
Young offenders, Children in care 373w

Shipping accidents
Bridges 419-20w
Fishing vessels 755
MV Marchioness 219w
MV Pescado 415w
Prosecutions 219w
River Ouse 419-20w

Shipping safety
3-4w
Fishing vessels 755-6
Northern Ireland (22:04:91) 874-5
Passenger ships (17:04:91) 447-9

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 25
Questions
Business statements 1214
EC external relations, Voting methods 1078
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Culloden School 406-7w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Tower Hamlets 407w
Iraq, Geneva Conventions 412-3w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 427, (22:04:91) 780
Questions
Iraq, Democracy 1077
West Midlands Police, Police misconduct 766-7

Showmen's Guild of Great Britain
358w

Shropshire
Grant maintained schools 402w

Sick leave
Teachers 438w, 459w, 578w

Sickle cell disease
Screening 233w

Sickness benefits
Social security recipients 98w

Silcott, Winston
1201

Sillars, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 27-8
Questions
Arthritis Care 429w
Criminal proceedings, Scotland 606-10w
Drug crimes, Prosecutions 611w
Housing problems, Scotland 196w
Legal profession, Drug crimes 610w
Legal profession, Manpower 605w, 609-12w
Legal profession, Pay 610-1w
Mentally handicapped, Scotland 425-6w
Plea bargaining, Scotland 605-6w
Scottish courts, Glasgow 543w
Scottish Office, Expenditure 457w
Sheriffs 543-4w

Sillars, Mr Jim—continued
Small businesses, Billing 282w
Trials, Scotland 606w

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 684, 708-10
Questions
Cancer Services Advisory Committee 395-6w
Divorce, Marriage guidance 147w
Family conciliation services, Government grants 221w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 6-7

Single parents
Social security claims 12

Sites of special scientific interest
Road construction 3w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 170-3, 193, 197
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 678, 681-2, 686, 691, 693-4, 698, 703-4, 710-1
Questions
Jordan, Overseas aid 1086

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 598
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 289, 292-3, 296-7, 380
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 600
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 576
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 781
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1393
Oral question time intervention (18:04:91) 557, 558, 562
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 440
Questions
British Rail, Pay settlements 757
Business statements 1213
Civil service, Pay 39w

Slaughterhouses
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 41-2w
Company liquidations 476w

Small businesses
Billing 282w
Corporation tax 238w
Government assistance 301w

Small claims
494w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
Adult education, Expenditure 308-9w
Cambridge Regional College, Construction 322w
Cambridge Regional College, Debts 322w
Cambridge Regional College, Property transfer 321-2w
Cambridge Regional College, Student accommodation 322w
Discretionary student grants, Expenditure 314-5w
Higher education, Cost per student 441w
Higher education, Early retirement 309-11w
Higher education, Expenditure 316w
Higher education, Libraries 315w
Higher education, Pay 311-4w
Higher education, Staff-student ratios 310w
Higher education, Student numbers 313-4w
Mandatory student grants, Expenditure 319-20w
Open College, Government grants 365-6w
Open University, Government grants 318-20w
Oxford Polytechnic, Educational standards 320w

Smith, Mr Andrew—continued
Polytechnics & Colleges' Funding Council, Government grants 320w
Postgraduate education, Student grants 317-8w
Reading, Teaching methods 892
Student grants, Costs 316-7w
Student grants, Parental contributions 317w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1275-6
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 759
Homosexuality, Isle of Man 560w
Metropolitan Police 560w
Social security benefits reductions, Criminal injuries compensation 466w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Women's employment, Equal opportunities 18

Smith, Rt Hon John
Questions
Economic situation 555-6

Smith, Mr John P
Questions
Outdoor recreation, Safety 225w
Prisons, Construction 1200

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Company accounts 25w
District health authorities, Audit 150w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 452-3w
Mineral resources, Extractive industries 568-9w
Taxation, Departmental correspondence 140w

Smoke control areas
357w

Smoke detection
(16:04:91) 164, (26:04:91) 1396-7

Smoke Detectors Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (16:04:91) 164
2R order read (19:04:91) 742
2R* & rem stages* (26:04:91) 1396-7

Smoke hoods
Air safety 451w

Smoking
Chemists shops 150w
Death 473w
Health hazards (23:04:91) 1062-70
Industrial health & safety (24:04:91) 1088

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 590
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 709, 719-20
Plumbing (19:04:91) 748
Questions
VAT, Low incomes 565

Snape, Mr Peter
Questions
Consumer protection, Package holidays 27w
Motorways, Lighting 213w
Railway safety, North West region 754

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 427
Questions
Commonwealth 287w
South Africa, Foreign policy 522w
Teacher training, Reading 892

Social Fund
Debt collection 542w
Expenditure 270w

Social Fund—continued
Leicestershire 466w
Scotland 328w

Social security
Expenditure 192w

Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986
Questions
326w, 465-6w

Social Security Appeal Tribunals
602w

Social security appeals
465-6w, 602w
Social Security Commissioners 289w
Vibration white finger 601w

Social security benefits
90w
Carers 235w
Civil service agencies 7-8
Computers in government departments 9, 600w
Dependants 95w
Long stay patients 328w
Marginal tax rates 92w
Pensioners 91-2w, 159-60, 327-8w

Social Security Benefits Agency
7

Social security benefits rates
Child benefit 2-3, 238w
Handicap benefits 4
Retirement pensions 5-6

Social security benefits reductions
Criminal injuries compensation 466w

Social security benefits rules
Community charge benefits 543w
Family credit 91w
Industrial disablement benefits 465w

Social security benefits uprating
Child benefit 12
Child support 191-2w

Social security claims
Administrative delays 6-7, 9
Cold weather payments 174w
Family credit 91w, 328-9w, 542-4w
Income support 236w
Norwich 99-100w
Single parents 12
Unemployment benefits 235-6w

Social Security Commissioners
Cardiff 289w
Social security appeals 289w

Social Security (Contributions) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
1R (25:04:91) 1222

Social security recipients
94-6w
Attendance allowance 236w
Disability living allowance 10-1
Disability working allowance 10-1
Family credit 90w
Housing benefits 98w
Income support 89w
Invalidity benefits 98w
One parent benefit 93-4w
Rent rebates 101w, 376w
Scotland 97-9w
Sickness benefits 98w

Social Services Inspectorate
149-50w

Social work
Local government expenditure 425-6w
Scotland 425-6w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Council housing, Property transfer 491-2w
Miscarriages of justice 534w
Mortgage interest rates, Mortgage relief 11w

Solihull
Urban planning 489w

Sollatek UK
Iraq 414w

Somalia
Overseas trade 272w

South Africa
453w, 1084
Apartheid 453-4w
Economic sanctions 1083-5
Foreign policy 522w, 577w
Human rights 52w, 577w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 519w
Official visits 518w
Overseas aid 769-70
Political prisoners 51w, 577-8w, 1084
Political refugees 52w, 578w
Refugees 413w
UN General Assembly 51-2w

South Atlantic
HMS Endurance 135w
Petroleum exploration 286w, 290w

South Circular road
346-7w

South East region
Greenbelt 390w
Railway transport 349w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
576w

South Glamorgan Health Authority
276w

South London
504w

South Shields
237w

South West Regional Health Authority
153

South Yorkshire
Cost per pupil 49-50w
Employment Service local offices 67w

Southport
Tourist industry 510-1w

***Speaker and his deputies**, For rulings & statements see separate heading Speaker's rulings & statements*
Debates etc.
Amendments & new clauses (15:04:91) 45, 68, 77, 79-80, 86, 90, 105, (16:04:91) 167, 218, 245, 249, (17:04:91) 450, (18:04:91) 599, (19:04:91) 676, 693, 704, (22:04:91) 819, 831, 853, 855, 858, 863, (23:04:91) 945, 952, 964, 968, 984, 1008, 1019, 1025, 1035, 1038-9, (24:04:91) 1092, 1116, (25:04:91) 1264, 1290
By election writs, Monmouth (23:04:91) 883
Members' deaths, Stradling Thomas, John (15:04:91) 1
Orders & regulations motions (17:04:91) 446, 523, (22:04:91) 787
Private Bills, 2R order read (18:04:91) 553, (25:04:91) 1191
Private Members' Bills, 2R order read (19:04:91) 741-2, (26:04:91) 1393-4
Procedure (15:04:91) 17, (16:04:91) 153, 289-90, (17:04:91) 403, (18:04:91) 593, (19:04:91) 703, (22:04:91) 762, 830, (25:04:91) 901, 903, 908

Speaker's rulings & statements
Amendments & new clauses (16:04:91) 199, 248
Business questions (18:04:91) 586, 590, 596, 597, (25:04:91) 1215
Calling of Members (15:04:91) 34, 39, (16:04:91) 243, (17:04:91) 422, 429, 432, (18:04:91) 573, (22:04:91) 757, 758, (23:04:91) 891, 892, 999

***Speaker's rulings & statements**—continued*
Closure of debate (16:04:91) 248, 329, 360, 367
Committee stage (26:04:91) 1396-7
House of Commons divisions (16:04:91) 244, 288
House of Commons questions (23:04:91) 917
House of Commons Whips (16:04:91) 217-8
Members' conduct (16:04:91) 378, (18:04:91) 562, (24:04:91) 1077, (25:04:91) 1302
Members' interests (26:04:91) 1379
Members' interventions (16:04:91) 298, 361, (18:04:91) 558, (22:04:91) 804, 861, 864, (25:04:91) 1283-4, (26:04:91) 1364, 1373, 1375-6
Members' speeches (15:04:91) 126, 132, 135, (16:04:91) 288, (17:04:91) 509, (18:04:91) 604, (23:04:91) 966, (25:04:91) 1229, (26:04:91) 1383
Ministerial statements (16:04:91) 272, 282, 375, 377, (17:04:91) 438-9, 443, 446, (18:04:91) 582, (19:04:91) 695, (22:04:91) 778, (23:04:91) 905, 911-4, 921-2, 931, (26:04:91) 1341-3, 1392-4, 1397-8
New clauses (16:04:91) 167
Oral questions (15:04:91) 39-40, (18:04:91) 558, (22:04:91) 787
Points of order (15:04:91) 20, (16:04:91) 164, 213-7, 265, (17:04:91) 517, (22:04:91) 787, (26:04:91) 1341-3, 1392-4, 1397-8
Prime Minister's questions (25:04:91) 1205
Private Members' Bills (19:04:91) 742
Scope of debate (16:04:91) 219-21, 225, 227-8, 239-43, 251, 254, 303, 305-6, 333, 339, 351-2, 356, 380, (18:04:91) 604, 618, (19:04:91) 712, 714, 719, (22:04:91) 873, (23:04:91) 993, (24:04:91) 1126, (25:04:91) 1294, (26:04:91) 1333, 1339, 1348-52, 1354-7, 1361-3, 1365-6, 1372
Supplementary questions (15:04:91) 8, (16:04:91) 151, (17:04:91) 409, (18:04:91) 566, 569, (22:04:91) 763, (23:04:91) 889, (24:04:91) 1081
Ten minutes rule (17:04:91) 450, 477, 501, (18:04:91) 599, 625
Unparliamentary expressions (16:04:91) 163, (25:04:91) 1287-8, (26:04:91) 1373

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 627-30
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 35
London Ambulance Service (18:04:91) 666-71
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 950-2, 1000, 1004, 1021-3, 1025, 1035-7, 1039-40, 1048-9
Questions
Bus services, Greater London 347w
Commonwealth, Agricultural production 299w
Health authorities, Conflict of interests 83-4w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, United Nations Disaster Relief Office 292w
Secondary education, Newham 895-6
United Nations 291w

Special education
306-7w
Bramble, Nigel 287w
Scotland 544-6w

Special protection areas
136w
Birds 145w
EC law 145w
Severn Estuary 490w

Special schools
Scotland 459w
Speech impaired 177w

Special training needs
414-5, 452w
Employment training 421w
Rehabilitation of offenders 363-4w

Spectacles
Optical charges 517w

Speech impaired
Scotland 177w, 429w
Special schools 177w

Speech therapists
Manpower 77-8w

Speech therapy
Expenditure 343w

Speed, Mr Keith
Questions
Cyprus, Arms trade 285-6w
M20, Road construction 355-6w

Speed governors
Cars 450w
EC action 571w
Lorries 175w, 571w

Speed limits
A303 754-5
Harmonisation of legislation 570w
M4 539-40w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Air pollution, Coke 306w
Coinage, Vending machines 559
District health authorities, Devon 153
Industrial noise 437w
Nigeria, Democracy 1074-5
Nigeria, Overseas aid 297-9w
North Devon link road, Road signs 523w
Road construction, North Devon 346w
Vegetables, Food imports 41-2w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 642-3
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 29
Malta, Monuments (15:04:91) 140-1
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 525

Sports
Broadcasting controls 178w
Public order policing 296w
Schools 404w

Sports administration
Corporation tax 561

Sports facilities
Water resources 567w

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 913
Plumbing (19:04:91) 743-7

Staff-student ratios
Higher education 310w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 30
Orpington Hospital (25:04:91) 1313-6
Questions
Nigeria, Democracy 1075
Sunday trading 1195-6

Standard community charge
Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill 1990/91 35w
Wales 35w

Standard of living
244-6w

"Standard Spending Assessment Handbook, 1991/92"
436w

Standard spending assessments
Educational finance 587-8w
West Midlands Police 567w

Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee
Public appointments 203w

Stansted Airport
Railway network 449-50w

Statistics
Exchange rates 590w
Import penetration 589-90w
Invisible trade balance 11-2w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 586
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 422
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 933
Questions
Community charge, Scotland 195w
Lebanon, Hostages 1080

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 171, 194, 197
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 910-1
Smoking, Health hazards (23:04:91) 1066-7, 1069
Questions
Airlines 350w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 907
Questions
VAT 26w

Sterilisation
517w
Costs 81w
District health authorities 80w
Research 80-1w

Sterling
Exchange rate mechanism 243w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Pensioners, Personal savings 4-5

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Debates etc.
Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1991 (23:04:91) 1058-9
Questions
Dept of Health, Civil service agencies 204w

***Stewart, Mr Allan**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office*
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 660
Questions
Alternative energy, Expenditure 614-6w
Alternative energy, Scotland 459w, 615w
Average earnings, Scotland 615-8w
Community charge, Scotland 193-4w, 197w, 411-2
Community charge review, Scotland 194w
Employment level, Tayside 413
Employment opportunities, Lanarkshire 193w
Employment training, Mentally handicapped 414-5
Employment training, Scotland 330-4w, 415
Enterprise initiative, Scotland 423-4w
Environmental health officers, Scotland 340w
European Investment Bank, Scotland 125w
Government assistance, Inverclyde 547-8w
Highlands & Islands Enterprise 429w
Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Costs 543w
Industrial development, Fife 197w
Industrial investment, Scotland 127-30w, 329w
Iron & steel industry, Scotland 196w, 338-9w
Kuwait, Contracts 253w
Local government expenditure, Scotland 159w, 428w

***Stewart, Mr Allan**—continued*
Local government finance, Scotland 126-8w, 193w, 195w
Local government revenue, Scotland 125-6w
Local government services, Local government expenditure 127-8w
New towns, Scotland 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Scotland 458w
Redundancy, Scotland 339w
Scottish Enterprise 337w
Scottish Enterprise, Property development 123w
Self-employed, Scotland 337-8w
Tayside Health Board, Contracts for services 413
Technical & vocational education initiative, Scotland 334w
Trade & Industry Select Committee, British Steel Corporation 338w
Training, Scotland 195w
Unemployment, Scotland 123w, 195w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc.
Coal Mining Subsidence Bill, Rem stages (22:04:91) 845-6, 848-9, 867-8
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 613
Questions
Local government finance 391-2w
NHS 411

Stewart, Rt Hon Ian
Questions
£2 coins 559-60

Stockport
Hospital safety 151w

Stockton on Tees
357w
Housing Corporation 266w

Stockton on Tees Borough Council
296w

Stoke Heath Youth Custody Centre
559-60w

Stoke Newington
Drug crimes 446w

Stokes, Sir John
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 31-2

Stop notices
(22:04:91) 819-72

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Ulster People's College, Educational finance 165-6w

Stradling Thomas, John
Members' deaths (15:04:91) 1

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 32
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 937
Questions
Brazil, Human rights 288w
Family doctors, Budgeting 248w
Police vehicles, Death 275w, 341w

Strangford Lough
Coastal protection 167w

Stratford Station
757-8

Strathclyde
Criminal statistics 604-6w
Drug crimes 605w
Motor vehicle theft 605w

Strathclyde Police
604-6w
Manpower 413-4

Strathclyde Regional Council
413-4

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (23:04:91) 885
School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Bill, Points of Order (16:04:91) 163-4
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 434-6
Questions
City technology colleges, Wandsworth 176-7w, 589w
Educational assessment 885-6
Educational institutions, Ministers' domestic visits 216w
Grant maintained schools 895
M65, Road construction 524w
Prison education services, Expenditure 207-9w
Vocational guidance 190w

Street lighting
Local government functions (24:04:91) 1089-91

Strikes
Local government staff 75-6w
Lost working days 422-3w

Strychnine
479w

Student accommodation
Cambridge Regional College 322w
Construction 322w

Student grants
Costs 316-7w
Departmental correspondence 588w
Expenditure 123w
Parental contributions 264w, 317w
Postgraduate education 317-8w
Scotland 123w, 246-7w

Student numbers
Higher education 313-4w

Sub post offices
137-8w

Submarines
Fishing grounds 164w

Subsidence
Coal mining (22:04:91) 819-72

Subsidiarity
456w

Subsidiary companies
Company liquidations 28w

Subsidies
EC countries 305w
Iron & steel industry 305w

Sudan
Christianity 413w
Human rights 456-7w
Overseas aid 53w

Sugar
EC countries 42-3w

Suicide
Leeds Prison 566w

Sulphur
306w

Sulphur dioxide
65-6w, 102w, 104w
Air pollution monitoring 357w
EC law 356w

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (16:04:91) 395
Questions
Air pollution control, Local government functions 493w
Greater Manchester relief road 754
Halons 493w
Prestwich Hospital, Hospital closures 397w

Summerson, Mr Hugo
Debates etc.
2R adjourned (19:04:91) 737-40
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 695-6, 718-9

Summerson, Mr Hugo—continued
Football (Offences) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 736
Water Requirements (Planning) Bill, 2R adjourned (19:04:91) 737-40
Questions
Aids for handicapped, Technological change 6
Government grants to local authorities, Greater London 390w
Lebanon, Hostages 1079-80

Sunday trading
533w, 1194-6
Employment protection 1194-5
Horticulture (23:04:91) 942-4

Sunderland
Family doctors 150w

Supplementary benefits
Northern Ireland 325w

Supplementary questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:04:91) 8, (16:04:91) 151, (17:04:91) 409, (18:04:91) 566, 569, (22:04:91) 763, (23:04:91) 889, (24:04:91) 1081

Supply Estimates
22w

Supply teachers
408w

Surgery
Lothian Health Board 193w
Wales 35w

Swimming
Derbyshire 403w

Syrian Arab Republic
Foreign relations 455w

Table Office
House of Commons accommodation 586w

Take-home pay
Married men 12-3w

Takeovers
Tootal Group 27-8w, 304w

Tameside
Infrastructure 64w

Tanks
Defence procurement 277w, 303w, 480-7w, 572w
USA 531w

Tarmac Construction
Derbyshire 146w

Taunton
Grant maintained schools 893-4

Tax administration
Separate taxation of wife's earnings 301w, 591w

Tax allowances
Charitable donations 556-7
Home annuities 23w
Offshore suppliers 24w

Tax & price index
384-6w

Tax avoidance
Trusts 592w

Tax burden
237-8w
Income tax 13-4w
VAT 239w

Tax collection
Income tax 593w

Tax evasion
VAT 239w

Tax rates & bands
VAT 238-9w

Tax repayment
300-1w
Woolwich Building Society 9-10w

Tax thresholds
Northern region 302w

Tax yields
Corporation tax 472w
Income tax 472w, 593w
VAT 384w
VAT exempted goods 239w

Taxation
Building societies 9-11w, 300-1w
Departmental correspondence 140w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
Water pollution 435w
Water pollution, EC law 435w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 369, 376
Questions
British Rail, Nationalised industries borrowing 133w
Corporation tax 560-1

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Beef, Food contamination 143w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Northern Ireland 371w
Brucellosis 181w
City action teams, Housing estates 167w
Clenbuterol, Cattle 558w
Clenbuterol, Northern Ireland 527-9w
Coastal protection, Strangford Lough 167w
Common farm prices 181w
Cyprus, Arms trade 229-30w
Cyprus, EC enlargement 229w
Cyprus, Ethnic groups 411w
Cyprus, Partition 229w
Employment opportunities, Lanarkshire 193w
Exchange rate mechanism, Sterling 243w
Flags, Armagh 218w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 201w
Fowl pest, Northern Ireland 201-2w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, Expenditure 199w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, Per capita costs 200w
Infectious bovine rhino tracheitis pneumonia, Northern Ireland 200w
IRA, Political parties 85w
Kurdistan, Overseas aid 187w
Milk, Northern Ireland 199w
Northern Ireland education & library boards, Finance 83-4w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards, Public appointments 84-5w
Northern Ireland health & social services councils, Public appointments 528w
Physical & social environment programme, Northern Ireland 200-1w
Traffic lights, Newtownards 167w

Taylor, Mr John M, Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 372

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 439
Questions
Arts finance 9w
Educational qualifications, Young people 891
Lebanon, Hostages 453w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 601, 604, 624, 637
Questions
Common agricultural policy 1204
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 553w

Taylor, Mr Teddy—continued
Dentists, Contracts of employment 575w
Dentists, Pay 575w
Dentures 573-5w
Dentures, Cancer hazards 574w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 89w
EC law 454w
Employment training, Travelling expenses 365w
Road safety, EC law 449w
Training 422w

Tayside
Employment level 413

Tayside Health Board
Contracts for services 413

Teacher training
Graduates 405w
Reading 402w, 891-2

Teachers
Career structure 263w, 404w
Languages education 224w
Migrant workers 437-8w
Ministerial statements (17:04:91) 433-46
Pay review bodies (17:04:91) 433-46
Review bodies (19:04:91) 675
Science education 177w
Scientific qualifications 407-8w
Scotland 459w
Sick leave 438w, 459w, 578w
Wales 224w, 408w

Teaching methods
Geography education 50-1w
Reading 892

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1174-7

Technical & vocational education initiative
Scotland 334w

Technical assistance
Nuclear accidents 568w, 621-2w

Technicians
Schools 177w
Secondary education 223w
Universities 49w
Wales 223w

Technological change
Aids for handicapped 6, 89w

Television
131-2w

Television reception
Scotland 375-6w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:04:91) 450, 477, 501, (18:04:91) 599, 625

10p coins
559

Tenancy agreements
Public houses 479-80w

Tenants
Scotland 163w

Tenants' choice
Scotland 120w

Terrorism
Northern Ireland 767
Pre-trial procedures 1197-8
Public buildings 63w
Railway stations 212-3w

Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990
Debates etc.
(15:04:91) 117-38

Thailand
Democracy 412w

Theatre
Educational finance 381w
VAT 21w

Theft
Documents 530w
Wandsworth 295w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Crime prevention, Norwich 1203
Educational assessment, Primary education 893
Employment Service, Performance indicators 511w
European Security Conference, Peaceful coexistence 1071-2

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 576
Plumbing (19:04:91) 750
Questions
China, Ministers' visits abroad 111-2w

THORP
497w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 586
Export & Investment Guarantees Bill, Rep & 3R (15:04:91) 46, 48
National Health Service (17:04:91) 459, 498-501
Questions
Adoption 283w
EC Finance Council 140-1w
Medical students, Patients 234w
Rehabilitation centres, Manchester 6
Romania, Adoption 1087-8
Speech therapists, Manpower 77-8w
Speech therapy, Expenditure 343w

Tibet
111-2w, 187w

Tilbury
(23:04:91) 945-1054

Times
Parliamentary Press Gallery 537w

Timesharing
Misleading advertising 303-4w

Tin
Mining 305-6w

Tipping of waste
Gases 145-6w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 145-6w

Tobacco
Exports 272w
Young people (19:04:91) 676-723

Tobacco advertising
Advertising codes of practice 234-5w

Tonga
Nuclear power 501w

Tootal Group
Company finance 28w
Takeovers 27-8w, 304w

Tornado aircraft
206w, 379w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 529-30w

Tottenham
62w

Tourist industry
Northumberland 415w
Southport 510-1w

Tower Hamlets
Family credit 325-6w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 407w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc.
NHS trusts, Points of order (26:04:91) 1342

Townend, Mr John—continued
Pig Husbandry Bill, Discharge of Rep & withdrawal of Bill adjourned (26:04:91) 1373, 1376-7, 1383-5
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1334-40, 1346-7, 1348, 1368

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 426
Questions
Kurdistan, Foreign aid 768

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 912
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 530
Questions
Arts finance, London boroughs grants scheme 16-7
Business statements 1214

Trade & Industry Select Committee
British Steel Corporation 338w

Trade barriers
Foreign investment 596w

Trade competitiveness
481w

Trade Descriptions (Animal Testing) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (19:04:91) 741, (26:04:91) 1396

Trade fairs
Arms trade 484w, 597w

Trade union recognition
North of England Building Society 1207-8

Trade unions
Honduras 140w

Trades Union Congress
Economic policy 565

Trafalgar Square
Demonstrations 5w

Traffic lights
Newtownards 167w

Training
422w
Armed forces discharges 485w
European Social Fund 157w
Judiciary 220-1w
Scotland 195w, 416

Training Agency
Privatisation 511-2w
Public relations 585w

Training & enterprise councils
190w, 280-1w, 365w, 421-2w, 585w
Bradford 509w
Finance 451-2w
Manpower 281w

Training Enterprise & Education Directorate
451-2w

Transfer & automated registration of uncertificated stock
Upper Waiting Hall 27w

Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988
Questions
144-5w

Transitional relief
34-6w, 54w
Community charge 163w

Transmanche
209-10w

Transplant surgery
Hospital waiting lists 1207
Kidneys 284w

Transport
Environmental impact assessment 420w

Transport & Road Research Laboratory
1w

Transport costs
Departmental leaflets 254w

Transport of animals
EC action (16:04:91) 392

Transport of radioactive materials
Advanced Nuclear Fuels 622w
Iraq 290w, 484w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 497w
Road freight transport (26:04:91) 1322-40, 1344-69

Travelling expenses
Employment training 365w

Trawsfynydd power station
Nuclear safety 497w

Treasury
Advertising 593w
Government buildings 514w
Public relations 592w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 512w

Treaties
Environment protection 362w, 493w
Migrant workers 40w
Weapons 292w

Treaty of Rome
449w
Animal welfare 430w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 32
Questions
Corporation tax, Small businesses 238w

Trent Regional Health Authority
Hospital beds 81w

Trespass
Public Order Act 1986 5w, 442-3w

Trials
Rape 219w
Scotland 606w

Tributyl tin
434w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 575
Questions
Business statements 1220-1
European Security Conference, Northern Ireland 1073-4
Terrorism, Pre-trial procedures 1197-8

Trippier, Mr David, Minister for the Environment and Countryside
Questions
Air pollution control, Local government functions 493w
Conifers, Pennines 391w
Halons 493w
Hedgehogs, Export of live animals 389-90w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Tipping of waste 145-6w
London Zoo, Government grants 387-8w
Water authorities 183w
Water conservation 227w
Zoological Society of London, Disclosure of information 226w
Zoos, EC countries 226w

Truancy
51w, 405w
Prosecutions 437w
Vocational education 886
Wales 223w

Trunk Road Assessment Advisory Committee
Environmental impact assessment 353w

Trust ports
(23:04:91) 945-1054

Trusts
Tax avoidance 592w

Turkey
Cyprus 160-1, 285w
Human rights 291w
Overseas aid 187w

Turtles
1w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Family credit, Expenditure 1-2

£2 coins
559-60

2p coins
559

Tyne & Wear
Railway accidents 763
Railway network 763

UK companies abroad
Government grants 138-9w
Iraq 595w
Minting 595w

UK contributions
European Development Bank 770
European Security Conference 105w
European Space Agency 51w
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development 22w
Western European Union 105w

UK delegations
International Atomic Energy Agency 501-2w
International Energy Agency 501-2w

UK trade with EC
Balance of trade 468-9w

Ulster People's College
Community relations 165-6w
Educational finance 165-6w

UN Commission on Human Rights
455-6w

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
230-1w, 598w
British dependent territories 287w

UN Environment Programme
106w, 305w, 359w, 362w, 493w
Pollution monitoring 183w

UN General Assembly
South Africa 51-2w

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
520-1w
Middle East 139w

UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission
531w

Underground railways
Fire services 373w

Unemployment
554, 562, 566-7, 898
EC countries 67w
Families 367w
Greater London 364w
Scotland 123w, 195w
Valleys initiative 324-5w
Wales 324-5w

Unemployment benefits
Employment Service 281w
Part-time employment 541-2w
Social security claims 235-6w

Unfair trading practices
Marinas 480-1w

Uniform business rate
Appeals 62-3w
Hornsey 62w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
621-2w

United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service
566w

United Nations
228-9w, 291w, 299-300w, 576w, 1083

United Nations Disaster Relief Office
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 292w

Universities
Technicians 49w

Universities' Funding Council
316w

University finance
Pay 50w

University teachers
Pay settlements 50w, 588w

Unpaid taxes
467-8w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:04:91) 163, (23:04:91) 1287-8, (26:04:91) 1373

Upper Waiting Hall
British Gas 53w
Rose Theatre 266w
Transfer & automated registration of uncertificated stock 27w

Uranium
Iraq 291w

Urban areas
Vacant land 55w

Urban planning
Housing 489w
Solihull 489w

Urban programme
62w

US bases
Armed forces deployment 486w
Hazardous wastes 144-5w

USA
Foreign relations 456w
Hazardous wastes 66w
Tanks 531w

USSR
1072
Armed forces 485w
Arms control 1074
CFE Treaty 487w
Emigration 111w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 103w

Vacancies
Crown Prosecution Service 584w

Vacant land
57-8w
Government departments 58w
Greenbelt 55-6w
Land acquisition 57-62w
Private sector 58w
Urban areas 55w

Vaccination
Children 343w

Valletta
(15:04:91) 140-4

Valleys initiative
Unemployment 324-5w

Valuation & community charge tribunals
North Yorkshire 62-3w

Valuation Office
471-2w

Varroasis
64w

VAT
26w, 238w, 273w
Charities 241-2w, 556-7
France 302w
Germany 302w
Holiday accommodation 26w
Horses 21w
Inflation 557-8
Knitting yarns 273w
Low incomes 565
Medical treatments 594w
Northern Ireland 86-7w
Rates & rating 87w
Secondhand goods 273w
Tax burden 239w
Tax evasion 239w
Tax rates & bands 238-9w
Tax yields 384w
Theatre 21w

VAT exempted goods
Tax yields 239w

VAT zero rated goods
557

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 167-70, 174, 199
Questions
Truancy, Prosecutions 437w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Questions
Business statements 1219-20
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 361-2w
Hospital waiting lists 147w
Safer cities scheme, Leicestershire 1194
Social Fund, Debt collection 542w

Vegetables
Agricultural production 41-2w
Food imports 41-2w

Vending machines
Coinage 559

Veterinary Investigation Service
477w

Veterinary Medicines Directorate
143w

Veterinary services
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 477w

Vibration white finger
Social security appeals 601w

Victoria Tower
Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 586w
Scaffolding 300w

Vietnam
455w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Amendment) Bill, 1R (16:04:91) 164
Questions
Arms control 1072
HMS Daedalus, Rights of way 104w
Water sports, Local authority powers 5w
Water sports, Noise control 54w

Visas
178-80w
Commonwealth 209w, 291w
Working holidays 209w, 536-7w

Vocational education
887
Truancy 886

Vocational guidance
190w

Vocational training
Employment training 280w

Voluntary organisations
Community care 146

Voting methods
EC external relations 1078

Wages councils
Low pay 366w
Manpower 366w

***Wakeham, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Energy 500w
Electricity consumption 498w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 498w
Electricity tariffs 217w
Government buildings, Dept of Energy 499w
Office of Electricity Regulation 501w
Office of Electricity Regulation, Public appointments 500w
Office of Gas Supply, Costs 499w
Office of Gas Supply, Public appointments 499-500w
Petroleum exploration licences 217-8w
Public relations, Dept of Energy 499w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Energy 497w

***Waldegrave, Rt Hon William**, Secretary of State for Health*
Debates etc.
National Health Service (17:04:91) 453, 459-68
Questions
Day surgery 155-6
Dental services 204w
Dept of Health, Civil service agencies 204w
Family doctors, Budgeting 148-9
Family doctors, Contracts 148
Family doctors, Hospital admissions 149-50
Health services 474w
Hospital waiting lists, Bradford 156
Medical research 474-5w
Medway Health Authority, Medical treatment abroad 155
NHS 150
NHS, Northern region 146w
NHS trusts 148w, 151-3
NHS trusts, Coventry 150-1
Primary health care 150
Tobacco advertising, Advertising codes of practice 234-5w

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 431
Teachers, Pay & conditions (17:04:91) 444
Questions
Nursery schools 889

Wales
Animal welfare 407w
Archaeological sites 323w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 410w
Broadcasting 408-9w
Children in care 36w
Community care 479w
Community councils 37w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 34w
Education 224w
Educational assessment 409w
Energy conservation 539w
Government grants to local authorities 276w
Haemophilia 538w
Higher education corporations (22:04:91) 875
Housing benefits 34w
Housing construction 324w
Land pollution 275-6w
Lead pipes 275w
Listed buildings 411w
Local government finance (23:04:91) 918-26
Local government revenue 410-2w
National Rivers Authority 275w
Nature conservation 136w
Nursery schools 324w
Outdoor recreation 225w

***Wales**—continued*
Rent officers 182w, 223-4w
Research 36-7w
Roads 578w
Science & technology research 136-7w
Science education 407-8w
Standard community charge 35w
Surgery 35w
Teachers 224w, 408w
Technicians 223w
Truancy 223w
Unemployment 324-5w
Water supply 275w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 582
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 933
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1226, 1234, 1237-8, 1249, 1278-9, 1282, 1285-6, 1298, 1305
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 128-9
Questions
Agricultural Scientific Services, Civil service agencies 160w
Community charge grant, Scotland 255-6w
Employment level, Scotland 567
Employment level, Tayside 413
Environment protection, Government grants to voluntary organisations 160-1w
Highlands & Islands Enterprise 429w
Scottish Constitutional Convention 405

Walker, Rt Hon Peter,
Debates etc.
Dyslexia (17:04:91) 545-7

Wallace, Colin
219w, 256w, 595w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Legal aid scheme, Scotland (16:04:91) 386-7, 389-90
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 936
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 954-5, 958, 969-70, 974-5, 979-80, 988-9, 1006-11, 1013, 1015-6, 1023-4, 1031-2, 1040, 1050-1
Questions
Alternative energy, Expenditure 614-6w
Alternative energy, Scotland 459w, 615w
Average earnings, Scotland 615-8w
Children in care, Orkney 268w
Children's panels, Orkney 254w
Community charge, Scotland 194w
Departmental leaflets, Transport costs 254w
Employment training 421w
Employment training, Career breaks 421w
Employment training, Special training needs 421w
Exxon Valdez, Oil pollution control 417-8w
Home energy efficiency scheme 496w

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
Further education colleges 889-90

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 948-52, 957, 965-6, 984-7, 992, 1001-3, 1005, 1015, 1042-3, 1051-3
Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill, Rem stages (26:04:91) 1325-31
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 2w
Environmental impact assessment, EC law 352w
Exhaust emissions, Complaints 419w
Fishing vessels, Shipping safety 756
Marine Accident Investigation Branch, Manpower 415w
MV Pescado, Shipping accidents 415w
MV Polly Anna, Safety standards 449w
Roads, Cleaning services 4w
Shipping safety 3-4w

***Walley, Ms Joan**—continued*
Trunk Road Assessment Advisory Committee, Environmental impact assessment 353w

Walsgrave Hospital
148w, 150-1

Waltham Toll Bar School
Grant maintained schools 893-4

Wandsworth
City technology colleges 176-7w, 589w
Community charge 54w
Crime 295-6w
Theft 295w

War casualties
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 197-8w, 397-8w

War crimes
Iraq 378w, 1082

Ward, Mr John
Debates etc.
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 999, 1005-6, 1008, 1045-6
Questions
Economic policy 554-5

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:04:91) 592
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 924
Questions
Animal welfare, Wales 407w
Broadcasting, Departmental responsibilities 408-9w
Cholesterol 282-3w
Cholesterol, Blood tests 474w
Community councils, Local government reform 37w
Driving licences, Age 354w
Drugs, Waste disposal 233-4w, 407-8w
Land pollution, Wales 275-6w
Lead pipes, Wales 275w
M4, Speed limits 539-40w
National Rivers Authority, Wales 275w
Speed governors, Cars 450w
Speed governors, Lorries 175w
Submarines, Fishing grounds 164w
Water supply, Lead 275w

Warehouses
329w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 30
Questions
Arts finance, North West region 8w
Hussein, Saddam, Genocide 161-2

Warrington
Employment opportunities 9-10

Waste disposal
Drugs 233-4w, 407-8w
Estuaries 66w
Farms 360w

Water authorities
183w

Water conservation
227w
East Anglia 390-1w
Irrigation 603w

Water pollution
435w
Agriculture 360w
Benzene 490-1w
EC law 435w
Kuwait 106w
Scotland 118w

Water Requirements (Planning) Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R adjourned (19:04:91) 737-40

Water resources
Northern Ireland 371w
Sports facilities 567w

Water sports
Local authority powers 5w
Noise control 54w

Water supply
Chelmsford 436w
Farmers 430w
Horticulture 390-1w
Lead 275w
Property development (19:04:91) 737-40
Scotland 418
Wales 275w

Water supply industry
Billing 359w

Wath upon Dearne
Hazardous wastes 567w

Watson, Alan
West Midlands Police 533w

Watson, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
British Technology Group Bill, Rem stages (16:04:91) 180-2
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 938
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 131-2
Questions
Arms trade, India 487w
Employment training, Scotland 415-6
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 496w
Kuwait, Human rights 453w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
Local government revenue 558

Weapons
Treaties 292w

Weed control
Rhododendron 265w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 429, (22:04:91) 782
Questions
Drinking & driving 375w
Stansted Airport, Railway network 449-50w
Theatre, Educational finance 381w

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 578
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1238, 1248-50, 1254, 1272-3, 1300-1
Questions
Lithuania 454w
Part-time employment, Men 71-2w
Part-time employment, Women 71-4w
Water supply, Scotland 418

Welsh Agricultural College
Finance 136w

Welsh Consumer Council
29-30w

Welsh Development Agency
136-7w

Welsh Office
407w
Advertising 538-40w
Government buildings 539w
Press releases 35w
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade 538w

Welsh Water
275w

Welshpool bypass
Road construction 578w

Wessex Regional Health Authority
Kidney machines 283-4w
Kidney patients 284w

Wessex Regional Health Authority—continued
Kidneys 284w

West coast railway line
760-1

West Germany
Environment protection 485w

West Lothian
Fox hunting 105w

West Midlands Police
Police misconduct 766-7, 1196-7, 1201
Standard spending assessments 567w
Watson, Alan 533w

Western environmental improvement route
346-7w

Western European Union
231w, 482w
UK contributions 105w

Whales
EC action 552w
Japan 551-2w
Nature conservation 237w, 359-60w, 431-2w, 551-2w

Wheal Jane Mine
Government grants 367-8w

Wheel clamps
Private sector 524w

Wheelchairs
Access to buildings 401w

Wheeler, Sir John
Debates etc.
Football (Offences) Bill, 3R (19:04:91) 734-5
Questions
Fire Service College, Civil service agencies 132-3w
Interception of Communications Commissioner, Annual reports 271w
Rehabilitation of offenders, Special training needs 363-4w
VAT, Horses 21w

Whooping cough
343w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Social Security 540-1w
Community charge benefits, Easington 326w
Community charge benefits, Social security benefits rules 543w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Cardiff 100w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 89w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Finsbury Park 135w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Greater London 13
Housing benefits, Government grants to local authorities 376-7w
Housing benefits, Lambeth 193w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 98w
Income support, Blyth Valley 88-9w
Income support, Pensioners 88w
Income support, Scotland 329w
Income support, Social security recipients 89w
Long stay patients, Social security benefits 328w
Occupational pensions 91w
Occupational pensions, Sex discrimination 466-7w
Occupational Pensions Board, Public appointments 100-1w
Pensioners, Low incomes 5

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
Pensioners, Personal income 90w
Pensioners, Personal savings 4-5
Pensioners, Social security benefits 91-2w, 327-8w
Rent rebates, Expenditure 96-8w
Rent rebates, Social security recipients 101w, 376w
Retirement pensions 327w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits rates 5-6
St John Ambulance Association & Brigade, Dept of Social Security 466w
Social security, Expenditure 192w
Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986 326w
Social security appeals 465-6w, 602w
Social security benefits 90w
Social security benefits, Computers in government departments 9, 600w
Social security claims, Administrative delays 9
Social security recipients 96w
Social security recipients, Scotland 97-9w
Widowers' benefits 600-1w
Widows' benefits, Rent increases 465w

Widowers' benefits
600-1w

Widows' benefits
Income support 465w
Rent increases 465w

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 618-21
Ports Bill, Rem stages (23:04:91) 987-8
Questions
Animal welfare, Local government staff 447-8w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 922-3

Wild animals
Import controls 358w
Poisoning 479w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 422-3
Questions
USSR, Arms control 1074

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Children & Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill, Rep & 3R (19:04:91) 684, 686, 702, 710-1, 716
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (17:04:91) 430
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 923
Questions
Invisible trade balance 12w
Severn bridge, Operating costs 2-3w
Severn bridge, Road tolls 2w, 214-5w, 355w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (HL), Rep adjourned (16:04:91) 243, 264, 268-9, 280, 285-7, 289-93, 321, 325-6, 327-330, 333
Local government finance, Wales (23:04:91) 924

Wilshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 909
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 530
Questions
EC defence policy 1077
Education, Local government expenditure 43-50w
Exports, Iraq 414w

Wilshire, Mr David—continued
Foreign companies in UK, Iraq 304w
Prisons, Construction 1199-200
Service Children's Education Authority, Civil service agencies 380-1w
Sollatek UK, Iraq 414w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rem stages (25:04:91) 1223-9, 1238, 1243, 1256-8, 1262, 1268, 1284-8, 1293-6, 1302
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 124
Questions
Crofters' Commission, Expenditure 115-6w
Crofters' Commission, Manpower 115w
Crofting, Land ownership & tenure 113-4w
Crofting, Property transfer 114-5w
Crofting, Scotland 113w, 116-7w
Income support, Young people 602w
Standard of living 244-6w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugee camps (18:04:91) 579
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 28
Personal Community Charge (Reductions) (England) Regulations 1991 (17:04:91) 531
Questions
Business statements 1221
Community charge 899-900
Hussein, Saddam, Crimes against humanity 271w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, International law 766
Kurdistan, Refugees 599-600w
Pensioners, Personal income 90w
Prescription charges 149w
USSR 1072
VAT 238w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (18:04:91) 634, 649-51
Questions
AIDS, Health education 82-3w
Educational assessment 885

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Local government reform, England (23:04:91) 914
Questions
Community care 145-6
Excise duties, Fuels 562

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 31

Witnesses
Mentally disadvantaged 433w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Kurdistan, Refugee camps (22:04:91) 779
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 759

Women
Higher civil servants 17-8
Judges 220w
National Council for Vocational Qualifications 68-70w
Part-time employment 71-4w

Women's employment
Equal opportunities 18

Wood Green
62w

Woolf Inquiry
see Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry

Woolwich Building Society
10-1w
Tax repayment 9-10w

Working holidays
Visas 209w, 536-7w

Working hours
Scotland 615-6w

World Conservation Monitoring Centre
65w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) Order 1991 (24:04:91) 1175
Testing in Primary Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1990 (15:04:91) 134-5
Questions
Carstairs Hospital, Mental patients 130w
Educational assessment, Primary education 124w
Educational finance, Scotland 119w, 252w, 256w
Employment training, Scotland 330-4w, 415
Enterprise initiative, Scotland 423-4w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Scotland 124-6w
Industrial investment, Scotland 329w
Low pay, Scotland 70w, 74-6w
New towns, Scotland 197w
Scottish Enterprise, Property development 123w
Student grants, Expenditure 123w
Student grants, Scotland 246-7w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Scotland 334w
Unemployment, EC countries 67w
Unemployment, Scotland 123w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Questions
British Rail, Channel tunnel 347-8w
Child care, EC countries 269w
Chile, Overseas trade 40w
Community charge, Scotland 411-2
Developing countries, Agricultural production 228w
Major, John, Electoral register 159
Medway Health Authority, Medical treatment abroad 155
Research facilities 263w
Water pollution, Scotland 118w

Yeo, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment
Debates etc.
Leasehold housing (16:04:91) 395-400
Local government finance, Scotland (23:04:91) 939
Plumbing (19:04:91) 747-52
Questions
Alternative energy 225w
Compulsory purchase, Agricultural land 489w
Council house sales 227w
Council house sales, Harrogate 437w
Environmental impact assessment, Private Bills 61-2w
Estate Action, Expenditure 357w
Fairgrounds, Planning permission 358w
Glass, Safety standards 144w
Government buildings, Building repairs 226w
Greenbelt 437w
Greenbelt, Greater London 569w
Greenbelt, South East region 390w
Homelessness 186w
Housing, Liverpool 61-2w
Housing associations, Lambeth 64w
Housing construction 489-90w
Housing Corporation, Expenditure 266w

Yeo, Mr Tim—continued
Industrial noise 437w
London City Airport 61w
Mineral resources, Extractive industries 568-9w
Parliamentary precincts, Lighting 265w
Planning permission, Concrete batching plants 185w
Planning permission, Heliports 63w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 266w
Prestwich Hospital, Planning appeals 63w
Property development, Hospitals 437w
Property development, Preston 65w
Public sector housing, Building repairs 491w
Recreation spaces, Land acquisition 56-7w
Terrorism, Public buildings 63w
Urban planning, Housing 489w
Vacant land 57-8w
Vacant land, Government departments 58w
Vacant land, Greenbelt 55-6w
Vacant land, Land acquisition 57-62w
Vacant land, Private sector 58w
Vacant land, Urban areas 55w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Employment Service local offices 422w
Lost working days 422-3w
New businesses 511w
Regional arts boards 8w

Young, Mr David
Debates etc.
Iraq, Refugees (15:04:91) 33

Young, Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning
Questions
Archaeological sites, Law reform 226w
Council housing, Property transfer 491-2w
Prestwich Hospital, Planning permission 144w
PSA Services, Privatisation 434w
Rose Theatre, Upper Waiting Hall 266w

Young offenders
1203
Alcohol & crime 427w
Children in care 373w
Punishment 1199

Young people
Alcoholic drinks 1198-9
Crime prevention 160, 1198
Educational qualifications 891
Income support 602w
International conferences 321w
Tobacco (19:04:91) 676-723

Young Persons (Alcohol Abuse) Etc Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (26:04:91) 1395

Youth employment
Pay 366w

Youth training
585w
Blyth Valley 365w
Finance 190w
Newham 281w
Renfrew 459w

Yugoslavia
Ministers' visits abroad 455w

Zoological Society of London
387w
Disclosure of information 226w

Zoos
EC countries 226w